THE DAILY CLIPS

December 5, 2007

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

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Public Forum

Athletic director's conduct outrageous

I am writing in response to the article published in the Sunday's Daily Reflector, "Aid to Holland relative halted."

If the reporting is accurate, I find myself outraged by Chancellor Ballard's dismissive remarks regarding the inexcusable conduct of his athletic director. It seems clear that the only interest being served is one of personal privilege rather than public interest that he, supposedly, upholding.

I find it puzzling that Ballard addresses such a serious transgression of Holland's as a "matter resolved" and his focusing on the "upward momentum in the athletics department" rather than emphasizing that this behavior is not acceptable. It is clear that a high-level university official, because of his position and stature, gave undue advantage to a relative.

Ballard does not refute such behavior as being unacceptable, nor does he reinforce his obligation of ensuring that all students have equal access to the same resources and that those programs are awarded solely on the hard work or need of an individual.

The Toronto report further downplays this serious breach of trust by stating there are no written policies for awarding athletics department aid to non-athlete students. May I suggest that even if Holland lacked a personal moral compass in this situation, institutionally a policy already exists for the university regarding such behavior. It's called the university's Code of Ethics. Please simply enforce it.

BOB GOSE
Greenville
COLLEGES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

to handle the calls. Callers say, "I don't want my tax dollars used to educate illegals," Bailey said.

Stepping down

The controversy threatens to overshadow a milestone for the system, which is expected to announce Thursday a president to succeed Lancaster. He will retire in May after serving almost 11 years. Finalists are Kennon Briggs, vice president for business and finance in the system office; Philip Day Jr., chancellor of City College of San Francisco; and Scott Ralls, president of Craven Community College.

Day said a California law allows immigrants who graduated from the state's public schools to be treated as in-state residents at community colleges. The investment has paid off, he said. He cited a young woman who is an honors student in industrial engineering and plans to transfer to a highly ranked university.

"Is that not better than forcing them to be on the outside looking in?" Day said by telephone from San Francisco.

Briggs declined to comment on the controversy; efforts to reach Ralls were unsuccessful.

The debate intensifies attention

EXCERPTS FROM LANCASTER

Those who are responding to that legal opinion should know that several undisputable facts have been overlooked:

1. The vast majority of students who might pursue an educational opportunity at a community college came to this country as young children having no choice in the matter. They were brought here by their parents, often as babes in arms. How can these children be considered lawbreakers intent on taking advantage of our community college programs illegally?

2. Each of these students had the opportunity to receive a free public education, in many cases from kindergarten through the 12th grade. Some of them have graduated as valedictorians or honor graduates with a clear potential for benefiting from a college education.

3. To attend a community college as an undocumented immigrant, these students will have to pay $7,465 per year as full-time curriculum students, which is $2,090 more than the legislature gives the community college to educate a full-time student. Therefore, there is no state subsidy for these students to attend a community college; these students would have to pay the cost of their community college education. Furthermore, the students can receive no federal or state educational benefits.

4. In every era of American history, the latest wave of immigrants ... has faced the same opposition that Hispanics now face ... We are a nation of immigrants, and if one reviews the names of those who have called or e-mailed ... In opposition to our open door policy, one must conclude that fifty or a hundred years ago, their grandparents or great-grandparents faced the same opposition that they are now voicing.

5. ... To say that undocumented immigrants can't work in North Carolina ignores the fact that thousands of them are working today in almost every field ... Do we want these workers to be knowledgeable workers or ignorant workers incapable of giving to their employers the best efforts?

6. Many European countries are now experiencing more significant violent, destructive and terrorist activity by immigrants than we are experiencing in this country. For years these countries have denied immigrants basic rights and services, creating a permanent, disenfranchised, and angry underclass. By refusing to educate and make productive members of our society the children of undocumented aliens, North Carolina and the United States face that same eventuality.

7. For North Carolina to be competitive in a global economy, it must depend on a knowledge-based workforce. ... To deny a significant portion of tomorrow's workforce any higher education opportunities will not only hurt these young people who came to North Carolina through no fault of their own, but it will also significantly diminish their incomes forever. The consequences to North Carolina are reduced tax collections and potential payments for social services and incarceration long into the future.

8. ... Only 340 undocumented students out of more than 271,000 curriculum students have chosen to enroll. This is hardly the inundation of our colleges predicted by the talk show hosts, bloggers, e-mailers, and phone callers.

Phones busy

Last week, Gov. Mike Easley said he supported the policy of including illegal immigrants in that number. On Tuesday, he said the state's phones have been buzzing.

"I think most people seem to be upset that the borders have not been controlled, and that upsets me and every governor in the country who then gets the illegal immigrants in their state and then has to deal with the reality of it," Easley said.

Easley said the college communities are trying to deal with the fact that right or wrong, illegal immigrants are here.

"It's like catching a cold. I don't want a cold ... but if I get it, I'm going to deal with it. I'm going to take the aspirin and whatever it is I got to do. I don't want any illegal immigrants in North Carolina, and the only way we can stop that is for Washington to control the borders. ... Washington has not acted. Therefore we are where we are."
source of the money was from an athletics facilities budget and apparently did not violate any university rules.

Such vague rhetoric does nothing to change the fact that this episode simply does not pass the smell test. If anything, it stagnates the water even more while raising unsettling questions about Holland's professional judgment.

Odds are that there is an acceptable, maybe even reasonable, explanation for what, when and how it all happened. It's entirely possible that everything looks and sounds worse than it really is. But that's precisely the problem. The department's image and Holland's reputation could be harmed a great deal more than $25,000 could ever offset.

If Holland and ECU chancellor Steve Ballard can't legally address the issue deeper, they should get permission from the brother to explain and bring the matter into clearer focus. If no rules were broken and there was a day's work given in exchange for a day's pay on a normal salary scale, then what does any involved party have to hide? ECU needs Holland, of that there's no argument.

From the moment he got the AD job in 2004, Holland has worked tirelessly to advance the school's athletics standing. His decision to replace football coach John Thompson with Skip Holtz literally turned chicken feathers into chicken salad overnight. There's still not much visible progress in the men's basketball program, but basketball is not and likely never will be the Pirates' A-Train. But if anyone is qualified to defy that ages-old hurdle, Holland has the ability to find the solution.

Among rank-and-file ECU supporters, this incident is a long shot to undermine the widespread popularity of Holland or Ballard. Their devotion to the school's best interests is largely unquestioned among the masses. Had both been hired 10 years earlier, ECU today might be competing in the Big East Conference, sharing in the Bowl Championship Series television money bonanza and fast-tracking in almost all sports.

But on this one, ECU isn't playing smart. It's time for the time-honored WWLJD — What Would former chancellor Leo Jenkins Do? — strategy to be applied. That would be to step up, present the facts, make your case and above all else, don't dare try to hide behind the I-95 great divide.

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Tuesday to discuss the report or the handling of Gregg Holland's payments.

Terry Holland is a well-known sports figure in the region. He is a former head basketball coach and athletics director at both Virginia and Davidson. At ECU, he has overseen big changes in the major sports and is paid nearly $300,000 per year.

**Surprised by criticism**

Contacted at his Greenville home, Gregg Holland said he was surprised by the attention and criticism of the job and aid he received.

He said that as far as he knew, the chancellor was aware of his arrangement in the athletic department, if not about all of the specifics.

"If he knew all the details — I don't know," he said. "I haven't talked with the chancellor and don't know his take on it."

The audit report did not identify the student by name, and a statement released by ECU referred to the recipient of the money only as a relative of the athletic director. School officials have refused to publicly identify the student or comment further on the matter.

The audit report said the student received financial aid from the athletic department's facilities budget for the 2006-07 school year as well as for the two summer sessions this year and the current semester that ends this month.

He also received payroll disbursements from spring 2007 to Sept. 30, when the arrangement was abruptly halted.

Gregg Holland acknowledged in the interview Tuesday that he was the recipient of the aid.

**No 'windfall'**

Gregg Holland said that Terry Holland, who he described as more like a father than an older brother, was just trying to help him return to school for his undergraduate degree.

"I'm not getting any largess out of this, any windfall," he said. "He was just helping me get by."

Holland said he had attended William & Mary in the mid-1970s but didn't apply himself to studies and didn't receive a degree in history as he planned. He said he is making good grades at ECU.

He said he intended to work full time in Greenville and attend ECU part time, but he had been unable to find a full-time job.

He said the job in the athletic department involved helping coordinate events in the athletics facilities.

He said he was "always kind of uncomfortable about it, but with it being out in the open I thought it must be OK if nobody's raising [heck] about it."

He said the job was mostly physical labor, such as setting up equipment and it was not an office job. He said that when he didn't have something to do, he sought additional chores.

"I haven't received a car, I'm not living in a fine house. I don't have $500 suits hanging in the closet," he said.

**Repayment possible**

He said he would have preferred to work somewhere other than athletics because being the brother of the athletic director made him feel "conscious.

"Just to be honest, I felt uncomfortable working over there because people knew who I was," he said. "I felt very conspicuous. I tried to find jobs on other parts of the campus. It just didn't work out."

He said that no one complained to him about his relationship or suggested to him or his brother that the aid might be a problem.

He also said he would repay the money if it was determined that he should not have received it.

"If somebody thinks I've been given an advantage, unfair advantage or whatever ... I'll make it right to them," he said. "If they want me to pay the money back, we'll call it a student loan and I'll pay 'em back."

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Evening out emergency aid

BY ELAINE D. SEEMAN

Widespread use of the “911” phone number has greatly simplified the process of contacting first responders in an emergency. Yet as telecommunications technology becomes more complex — with text messaging, wireless e-mail and Voice over Internet Protocol on the rise — the 911 process faces new complications, especially when it comes to determining caller location.

While first responders (police, fire and EMS) stand ready to assist, the process of locating and dispatching a 911 call is problematic because North Carolina currently has no minimum standards for 911 centers.

Citizens generally believe that dialing 911 from a cell phone will bring them help as needed. Different counties throughout the state, however, operate 911 response centers using assorted technologies, resulting in diverse operating procedures with varying results.

These differences in technological capabilities and operating procedures can create a host of problems, from a delay in 911 services to no help arriving at all in crisis situations.

For example, some counties offer emergency medical response, which allows the call taker to provide pre-arrival medical instruction in situations ranging from heart attacks to gunshot wounds. Unfortunately, other counties do not offer this lifesaving response.

A NEW STATE LAW SEeks TO REMEDY THIS PROBLEM.

Session Law 2007-383 ensures that all voice services will contribute to the 911 system. It will provide uniformity in the quality of service and the level of 911 charges across voice communications service providers.

Up to now, land-line 911 fees have been higher than 911 fees for cellular users — and Internet phone services were not required to pay the fees at all. Moreover, land-line 911 fees were disbursed to the individual county and were often used for purposes unrelated to 911.

Starting Jan. 1, land-line, cellular and Internet providers will be required to collect and submit a uniform monthly 70 cent fee per customer. The law further aims to modernize and improve the 911 system through establishment of a statewide 911 board. A major goal of the board will be to establish minimum standards for call centers.

While small counties may fear loss of control and revenue, this new statute will allow the state to narrow the gap between 911 technology and local 911 operation and implementation. By consolidating fees and their disbursing, and monitoring cost and performance, the 911 board can ensure that each county meets minimum standards.

The law will ease the burden previously put on small rural counties. Just as tax revenues are shared statewide, fees collected will be shared between large and small counties.

State oversight will ensure that those fees collected for 911 will be used for that purpose. In addition, economies of scale should lower costs for everyone.

Putting the fees together in a single fund should help all counties provide the capability to call for emergency help to anyone who dials 911. The law will ensure that new communications technologies currently lacking access to 911— for example, text and instant messaging — will have access in the future. Finally, and most importantly, the law ensures that residents and visitors will receive uniform emergency call services, whether calling from home or traveling across the state.

Elaine D. Seeman, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Management Information Systems at East Carolina University's College of Business. With three colleagues, she studies 911 issues and will be forming a 911 research center initiative.
Out in the cold

Even on Tobacco Road, the writing is on the wall for smoking. It's becoming harder to find places to light up legally.

Writing on the wall? Actually, it's on signs placed outside public university buildings announcing new restrictions on smoking that take effect Jan. 1. The new rules will be rough on smokers — the huddled masses outside building entrances must move farther away — but good for public health.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, signs note that smoking will be banned within 100 feet of all campus buildings. Smoking has been prohibited in classrooms for several years. In July, tobacco use was barred anywhere at the university's hospital complex. At N.C. State University in Raleigh, no one will be able to smoke within 25 feet of a building (or inside most of them).

So there's a strong move to limit tobacco use on campus — and a 75-foot gap in how far the two campuses are going in their outdoor antismoking campaigns.

The distance difference understandably caused some wisecracking among students, but on the larger point there's no separation between leaders of the two campuses. They are, quite properly, putting public health above individuals' needs to stoke their smoking habits.

That's the case despite North Carolina's status as first in tobacco-growing receipts, and despite N.C. State's tradition of aiding tobacco farmers through research (which will continue).

But the public health interest is paramount. This year it got a boost from the legislature, which basically prohibited smoking in state buildings. (Buildings at Duke University, a private school, also are smoke-free.) The 25- and 100-foot limits are a new tool in the antismoking arsenal; the latter could make it illegal to smoke outdoors over substantial areas of the Chapel Hill campus.

That, however, is how the world is going, with good reason. In the United States nearly a half-million people die each year from smoking-related diseases. And an estimated 35,000 Americans die from exposure to second-hand smoke. The annual second-hand toll in North Carolina has been estimated at between 1,220 and 2,180 deaths. The good news is that fewer people — and considerably fewer young people — are smoking these days. In part, that's due to tougher restrictions on smoking in public places.