County law enforcement officials backed the Greenville police chief’s idea to form a task force to tackle youth crime and gang activities countywide.

Citing the disproportionate involvement of young black males in violent crime, Chief William Anderson requested participation from each of the county’s municipal agencies, the sheriff’s office, East Carolina University, the hospital and community college.

Deputy Chief Joe Bartlett met Wednesday with representatives from all the agencies to begin planning the task force’s strategies, focusing on identifying locations where gang activities are most prevalent.

In interviews with The Daily Reflector, the municipal chiefs acknowledged their communities either wrestle with youth crime and gang activity or see it approaching.

Bethel Police Chief Barry Stanley, an Ayden native, has a unique view, being familiar with crimes in both towns. After years as the Bethel chief, Stanley is returning to his hometown and the Ayden Police Department.

“(The task force) is really needed,” he said. “These issues affect all the municipalities and unincorporated areas of Pitt County. If we do it right, it will have a huge impact on these problems.”

With Greenville shouldering the largest portion of the technological burden, towns like Ayden and Bethel can make the most of the manpower and resources they have and benefit from applying Greenville’s tools, Stanley said.

Each agency sitting at the table has at least one or two officers with a finger on the pulse of their town’s youth crimes issues. Anderson’s plan is for those
officers to meet weekly, share intelligence and develop strategies for dealing with gang members and their associates wherever they are located, he said.

“Gangs are prevalent in Ayden and Bethel,” Stanley said. “We deal with the issue on a daily basis, with both towns reporting shots fired in the past few weeks. All of our county’s municipalities are dealing with this.”

Farmville’s chief, Donnie Greene, was enthusiastic in his support for the task force and its mission.

“It’s got to be a benefit to us all,” Greene said. “Our problems are Greenville’s problems and vice-versa. We had people here affiliated with gangs who were going to Greenville and committing armed robberies. Greenville got them, and now they’re in prison.”

For Grifton Police Chief Warren Morrisette, one of the more important benefits to his department is the opportunity to tie information about gang activity in his community with other municipalities. Although his town is on the fringe of county gang crime activity, it doesn’t escape Morrisette that Grifton is situated between Kinston and Greenville.

“This task force will help us push aside any activity that might want to take hold here,” he said.

Sheriff Neil Elks characterized Wednesday’s meeting as a “very, very preliminary information and opinion gathering session.”

Elks said his office no longer operates a separate gang unit, as it did under Sheriff Mac Manning. He addresses potential gang issues, instead, through drug enforcement detectives and school resource officers, he said.

“The unincorporated portions of the county don’t face the gang issues that the towns and cities do, but people who live outside of towns go to those places for work, shopping, church and entertainment,” Elks said. “I think people are positive about us participating in this so they’ll be safe wherever they go.”

He said he still is deciding whether his office will participate, saying he has concerns about legal issues attached to cross-jurisdictional work, including responsibility if an operation goes wrong.
“Some of the things they mentioned are, I think, very workable,” Elks said. “I think it’s a good idea for us to help our smaller fellow agencies out and network with them.”

The chiefs said Anderson was on target when he told a gathering Tuesday at the Pitt County NAACP’s monthly meeting that police cannot fight crime alone.

“Yes, we’re tasked with public safety, but it cannot be solely a police department’s responsibility,” Stanley said. “Faith-based and other community organizations need to step up to the plate and the people in affected areas must say they are tired of this and partner with law enforcement. We’re ready to hit the ground running. We want this to start yesterday.”

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Driver sentenced in crash
By SHANNON KEITH
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, December 8, 2011

An ECU student was sentenced Wednesday in a 2010 car crash that killed two of her sorority sisters on Greenville Boulevard.

Kamil Shaunay Arrington, 21, of Nashville must serve one year of supervised probation and perform 100 hours of community service for the Nov. 20, 2010, crash.

Authorities said she fell asleep at the wheel on the way to an early morning hair appointment. Briana Latrice Gather, 20, of Winston-Salem and Victoria T’nya-Ann Carter, 20, of Raleigh were killed. Taylor Nicole King, 20, of Chapel Hill survived.

The four were to be inducted into Delta Sigma Theta at East Carolina University later that day.

Arrington was charged with two counts, but both victims were put on a single charge, Pitt County Assistant District Attorney Tonya Montanye said. District Court Judge David Leech also ordered Arrington to surrender her driver’s license for one year and abide by a curfew set by her probation officer.

“The court also recommended that she be evaluated by an agency for situational depression if instructed by her probation officer,” Montanye said.

The 2008 Toyota crashed about 6:30 a.m. in a residential area at Greenville Boulevard and Rosewood Drive. A witness told police the car was traveling west when it ran off the right side of the road, struck a utility pole guy-wire, became airborne and struck a tree.

Alcohol was not a factor.
“She was never suspected of being under the influence,” Montanye said. “It was a failure to maintain lane control.”

Carter died at the scene, and Gather died at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

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Forum discusses 10th Street Connector
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, December 8, 2011

A welding shop owner along the planned route for the 10th Street Connector asked Greenville city officials on Wednesday to do more to assist 24 businesses being displaced by the project.

Janette Cox, co-owner of Hardee & Cox Welding, and others attending a citizens advisory update on the highway project said the city is helping homeowners relocate, so it should do more to help businesses.

“I’ve been told I am not an essential business for the community,” Cox said.

However, that location has afforded her company a lot of walk-in business, and it has generated tax dollars for the city, she said.

Cox said it’s unlikely she can relocate within the city limits because her business is classified as an industry. It’s also unlikely the money the state will pay for the land and structure will cover the price of land in any nearby industrial park.

Public Works Director Wes Anderson said the Greenville City Council directed staff to search for outside agencies to assist businesses, and several programs have been recommended.
The programs recommended to her only assist expanding businesses, not ones that are relocating, Cox said.

The 10th Street Connector is a proposed 1.4-mile, four-lane road that will extend from Evans Street to Memorial Drive, connecting East Carolina University to Pitt County Memorial Hospital and the medical school.

It will travel down Farmville Boulevard before crossing a residential neighborhood and rising into a bridge over the railroad tracks across Dickinson Avenue.

“Businesses pay property taxes the same as residents, and it only seems reasonable and fair to come up with something for these businesses,” Clark Stallings, executive director of Hope of Glory Ministries, said.

The ministry’s Ninth Street building also is in the proposed highway’s path.

The state transportation department has acquired many businesses through the years for various road projects, City Manager Wayne Bowers said, and the city has never assisted those businesses with relocation.

Stallings said he doesn’t understand how the city can discuss building a business incubator in the west Greenville neighborhood to generate commerce in the area but offer no solutions to help those being forced out.

Stallings said if the city isn’t going to help businesses, it should say so and stop talking about outside assistance.

“I think the worst thing is to keep people in a holding pattern,” he said.

Councilwoman Rose Glover said business owners should consider coming before the City Council one more time to ask for help.

About 65 percent of the project has been designed and turned over to the state Department of Transportation for review, said Jeff Moore, the highway’s project manager with Kimley-Horn, which is designing the highway.

Moore presented a map that offered more details on the highway’s path and which 65 homes, businesses and institutions would be affected.
The state will review the submitted design in the next several months, he said.

While that is taking place, engineers are expected to take soil samples from the area starting next week, Anderson said.

The sampling will require pavement to be removed so portions of Farmville Boulevard will be blocked.

Additional details about when the work will occur should be released next week.

Anderson also updated the group on the project’s timeline.

Right-of-way acquisition is expected to begin in June and should take two years, he said. Construction should begin in mid-2014 and take about two years.

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UNCC to pitch tuition and fees plan today
By April Bethea

UNC Charlotte officials are expected to roll out a proposed tuition and fee plan for 2012-13 at a trustees meeting later this morning.

Tuition and fees could rise by 15.6 percent over the next five years, according to WCNC-TV, the Observer's news partner. That could mean an increase up $2,800 over five years for in-state undergraduates, the television station reported.

The trustees meeting is set to begin at 9:45 a.m. today in Tate Hall at the Harris Alumni Center on the university's campus.

The proposal from Charlotte comes as universities across the UNC system are debating how much to charge students in the coming year.

In recent years, the system has instituted a 6.5 percent cap on tuition and fee increases at the public universities.

But in a memo to campus leaders in October, the UNC system issued guidelines for next year's tuition requests, reiterating the 6.5 percent cap. But the guidelines also said campuses could consider one-time adjustments to "catch up" to tuition levels at public peer universities across the nation.

UNC Charlotte vice chancellor of business affairs Beth Hardin told the Observer last month that university leaders were trying to balance keeping the school accessible for students, while also ensuring that it'll have adequate funding. She noted the school sustained nearly $34 million in permanent cuts, more than 16 percent of its budget, this year along with other one-time reductions.

"We're certainly looking at the option," of a higher increase, Hardin told the Observer last month. "But the other side of that is as you increase tuition, you certainly make it more difficult for students, especially those with unmet financial need, to be able to go to school."
BUIES CREEK—Campbell University will break ground this morning on a building to house the first new medical school in North Carolina in 35 years.

The Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine is scheduled to enroll its first students in 2013 and plans to eventually graduate 150 osteopathic physicians a year.

Like traditional MDs, doctors of osteopathic medicine complete four years of basic medical school, plus three to six years of internships and residencies. They must pass comparable exams to obtain state licenses and are regulated by the N.C. Medical Board.

But osteopathic physicians emphasize preventive health care and receive extra training in the body's interconnected system of nerves, muscles and bones, which they focus on as the center of the body's healing powers.

DOs, as they're called, are also more inclined to practice primary medicine, rather than pursue specialties. Campbell will cultivate that tendency with an aim at creating general practitioners for rural areas that have had difficulty attracting doctors.

Campbell, a private university affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, has had a pharmacy school since 1985 and also trains physician assistants.

It has more than 4,500 students on its main campus in Harnett County, and about 475 at its law school in Raleigh.

The new medical school building will have 96,500 square feet on U.S. 421 about a quarter mile from the main campus.

The facility will cost more than $60 million to build and equip.
DURHAM—For the second time this week, Duke University has announced a multi-million dollar gift from a university trustee.

Duke announced Wednesday that retired health care executive Jack O. Bovender Jr. and his wife, Barbara, have established a bequest of $25 million to support the Fuqua School of Business, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Nursing.

Fuqua's Health Sector Management Program and Trinity College each will receive $10 million from the Bovenders' estate, and the School of Nursing will receive $5 million.

The announcement comes two days after Duke said that trustee Bruce Karsh and his wife, Martha, had agreed to give $50 million for an endowment to support financial aid. The Karsh gift is the largest single donation by individuals for financial aid in the school's history and follows two previous Duke gifts from the couple totaling $32 million.

Bruce Karsh graduated from Duke in 1977 with a degree in economics and is co-founder and president of Oaktree Capital Management, a global investment firm, in Los Angeles.

Jack Bovender is a native of Winston-Salem who attended high school in nearby King.

At Duke, he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1967 and a master's degree in hospital administration in 1969, then began a career in hospital administration as a U.S. Navy lieutenant stationed at the Naval Regional Medical Center in Portsmouth, Va. He retired in 2009 as chairman and chief executive officer of Hospital Corporation of America, which owns and operates 164 hospitals and 106 surgery centers in the United States and Great Britain.

Bovender, who lives in Nashville, Tenn., joined the Duke Board of Trustees in 2007 and is one of two vice chairs of the board.

"Duke has played an important role in my life, and I've stayed connected to the university since graduation," Bovender said in statement released by Duke.
"Supporting Duke through this bequest is a way to give back to the university that provided me with such a strong educational foundation. "Through this gift, Barbara and I want to help pave the way for future students to take advantage of all that Duke has to offer."
NCCU law school dean to step down

BY JANE STANCILL - jstancill@newsobserver.com

DURHAM—Raymond Pierce, dean of N.C. Central University's law school, will step down next year and return to private practice.

Pierce will leave NCCU next summer after seven years at the helm. In July, he will join Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough, a firm of 420 lawyers in 12 locations across six states and the District of Columbia. Pierce will stay in North Carolina, where he will specialize in business and government relations.

During Pierce's tenure, NCCU's law school tripled applications and boosted alumni donations. In 2008, Pierce led an effort that achieved for NCCU equalized state funding with UNC's law school, the other public law school in North Carolina. The law school also gained visibility with visits by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

"It's been a lot of fun," Pierce said Wednesday, but added that it's time for him to get back to practicing law.

A former deputy assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education under President Bill Clinton, Pierce will also work with Nelson Mullins' Washington office on education and federal policy.

Previously in private practice, Pierce represented clients in the steel, energy, banking and private-equity businesses.

"I'm a business lawyer," he said. "I grow businesses."

Stancill: 919-829-4559
2008 AP file photo / Larry Fedora will be the subject of a UNC Board of Trustees meeting today, a source said Wednesday.

**Fedora hiring could be near for UNC**

BY ANDREW CARTER AND RON GREEN JR. - acarter@newsobserver.com, rgreenjr@charlotteobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL–North Carolina plans to announce Larry Fedora as its new football coach after a deal to hire the Southern Mississippi coach was finalized Wednesday pending approval of the university's board of trustees and the university system's board of governors, two sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations confirmed.

The trustees are scheduled to meet at 9 a.m. today to formally discuss the hiring of Fedora, 49, who has coached Southern Mississippi for the past four years. In addition to the trustees meeting this morning at the Carolina Inn, the board of governors is scheduled to meet today at 3 p.m. at the Spangler Center. The majority of both meetings will be held behind closed doors, according to university releases.

A third university source close to the situation confirmed that the university's board of trustees was meeting today to discuss Fedora. The source spoke on condition of anonymity because the university has not authorized anyone to comment publicly about its football coaching search.

The board of trustees will meet again Friday at 9 a.m. and "is expected to take action in open session," according to a statement released by the university.
Fedora, who led Southern Mississippi to an 11-2 record and a berth in the Hawaii Bowl this season, had emerged as the leading candidate at North Carolina, though he was reportedly being pursued by other schools, including Texas A&M and Kansas.

Fedora emerged Tuesday as the leading candidate to become North Carolina's 35th head football coach. Media speculation persisted Wednesday that Fedora had agreed to a contract, but it won't become official until approval from the university's board of trustees and the UNC Board of Governors.

According to the UNC Board of Governors' online policy manual, the board must approve "all terms and conditions" of a head coach's contract before it becomes valid.

The board's policies mandate that all contracts include provisions that comply with the principles of "academic values" and "compliance with NCAA rules."

If approved, Fedora would succeed Everett Withers, the Tar Heels' former defensive coordinator who was named interim head coach after Butch Davis was fired before the start of preseason practice.

The university dismissed Davis amid an NCAA investigation into impermissible benefits and academic fraud within the football program.

**Fedora's track record**

Under Fedora, Southern Mississippi's graduation success rate ranked third in Conference USA during the 2010-11 academic year, and second during the 2009-10 academic year.

His teams succeeded on the field, too.

Fedora became the head coach at Southern Miss before the 2008 season, after serving as offensive coordinator at Oklahoma State and Florida. He coached the Golden Eagles to consecutive 7-6 finishes in 2008 and '09, and then an 8-5 finish in 2010.

Southern Miss won the Conference USA title last weekend with a victory against Houston, which was undefeated and ranked seventh in the country at the time. The No. 22 Golden Eagles (11-2) will play Nevada on Dec. 24 in the Hawaii Bowl.

Withers said he had no comment about the trustees meeting.
FAMU puts off hazing disciplines until after FDLE probe

By Denise-Marie Balona

The four Florida A&M University students targeted for dismissal after a fellow student died from an apparent hazing ritual might not face disciplinary action anytime soon.

Same goes for the band director, who the university planned to fire because of problems with hazing among music students.

FAMU has decided to put off all disciplinary actions and internal reviews pending the results of an investigation by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, university officials told the school's board of trustees Wednesday.

The FDLE recently asked FAMU to conduct business as usual while it looks into the death of 26-year-old drum major Robert Champion, who collapsed on a bus at the Rosen Plaza hotel in Orlando last month after the annual Florida Classic football game between FAMU and Bethune-Cookman University.

Authorities have said Champion died after an apparent hazing ritual aboard the parked band bus.

His death has sparked a national outcry over hazing and prompted FAMU to place longtime band director Julian White on administrative leave until later this month.

James Ammons, president of the historically black college in Tallahassee, had told the Orlando Sentinel that White was terminated. But officials said Wednesday that White was simply notified of FAMU's plan to fire him on Dec. 22.

Now, White will remain on administrative leave with pay until the completion of the FDLE investigation, said David Self, one of FAMU's attorneys.

At that time, FAMU will decide if it will take action against White.

Chuck Hobbs, White's attorney, called the suspended firing a "step in the right direction" and that he and White will keep exploring legal options to have him fully reinstated.
Discord Over Dean Rocks Columbia Engineering School

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

Columbia University is grappling with a rare faculty revolt against the dean of its engineering school, who has helped the school grow in size and stature since his 2009 hiring, but has also been accused of ignoring professors’ concerns and worsening a chronic space shortage.

Most of the engineering school’s nine department chairmen sent a letter of no confidence in the dean, Feniosky Peña-Mora, to university administrators at the start of the academic year, and most of its tenured professors sent a similar letter in October. The second letter said “the morale of the faculty and their trust in Dean Peña-Mora are reaching an all-time low,” and it called for “a quick change in leadership.”

The dean and Columbia’s interim provost this week described the conflicts as primarily the growing pains of a rising star new to the campus, and of a program that had expanded faster than its quarters. “It’s a problem that’s on its way to being solved,” said the provost, John H. Coatsworth, adding that Dr. Peña-Mora had done an excellent job of fund-raising and recruiting professors from other top schools.
But the strong dissent comes at an awkward time for Columbia and its president, Lee C. Bollinger, whose leadership has been challenged by the faculty on several fronts, notably the resignation in August of the dean of Columbia College, who complained that the university was undercutting the college’s independence, and her authority. That the new dispute concerns the School of Engineering and Applied Science is of particular concern as Columbia competes with other prestigious universities in Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s contest to build a new graduate school of applied sciences.

While Dr. Coatsworth said he and Mr. Bollinger stood firmly by Dr. Peña-Mora — “none of the complaints that we’ve received rise to the level that would justify replacing a dean” — he also called the faculty concerns “perfectly legitimate.” In late November, after a series of meetings with engineering professors, the university created the post of executive vice dean with oversight of faculty affairs, which provides a buffer between the dean and his rebellious staff.

In a telephone interview from China, where he is meeting with alumni and exploring possible partnerships for the university, Dr. Peña-Mora said that compared with M.I.T., where he began his teaching career, and the University of Illinois, where he was a professor and administrator, the culture of Columbia “takes some getting used to.” He declined to elaborate.

When Columbia hired him, Dr. Peña-Mora was hailed for his energy, charm and compelling personal story. He arrived from the Dominican Republic at age 21 speaking little English, yet managed to earn graduate degrees at M.I.T. and move up through teaching and administration before leading one of Columbia’s most prestigious and important schools at age 43. His academic specialty is computer-supported design, particularly in relation to disaster preparedness and response.

But dissatisfaction with his management followed quickly; in his first year, department chairmen sent him a letter of concern. Most of them stepped down since he took over, and some have said they did so because they did not want to deal with Dr. Peña-Mora.

Dr. Peña-Mora said he had not seen the text of the faculty letter until a reporter showed it to him. Several professors said it was endorsed by more than 80 percent of the tenured faculty members; Dr. Coatsworth said that he did not know the exact figure, but that it was a large number.

Perhaps the most damaging claim in the letter is that the dean “has repeatedly disavowed written as well as oral agreements made with individual departments.”
“It is true,” Dr. Coatsworth said, “that there are a number of cases in which Feniosky made a commitment and then found with further study that he couldn’t meet the commitment. Mostly they had to do with space.”

Professors say that in some cases, people have been recruited as graduate students and teaching assistants with promises of research space, only to have those promises broken.

Dr. Peña-Mora said, “There are different views of how people see conversations and how they take commitments.” But he acknowledged that when he first joined Columbia, he did not understand how meager the available space was — a longstanding problem that also affects other parts of the university.

He arrived at a time when Columbia was determined to raise the profile of its engineering school, which includes bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs. The school had fewer than 1,400 graduate students in 2005, about 2,000 when the new dean took over, and 2,400 now. The faculty has also grown, but not as fast.

That means larger classes, and a critical shortage of laboratory space. A new building at Broadway and 120th Street has helped, but cramped conditions are expected to continue for a few years, until buildings are completed on a sprawling new campus in West Harlem.

Professors say that an effort to reshuffle the available space ignored their input and made matters worse.

The faculty letter also contends that in making decisions about hiring and promotion, “candidates with impressive academic records and outstanding recommendations are discounted if their fields do not promise major funding for the school.”

That same tension exists, to varying degrees, at every major research university. But Dr. Peña-Mora said it had been heightened by his efforts, in recruitment and management, to break down traditional boundaries.

“Research is becoming more interdisciplinary, and I have a strong view that a school is not a collection of separated departments,” he said. “That can definitely be a significant source of tension.”

Among professors interviewed, nearly all of whom insisted on anonymity for fear of angering the administration, the most persistent criticism was that Dr. Peña-Mora simply did not listen.
“He’s a control freak, in my opinion,” said Van C. Mow, who said he stepped down as chairman of biomedical engineering because “I got tired of banging my head against the wall.”

When Dr. Peña-Mora was hired, it was the third time in quick succession that the university had filled a high-ranking post with the first minority member to hold that job. That fact drew considerable attention, especially in light of Mr. Bollinger’s national reputation as an advocate of ethnic diversity and affirmative action.

The first two of those appointees, both African-Americans, have left in the last six months: Claude M. Steele, who was provost, departed in June to become dean of Stanford University’s School of Education, and Michele M. Moody-Adams, the dean of Columbia College, quit her administrative post in frustration as school began but remains on the faculty. Some professors speculate that Mr. Bollinger is standing by Dr. Peña-Mora in part out of fear of criticism from minority communities.

Dr. Coatsworth said that such a theory was insulting to all involved, and that ethnicity had never entered into the university’s handling of the disputes at the engineering school. Dr. Peña-Mora declined to address the issue.
Tough entry into the job market: The national unemployment rate is 5.4% among those with a bachelor's degree and 4% for those with a master's degree.

**Column: Yes, a college education is worth the costs**

*By Rodney K. Smith*

Updated 21h 7m ago

I can imagine a frustrated graduate in an Occupy Wall Street protest carrying a placard reading, "Worthless degree. Will not repay my student loan debt." A recent Pew Research Center survey revealed that 57% of Americans rate the job that our higher education system is doing in providing value for money spent by students and their families as only fair (42%) or poor (15%); only 53% of families report that they are saving to help pay for their children's education. More than half of those ages 18 to 34 who do not have a bachelor's degree say they would rather work and make money than pursue higher education.

Concerns regarding student indebtedness and educational quality are legitimate, but we are losing our appreciation for education as an investment and stewardship. Many are more inclined to spend money on a fancy car or on a less-than-modest home than to invest in education. Many in the rising generation fail to see education as a stewardship worthy of investment on their part.
We face major unemployment in the United States today. We talk of jobs bills but fail to see the value of education in this calculation. Who populates the ranks of the unemployed? According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for 2010:

- 14.9% of those without a high school diploma
- 10.3% of those with a high school education
- 7% of those with an associate degree
- 5.4% of those with a bachelor's degree
- 2.4% of those with a professional degree
- 1.9% of those with a doctoral degree.

See a trend here?

We talk about stimulating the economy by increasing the tax base. Once again, educational attainment correlates with income, according to BLS. Here's the average weekly income for those who have jobs:

- $444 for those with less than a high school degree
- $626 for those with a high school degree
- $767 for those with an associate degree
- $1,038 for those with a bachelor's degree
- $1,550 for those with a doctoral degree

To worldly wealth, education adds richness. As president of a small liberal arts college with a strong core curriculum, I remember when one of our football players stopped by my office to complain about having to take music history. I urged him to give it his best effort. He was required to attend four concerts. I observed him at each one. At the first, he was disengaged. At the second, he was mildly attentive. At the third, he was enjoying the music. At the fourth, he approached me during intermission and
said, "Wasn't the dissonance in the third movement of that last piece wonderful?" Today, as an investment banker, his education provides him with a job and the love of music fills his home.

Graduates enjoy increased opportunities for employment at higher rates of pay, providing them with the wherewithal to pay off debt, if they are wise stewards of that debt. It also brings joy into lives in a world that is increasingly stressful.

Our family views education as an investment and stewardship. My father grew up in Oklahoma during the early years of the Great Depression. He was the only living child of a hardworking farmer and a devoted mother. When Dad completed eighth grade, my grandfather believed his only son would work on the farm. My grandmother, however, understood the door that an education could open even in tough economic times. She persuaded Grandfather to permit Dad to finish high school.

Dad worked hard and completed high school at the age of 16. At last, Grandpa was to have his wish. Dad would work on the farm, easing the economic and physical burdens Grandpa carried.

But Grandmother intervened again. She begged Grandpa to permit my father to go to college.

After reflection, Grandpa made the most difficult walk of his lifetime. He walked to the chicken coop, where he did his banking. Taking a shovel in his work-worn hands, Grandpa dug up a mason jar that held all the family's savings. He offered the jar and its precious contents to Dad, saying, "Here boy, go make something of yourself."

Realizing that his family was sacrificing all their savings by investing in his education, Dad became a steward of those funds. He received his bachelor's degree and then went on to the University of Oklahoma, where he graduated second in his law school class in 1936. Dad flipped hamburgers to ensure that the family savings would suffice for him to obtain his education. Jobs were hard to come by when Dad graduated, so he opened his own practice and lived in a home with a dirt floor. He worked long hours, but I remember him sharing the great books he discovered in the course of his education with me.
Our family was changed by the long walk Grandpa took to the chicken coop. Education is more than an investment in our family. It is a treasure. I followed my father to college and law school, and my children have sought higher education. We have been transformed by a sacrifice made two generations ago by a loving, if not fully convinced, grandfather and a persistent grandmother.

Rodney K. Smith is a law professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and formerly served as president of Southern Virginia University.