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East Carolina University has transformed two dining halls into study halls so students have more space to prepare for final exams.

ECU Campus Dining has opened Todd Dining Hall and West End Dining Hall from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. through Dec. 14.

Bill McCartney, associate vice chancellor of ECU Campus Living and Dining, said the idea was generated from discussions with residence hall students and residence advisors.

“The students told us at the end of the semester there was simply not enough study space in their halls or on campus as finals approach,” he said. He said students also expressed concern about late-night excursions across campus to the library.

In the fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters, nearly 3,000 students took advantage of the dining halls to study. Numbers are shooting up, with 24 students using Todd the first night last fall. This year, the first night in Todd saw 91 students hitting the books.
“We are very happy to be able to offer this to our students,” ECU food services director Joyce Sealey said. “In addition to providing top-quality food service, we feel it’s important to serve our students’ academic needs and interests whenever we can.”

Campus Dining will provide light refreshments for students. Campus Living staff will supervise to ensure that an appropriate study hall environment is maintained.

The wireless signal in both facilities has been strengthened to help students with online access.

*Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.*
A man accused of streaking through halftime ceremonies at an ECU football game last month appeared in court Monday — fully clothed.

John D. Sieglinger, 21, of Raleigh was granted a continuance during the hearing in Pitt County District Court so that he could retain a lawyer. He said he regretted his actions.

“I just did it for a goof. I heard this is ‘Party City,’ and I was kinda drunk,” Sieglinger said outside the courtroom.

Sieglinger was charged with indecent exposure and first-degree misdemeanor trespass after he ran naked onto the field during Nov. 12 ceremonies honoring the service of military men and women.
ECU banned Sieglinger from university property and future events and issued a lifetime trespass warning against him. He said he is self-employed, doing yard work.

His new court date is set for Jan. 27.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or 252-329-9571.
In the 1970s, a Duke University admissions officer gave the go-ahead to invite Bruce Karsh to join the class of 1977.

Now, some three decades later, that decision will make it possible for hundreds of students from across the country and around the world to follow Karsh's path to Durham.

Karsh, a 1977 Duke alumnus, trustee and head of a global investment firm, and his wife, Martha, a lawyer and founder of an architecture and design firm in Los Angeles, have agreed to give Duke a $50 million gift for an endowment to support financial aid. Not only is their gift the largest single donation by individuals for financial aid in the school's history, it comes on top of two other large gifts from the Karshes -- $20 million in 2008 and $12 million in 2005.

Such investments in future students is how Duke and similar universities sustain themselves, said Michael Schoenfeld, vice president for public affairs and government relations at Duke. "The generosity of people 50, 60 - many years ago, they invested in people they had no idea would be as successful as they are today. In turn, those people invest in people," he said.

Bruce Karsh, who came to Duke from St. Louis, is co-founder and president of Oaktree Capital Management in Los Angeles. In addition to being a trustee at his alma mater, he serves as the chairman of the board of directors for the school's investment management company.

Karsh's net worth, according to Forbes, was $1.6 billion as of September.

At Duke, Karsh was an honors student who received a degree in economics. He went on to the University of Virginia and got a law degree there. He served as appellate clerk to U.S. Supreme Court justice Anthony M. Kennedy.

Karsh said in a statement released by Duke that he and his wife Martha believe financial aid is an investment in people that can be a "genuine game changer."

"It makes a crucial difference to the individual recipients and enhances the intellectual and cultural diversity of the university community," Karsh said.
in the statement. "Moreover, it helps develop the pool of talent needed to 
grapple with an increasingly complex and global world."

The Karsh gift comes in a sluggish economy, when fund-raisers are only 
beginning to see an uptick in major donations to universities and other 
educational institutions.

"Obviously, these kinds of gifts are significant, if not transformative," 
Schoenfeld said Monday.

At Duke, where more than half of the undergraduates receive some form of 
financial assistance from the university, the Karsh gift includes $30 million 
for U.S. students and $20 million for international students. Duke officials 
highlight the assistance for foreign students who are ineligible for some of 
the federal assistance and grants that American students can tap. The cost of 
attending Duke in tuition and fees alone is just over $40,000 per academic 
year.

"This gift helps safeguard our commitment to keeping a Duke education 
accessible to students from a wide range of backgrounds, even as the 
economy continues to recover," Duke President Richard H. Brodhead said in 
a prepared statement. "It also opens our door further to the best and brightest 
students from around the world, creating a richer learning environment for 
all Duke students."

Alison Rabil, Duke's assistant vice provost and director of financial aid, 
described the gift as one that would make an enduring difference for 
students and their families and benefit generations.

"Donor-funded scholarship endowments play a key role in helping Duke 
meet the rising cost of financial aid," Rabil said.

"We've seen a marked increase in student need in recent years."

The Karshes' contribution comes six years after the Duke Endowment gave a 
$75 million gift for financial aid, the second largest gift in Duke history.

The largest was an $80 million gift from the Duke Endowment to renovate 
three historic buildings on campus.

In 2004, Peter M. Nicholas, who made a fortune selling medical devices, and 
his wife Ginny agreed to donate $72 million to support study of the 
environment. The gift was described at the time as the largest ever received 
by the university.

Blythe: 919-836-4948
University of Kansas adopting software program to flag struggling first-year students

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The University of Kansas is adding a new system for identifying struggling first-year students and finding them help.

The Lawrence Journal-World reports (http://bit.ly/uXfvNL) that the school is finalizing a contract with Arlington, Va.-based software provider Starfish Retention Solutions to flag students. Professors will get to decide what triggers students being flagged. Possibilities include missing class, failing to turn in assignments or flunking tests.

Students who are flagged will receive a phone call from the university's student advising office. From there, an adviser will seek to determine any issues students are having. Students also will be directed to on-campus programs that provide such services as tutoring or writing help.

The program is part of an effort to boost retention and graduation rates.

School spokeswoman Jill Jess said she doesn't know when contract negotiations will be finalized and won't know how much the program will cost until that process has been completed.

The university ran a pilot program using its own internal software earlier in the semester. The course was a very large one, and the university wound up with more students than it had the capacity to work with.

Chris Haufler, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology who is leading an effort to raise the university's retention and graduation rates, said the instructor was a psychologist and suggested that the school run a sort of nonscientific trial and intervene with half of the flagged students and not with the other half. He said students who were told that their instructor had flagged them as struggling in the course wound up faring better.

"In most of the cases, they either didn't realize that was the case or they said, 'Yeah, I know, I've been sleeping in too long,'" Haufler said.

Similar efforts to identify struggling students are under way at other universities.
East Carolina University has been using the software for about a year to flag students who are excelling and those who are struggling, said Jayne Geissler, ECU's executive director for retention programs and undergraduate education. Geissler said a few faculty members were resistant and said students should know they're struggling if they get a test back with an F on it. "Have you ever raised a teenager?" Geissler said she felt like asking them. "The first time you tell them something, do they say 'OK,' and do it?"
Blue Cross teams with UNC Health

STAFF WRITER DAVID RANII

An innovative joint venture between Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina and UNC Health Care opens Wednesday in Chapel Hill.

The opening of Carolina Advanced Health, which will provide care for 5,000 Blue Cross members with chronic conditions, will be marked with a ribbon-cutting ceremony presided over by the CEOs of the two organizations: Brad Wilson of Blue Cross and William Roper of UNC Health. Blue Cross is the state's largest health insurer.

The executives will discuss how they expect this type of medical practice to hold down costs and improve care.

The new practice, spurred by the federal health care overhaul, was announced in January. Carolina Advanced is designed to enable teams of health care professionals to collaborate on care for patients with chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, asthma and major depression.

The director of the new practice is Dr. Thomas K. Warcup, a former associate clinical professor at the Brown University School of Medicine.

The two organizations previously said they would split the costs of the practice, which is located at the Quadrangle office park in Chapel Hill.
WASHINGTON A surge in young nurses may ease forecasts of coming shortages as their baby-boomer coworkers retire.

The past decade brought a 62 percent increase in the number of younger registered nurses entering the workforce, researchers reported Monday in the journal Health Affairs.

A young influx is noteworthy because at least 900,000 of the nation's roughly 3 million nurses are older than 50, meaning they're nearing retirement. At the same time, the population is aging and getting more chronic diseases, bringing an increased demand for care even before the new health care law that promises to help 32 million more Americans gain insurance within a few years.

The numbers of 20-something nurses had dropped steadily through the 1980s and 1990s, hitting a low in 2002. But by 2009, there were 165,000 full-time equivalent nurses ages 23 to 26, reported lead researcher David Auerbach, a health economist at RAND Health.

There's been a national push for more nurses in recent years, with accelerated degrees and other programs aimed to attract both young nurses and second-career ones in their 30s, said study coauthor Peter Buerhaus, a nursing professor at Vanderbilt University. The latter group is on the rise, too, not unexpected in tough economic times.

But it's not clear if the growth in new nurses will continue enough to meet the coming demand.

"Keep it up and maybe we'll get out of the woods," Buerhaus said.

Another issue is whether there are enough nurses trained in geriatric care, especially for outpatients, areas that a recent Institute of Medicine report deemed key.

Adding to the shortage question is how to assure nurses are distributed adequately around the country. New York University nursing professor Christine Kovner led a survey of newly licensed RNs in 15 states, and found just over half work within 40 miles of where they attended high school.
Census data shows it's one of the least mobile professions, Kovner wrote in Health Affairs. It's not clear why, but one reason is an increase in second-career nurses who already have family obligations by the time they switch jobs, she said. To compensate, policy makers should expand nurse-training programs in rural and other underserved areas, she concluded.
December 5, 2011

College Leaders Meet With Obama to Discuss Costs and Productivity

By TAMAR LEWIN

In a private meeting on Monday, President Obama and his secretary of education, Arne Duncan, conferred with a dozen college presidents, mostly from public institutions, and leaders of two nonprofit education organizations, about how to curb the rising cost of college and improve graduation rates.

“It was an unusually interesting meeting, and not your usual list of college presidents,” said Jane Wellman, founder and director of the nonprofit Delta Project, which studies college costs. “These were all people who had led institutions that had done something about reducing spending or improving student learning.

“There was good discussion on how we drive down tuition, and what the right role is for the federal government,” she said.

The Obama administration’s first salvo at college costs came last Tuesday, in a speech by Mr. Duncan in Las Vegas, in which the secretary prodded college officials to tackle the issue with greater creativity and urgency. In recent months, the cost of higher education has become a central issue of the Occupy movement, and one that arouses bipartisan concern.

Also last week, Representative Virginia Foxx, a Republican from North Carolina who is chairwoman of a higher education subcommittee, held her own hearings on college costs.

At Monday’s meeting, Mr. Obama spent about an hour with the educators, and Mr. Duncan remained after he left.

Jamie P. Merisotis, president of the Lumina Foundation, which works to increase the number of college graduates, said there seemed to be some consensus at the White House meeting that the federal government should develop policies on financial aid, its biggest tool, to spur a higher graduation rates, whether by limiting the number of semesters for which students could receive aid, requiring them to attend full-time, or doling out aid bit by bit to discourage students from dropping out mid-semester, or other approaches.
“We discussed three core issues,” Mr. Merisotis said. “One was responsibility for costs, and what the federal government can do to support innovation with incentive money, or something like Race to the Top. We talked a lot about increasing accountability in student aid. And third, there was conversation about what degrees mean.” Mr. Merisotis and Ms. Wellman both testified at Representative Foxx’s hearing.

Several of the participants said they discussed the importance of linking colleges with K-12 education, and a recognition that attempts to control costs would require a fundamental rethinking of the traditional model of higher education, making greater, and different, use of technology.

“If we’re going to address the 37 million adults with some college and no degree, we can’t just tweak the existing model,” said Robert W. Mendenhall of Western Governors University, an online nonprofit university. “Mostly in higher education, technology is an add-on cost that doesn’t change the model at all. We need to fundamentally change the faculty role, and use technology to do the teaching.”

Larry D. Shinn, the president of Berea College, did not disagree. “We’re structured in a 19th-century model, but I think we all know now that blended learning, combining technology and classroom learning, can let us educate for less cost,” he said. “The question is how we get there from here.”

Participants said that everyone understood that additional financing for education would be scarce in the coming years, making it crucial to improve affordability and graduation rates through innovation, including online learning.

“The key message was a challenge to us to question all our strongly held assumptions, including getting our faculty to think differently about teaching,” said Jared L. Cohon, the president of Carnegie Mellon University, which has developed online classes that provide instructors real-time information about each student’s progress. “I personally get very uncomfortable when people start talking about replacing faculty with technology,” he said, “But I do think technology can help us educate more students faster and better.”

The Carnegie Mellon courses are now being used at many universities, including in pilot programs at the three large statewide university systems — Maryland, New York and Texas — whose presidents all attended the meeting.
Cuddly puppies help law students de-stress before exams

By Jenna Johnson

The stress of looming exams at George Mason University School of Law lifted for a couple of hours Thursday, thanks to the arrival of 15 homeless and adoptable puppies with velvety ears, soul-searching eyes and names like Doughboy, Sugar and Sue.

“Especially this time of the year, law school seems to ruin your life,” said Allison Tisdale, 24, a third-year from Texas who didn’t go home for Thanksgiving because she had to study. Holding a squirming puppy, she said, “you get to be human again.”

After the Yale Law Library added a “therapy dog” named Monty to its collection in the spring, a number of other law schools have used the gentle yapping of puppies to break the stifling pressure that blankets their
campuses. Thursday was the second time Mason’s law school, in Arlington County, partnered with a Chantilly-based rescue group for “Puppy Day.”

Law school is designed to be stressful and competitive — professors are preparing students to work long hours for demanding bosses at large firms. The economic doldrums and scarcity of jobs after graduation have only added to the pressure.

Studies have found that the legal profession has higher-than-average rates of depression and problems with substance abuse. Many law schools now teach students how to balance the stress of late-night legal research, tort outlines and case summaries with healthy habits: running marathons, volunteering or hanging out with a pet.

“If people don’t learn how to balance their lives in law school, and then, if they go to a big firm, chances are they won’t balance their lives there, either,” said James E. Leffler, executive director of Lawyers Helping Lawyers, a Virginia nonprofit organization that offers assistance with substance abuse and mental-health issues. “They need to learn to take care of themselves and to also look out for their colleagues.”

At the University of Maryland School of Law, members of each incoming class meet in small groups with Dawna Cobb, the assistant dean for student affairs, who practiced law for 22 years while raising a family.

Some of Cobb’s messages: It’s okay to cry, but not for hours each day. Sleep is important. Eat healthy. Monitor your drinking. Find an outlet for stress, such as exercise, singing or knitting. And her door is open if you need to talk.

“There is a lot of pressure. Law school is challenging,” Cobb said she tells her students.

Many law schools offer in-house counseling centers and stress-management seminars. Finals season brings a flurry of activities to ease pressure: Georgetown University Law Center will serve up a carb-heavy “Night Owl Breakfast” next week. At the College of William and Mary Law School, a student group is organizing yoga classes, massages and meditation sessions.

Over the past three years, the Washington and Lee University School of Law transformed its third-year curriculum from a traditional hit-the-books regimen to hands-on experiences similar to practicing in the real world. In addition to making students more marketable, school officials hope it teaches them how to structure their lives after graduation.
“Law school is becoming more like life,” said Washington and Lee law professor James E. Moliterno. “I’m not a psychologist, but my take on life is that if you have experience with the things that can stress you out, the better prepared you are to handle those things.”

For high-strung law students, dogs and other animals can also provide a soothing presence. That’s a lesson researchers have learned from others in stressful environments, including soldiers in war zones and patients in rehabilitation centers.

At George Mason’s law school, which has more than 700 students, dozens took a break Thursday from their immersion in contracts, torts, criminal law and the like and gathered for more than two hours in the school’s atrium to play with the puppies. The animals had been saved recently from euthanasia in West Virginia shelters by A Forever-Home Rescue Foundation. The four litters of puppies are living with four foster moms until they are adopted. They are a mix of breeds, but many of them look like beagles or Labrador retrievers.

“There’s nothing like a puppy to make someone smile,” said Debbie Marson, a volunteer with the foundation. “It’s great for the students, and it’s great socialization for the dogs.”

When the puppies arrived, many seemed nervous around the mob of strangers. But as the students stroked their silky coats, they chilled out. Several fell asleep in the arms of future lawyers.

“I think they are sensing our stress,” said Tashina Harris, 23, a second-year student from Manassas who cuddled Summer, a white puppy with brown spots. “They’re reminding us we need to take breaks.”

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