THE DAILY CLIPS

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Holland refunds $25,000 to ECU

The amount is about the same as the wages and aid paid to his brother.

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University Athletics Director Terry Holland reimbursed the university Wednesday for wages and aid paid to a relative.

In a news release issued just before 5 p.m., the university announced the $25,000 payment and acknowledged Holland arranged a part-time job and financial assistance for the relative, who is a student at ECU.

There is no doubt that this incident has created a great deal of embarrassment for ECU and for many good individuals who care about the university and who also care about me," Holland wrote in a letter to ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard that accompanied his reimbursement check, according to the release.

Holland originally committed to pay $25,000 to the Athletics Department's Circle of Excellence fundraising campaign in September, after university auditors investigated the employment arrangement, according to the news release. He decided Wednesday to give the money directly to the university.

Multiple media outlets have reported Holland's 51-year-old brother, Jonathan Gregg Holland, was the student employee who received $8,500 for his labor and another $16,639 to pay for school.

Holland, a business major, has acknowledged he worked for the Athletics Department, but the university has declined to confirm he was the student cited in an auditor's report on the arrangement.

Terry Holland offered his first public statements on the matter in the Wednesday news release.

"It is not my desire to defend my decision but I do believe our Pirate faithful has always depended on me to be open and frank with them in good times and bad times, even though there are many who disagree with me on specific issues," he wrote to Ballard.

"It has been extremely frustrating to be in a position that does not allow that open dialogue."

Controversy over the hiring rose after the university issued a news release and audit report Saturday. In a Nov. 1 letter to ECU administrators, a university auditor detailed funds the student received between fall 2006 and Sept. 30, 2007, when Holland cut off the aid and the student stopped working for the university.

The money came from the Athletics Departments facilities budget.

It was an "inappropriate" use of funds but broke no ECU policies, university auditor Stacie Tronto wrote in the Nov. 1 letter. University officials maintain that there was no effort to cover up the job or the student assistance.

There are no written policies for distributing athletics financial aid to students, according to the audit. Guidelines currently under design will be "consistent with national best practices," Ballard said.

The incident hasn't shaken support for Holland as athletics director, Ballard and ECU Board of Trustees Chairman Bob Greczyn Jr. said in the Wednesday news release. Holland "has been forthright and has over-ruled with suggestions to rectify the perception created by his decision," Ballard said.

"From the beginning, he has encouraged us to provide more information to the media and the public than we can legally provide," Ballard added. "Further, he has my complete confidence as among the very best athletic directors in the nation."

"East Carolina is fortunate to have him."

Holland, who came to ECU in 2004 after tenures at the University of Virginia and Davidson College, has the trustees' unequivocal support, Greczyn said.

"The ECU Board takes this issue seriously," he said. "By taking responsibility for this situation and returning the funds, Terry Holland has completely addressed the situation to our satisfaction."

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.
Public Forum

AD's use of tax dollars offensive

Once again, we find our tax and tuition dollars squandered by Athletics Director Terry Holland. On top of the hundreds of thousands of dollars we are paying to various fired coaches, we now find we are funding the tuition and fees of one of Holland's relatives ("Aid to Holland relative halted," Dec. 2).

The university news release quoting "inappropriate use of university funds" is an understatement. This is nepotism, pure and simple, and has no place in a state-tax-supported institute of higher education. If Holland held a similar position in private-sector business, he would have been released of his duties long ago.

As both a taxpayer and tuition provider for a student at ECU, I am angered by this as we struggle to keep up with the escalating tuition and fees. Some of these increases undoubtedly are the result of Holland's bad decisions. As taxpayers, we should all be offended by this use of our tax dollars. When the individuals in the Financial Aid office were caught doing something similar, they were fired and prosecuted.

Unfortunately, this will probably be brushed under the table as the university continues to support Holland's sports fiefdom.

Now, it seems we'll be paying for an expensive junket to Hawaii to attend another "No Name" bowl. Enjoy the trip, Mr. Holland. I can only hope that it is your last.

S.E. SCHWING
Greenville
ECU event puts focus on student insurance

- A hard waiver policy would require all students to provide proof of health insurance before enrolling at ECU.

The Daily Reflector

Students will have a chance to weigh in on a new health insurance proposal tonight at East Carolina University. Campus officials will hold a forum at 5 p.m. in Hendrix Theatre to discuss a proposed hard-waiver insurance requirement. Chancellor Steve Ballard and interim Provost Marilyn Sheerer will answer students questions about the proposal, according to ECU officials.

The hard-waiver policy would require all students to provide proof of health insurance before enrolling at ECU. Those without insurance would have to buy a policy through the university, at a cost of $700 per year.

Campus proponents of the plan say it would expand health insurance coverage and lower costs for hard-to-insure students. Administrators have expressed reservations about the burden a hard waiver policy would place on underprivileged students.

The university will hold at least three forums on the proposal during the next month, Ballard told the ECU Board of Trustees on Friday. He said he expects to decide on the waiver requirement by mid-January, adding that further delay would make it impossible to start the program in fall 2008.
HOLLAND REPAYS $25,000 TO ECU

Reversing course, Terry Holland, the athletics director for the Pirates, writes out a check worth one month's salary to pay back his brother's financial aid. He says the incident caused "a good deal of embarrassment."

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well known at ECU, that he worked in a facilities job setting up and taking care of venues and that he thought the chancellor was aware of the arrangement.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard said in an interview Wednesday that he first became aware of the arrangement in July or August of 2007, after ECU auditor Stacie Tronto told him she was investigating.

It turns out, he said, that Holland had sent him an e-mail message a year earlier “informing people of Gregg’s employment.”

But the chancellor said he did not read it.

“It may have come to my computer but I never read it,” Ballard said. “It came to an account that I don’t look at as much as I look at my direct account. I think Terry was trying to inform me of it at that time but I can say unequivocally that I did not read that e-mail.”

Ballard also said that Holland received disciplinary actions “commensurate with what happened.” He said the actions, which he declined to describe, was taken in early October after the chancellor received a draft audit report.

“I’ve been told that I cannot say what they are,” he said. “I think it’s protected in the personnel file.”

Ballard and Bob Greczyn, chairman of the ECU Board of Trustees, said Holland had satisfactorily addressed the issue.

On Wednesday, both pledged support for Holland, a well-known sports figure in the region who is a member of the N.C. Sports Hall of Fame.

“By recognizing that this issue was a serious one and by taking responsibility for that and returning the funds, I think he’s done the right thing,” Greczyn said. “He has my absolute support as our athletic director.”

In a separate statement issued Wednesday, Ballard said Holland had “over-complied with suggestions to rectify the perception created by his decision.”

“From the beginning he has encouraged us to provide more information to the media and the public than we can legally provide,” Ballard’s statement said. “Further he has my complete confidence as among the very best athletic directors in the nation.”

Greczyn and Ballard both said new policies would be implemented to avoid a similar situation.

Holland said in a letter to Ballard, which was released by the university, that he did not intend to defend his decision but felt that ECU supporters had depended on him to be open and frank “in good times and bad times, even though there are many who disagree with me on specific issues.”

Holland said that after he met with auditors in September he ended the employment agreement and decided to increase a donation to the athletics department “Circle of Excellence program” from $50,000 to $75,000 to ensure the department was not disadvantaged by his actions.

On Wednesday, that changed.

“I am enclosing a check for $25,000 to ECU — instead of the Circle of Excellence — to fulfill that commitment,” his letter to the chancellor said.

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A degree's value

I find it interesting that an accountant attempts to justify the insane raise proposed for the football coach at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ("Reality 101," letter, Nov. 27).

College athletics hardly represent "economic reality" as the writer asserts. Athletics departments are largely independent of the university, their "star" employees don't get paid (and can be "fired" on a whim with little or no repercussion), they often run huge deficits and they are overseen by an organization (NCAA) that has demonstrated little interest in the academic mission of the university.

Allocating huge sums of money toward athletics to "enhance the reputation of the university" is an oft-repeated justification for the out-of-control spending seen in large college programs. Ivy League schools said "no" to big-time college athletics a long time ago, and it certainly has not hurt their reputations; indeed, some might say it has enhanced it.

The writer would do well to remember that the value of his Carolina degree is due primarily to the hard work and dedication of an underpaid faculty, not an overpaid athletic staff.

Sean McKnight
Durham