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If approved by the UNC Board of Governors, East Carolina students will see a 2.82-percent tuition increase and also pay $25 more in fees.

BY JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector

The ECU Board of Trustees approved 2.82-percent tuition increase for both in-state and out-of-state undergraduate students in a special meeting Thursday.

North Carolina residents will face a $69 increase in tuition, while students from other states will see their rates increase by $366 annually. All students will pay an increase in fees of $25.

Graduate students, both resident and non-resident, will pay an extra $69 beginning next year.

The tuition rates were approved by the board of trustees but the UNC system Board of Governors must also approve the recommendation before the increases will be applied.

The board delayed action on tuition and fees at its last regular meeting in November after rejecting a 2.41 percent increase proposed by Chancellor Steve Ballard.

Several members of the executive committee to the board indicated that the increase was too low, but a motion to raise the in-state tuition by 4.5 percent also failed.

Ballard said Thursday that he wants to make sure that ECU remains affordable for North Carolina’s students.

“We are trying to hold to a minimum to North Carolina students,” Ballard said. “I think this is a reasonable compromise while paying attention to the needs of our students.”

ECU, by far, has more students with a demonstrated need than any other school in the UNC system, Ballard said.

Ballard also said that ECU does not have the large endowments that some schools in the state have, and that increasing tuition is not the way the administration should be addressing budget concerns. Tuition accounts for a very small amount of the university’s overall revenue, Ballard said.

Around $650,000 of the tuition increase will be used to boost faculty salaries; about $1.5 million will go to financial aid; the rest, nearly $500,000, will be used for other support services at the university.

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The motion to raise the tuition at the rate recommended by Ballard passed by a near unanimous vote. Only Margaret Ward, who wanted to see a higher increase, voted against it.

The hikes at ECU are lower than fee and tuition increases at UNC-Chapel Hill, N.C. State, UNC-Wilmington, Appalachian State and UNC-Greensboro, where increases are expected to be at 5.5 percent or higher.

The Board of Governors limits tuition increases at the state's universities to a maximum of 6.5 percent a year.

ECU is the third-largest school in the UNC system, but ranks sixth for fees and seventh for tuition. Current tuition is $2,445; fees are $1,774.
East Carolina Heart Institute readies to help the East

BY TOM MARINE
The Daily Reflector

The East Carolina Heart Institute represents a new beginning for eastern North Carolina, a region that is the epicenter of cardiovascular diseases, Dr. W. Randolph Chitwood Jr. said Thursday at the dedication ceremony for the ECHI.

More than 250 people attended the event in the auditorium of the new facility at East Carolina, including officials from ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital, state legislators and local community leaders. The ceremony caps a four-year journey of collaboration between the hospital and the university, which produced the research, education and outpatient facility at ECU and the six-story cardiovascular bed tower at PCMH.

"Today we stand on the forefront, not only of progress, but of a wave of the future," Chitwood said. "We are a unity focused on one goal — improving the health of eastern North Carolina." Chitwood listed examples of the state-of-the-art technology, but then added it is the people who will make the Heart Institute a reality. He said these two facilities will help ECU and PCMH to expand, retain and recruit their workforce.

"It's been a long journey, and many people have participated," he said. "We dedicate today what is the beginning. The past is done and we have a mandate to move into the future."

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HEART TO HEART

The East Carolina Heart Institute at Pitt County Memorial Hospital:

A six-story, 375,000 square-foot medical care facility dedicated to diagnosing and treating cardiovascular disease.

The $150 million patient care facility was approved by the North Carolina Division of Facility Services in January 2005.

Home to 120 cardiovascular beds, six operating rooms, seven interventional laboratories and three electrophysiology labs.

The East Carolina Heart Institute at East Carolina University:

A four-story, 205,000 square-foot facility dedicated to clinical research, training, education and outpatient care of cardiovascular disease.

The $60 million research facility received funding from the North Carolina General Assembly in July 2004.

Home to basic science and clinical research facilities, a robotics-training program, a clinical outpatient facility and a database center.
Dave McRae, chief executive officer of University Health Systems of Eastern North Carolina, provided a historical perspective to the occasion, referencing to the beginnings of the hospital and the Brody School of Medicine.

“There is a history that brought us here, and if we can’t remember our history then how will we remember today?” McRae said. “Look at where we are. We wouldn’t be here without my friend, Dr. Randolph Chitwood.”

Also speaking at the ceremony, PCMH President Steve Lawler and ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard thanked those who made the Heart Institute possible.

They also touched on the important partnership between the two institutes, with Ballard saying both the university and the hospital are vital to the success of the other and are central to the growth of eastern North Carolina.

Following the event, the four speakers and invited guests took tours of the $150 million bed tower at PCMH.

Chitwood, standing in one of the tower’s operating rooms, described the multidisciplinary approach that will bring specialists together. Ultimately, he said, this interactive way of giving patient care will not only be good for North Carolina, but also the rest of the world.

“You may ask why we have multiple monitors,” Chitwood said, referring to a number of high definition screens attached to hydraulic lifts. “It is a different type of team approach. It is a new way to do surgery.”

The people of North Carolina may be the biggest benefactors from the new facilities, as one-fourth of the population suffers from cardiovascular disease, according to an ECHI information packet. That accounts for more than 30 percent of all deaths in the state.

For Chitwood, he said there is a mandate from the people to get these problems fixed.

“This is only the beginning.” Chitwood said. “You will see magical things happen.”

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Holtz passes on Orange job

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

A three-day courtship between Skip Holtz and Syracuse University has ended, and East Carolina's football coach is staying put, at least for now.

While rumors continued to simmer about Auburn's coaching vacancy Thursday, Holtz put to rest the possibility of him leaving ECU for the Big East Conference school. Though Holtz reportedly met with Syracuse athletic director Daryl Gross Monday and continued speaking with him throughout his three days in New York, the fourth-year ECU coach confirmed at a press conference Thursday he wouldn't be leaving the Pirates for the Orange.

"I'm happy with the one I have," Holtz said in response to whether he had interest in any other coaching jobs. "I'm excited about having the opportunity to be here at East Carolina and represent East Carolina in this bowl game."

Holtz addressed Memphis media members and outside callers Thursday as part of the buildup to the 50th Liberty Bowl Jan. 2.

The Pirates take on Southeastern Conference member Kentucky (6-6), and Holtz remained focused on that during his comments.

"Everybody wants to talk about that this time of year ... it gives them something to do during this lull from the last game until the bowl," Holtz said of the rumors. "For us right now, this is all about the Liberty Bowl and what we're trying to do here."

Last season, West Virginia took an interest in Holtz after the departure of Rich Rodriguez, but Holtz was never involved in an interview process.

It is unclear whether Gross ever offered the Syracuse position to Holtz this week, but the coach confirmed in a published statement he was no longer interested in the opening.

"While it is always flattering for others to have an interest in your abilities, I am simply too focused on our preparations for the bowl game and many other of our short and long term goals to fairly evaluate what I feel is a promising situation at Syracuse," Holtz said in the statement. "I appreciate Syracuse's interest but that is certainly a direct reflection on what our players, coaches and the Pirate nation have been able to accomplish, especially through a season that featured so much adversity."

The 9-4 Pirates are fresh from upsetting Tulsa to win the Conference USA championship game last Saturday, but Holtz's being in New York the last three days stole some of that spotlight.

Holtz acknowledged the Pirates will see a good match for their defense when they square off with the Wildcats, who started off hot at 4-0 but hit wall in their brutal conference slate, finishing 2-6 in the SEC with wins over Arkansas and Mississippi State.

"It huge," Holtz said of the game. "You've got the country watching, and you have it on Jan. 2, when everybody's trying to get their bowl fix the first couple days of the year. It's an exposure opportunity as a program."

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Fox Business goes live from UNC-CH

CHAPEL HILL — Robert Gray, an anchor at Fox Business Network, will report live today from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Gray will be in Chapel Hill for a series called "Opportunity in America: My Hometown," in which Fox Business Network reporters examine how their hometowns have changed. Gray, who graduated from UNC-CH, is originally from Roxboro. Pre-recorded spots from Roxboro will be mixed throughout the day with live interviews from campus.

Gray's broadcast will originate mostly from the upper quad and will run from about 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. At 5 p.m., it will shift to Spanky's restaurant on Franklin Street.

The Fox Business Network is seen on Time Warner Cable channel 121 in the Triangle.

Staff writer Matt Ehlers