THE DAILY CLIPS

December 15, 2008

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

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The New York Times
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USA Today
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Newsweek
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ECU News Bureau

Sunday, December 14, 2008

East Carolina University is scheduled to begin testing Tuesday in preparation for installing outdoor speakers throughout campus.

This is the first step in the installation of an outdoor emergency notification system to serve both east and west campus buildings, according to Tom Pohlman with ECU Environmental Health and Safety.

During the testing, people on campus will hear two different tones, said Martin Jackson with ECU's Information Technology and Computing Services.

One sound is a high/low tone, not a siren, and the other is water splashing. Atlas Speakers, the manufacturer, will be conducting the testing along with ECU ITCS.

"Using these type tones allows us to compute and predict how the sound works at various distances on campus, and if it's understood and heard well at varying distances from the speakers," Jackson said.

The results of the testing will be used to determine how many speakers the university needs and on which buildings to place them to reach people outdoors on campus.

People in the neighborhoods surrounding the university may also be able to hear the acoustical testing but should not be alarmed, Jackson said.

"This system will alert individuals outdoors on campus of tornado warnings and other dangerous situations which may affect the safety of our campus community," Pohlman said. "We are conducting this test to ascertain the best locations for audible and understandable outdoor voice notification."

Funds provided through the UNC General Administration safety initiative will pay for the speakers and the installation, he said.

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Editorial: Needing repair - Reform broken N.C. probation system

Sunday, December 14, 2008

North Carolina residents will have trouble determining which is worse. Is it that 17 percent of murder and voluntary manslaughter convictions since 2000 were committed by individuals under the supervision of state probation officers? Or that officials knew the system's problems and did virtually nothing to fix them?

Regardless of how citizens rank those offenses, the issue is both outrageous and inexcusable. State officials cannot let a moment pass once work begins anew in Raleigh to enact meaningful reform that assures this state of the safety it deserves.

The shooting death of Eve Carson, the popular student body president at UNC-Chapel Hill, was the most recent tragedy illuminating fissures in a broken system. Both men charged in that crime, and in the death of Duke University graduate student Abhijit Mahato, were the responsibility of probation officers who fell down on the job.

Though officials with the N.C. Division of Community Corrections claimed this was an isolated incident, a closer investigation conducted by the News & Observer provides ample evidence that this case represents business as usual.

Since 2000, 580 offenders free on probation have been convicted of murder or voluntary manslaughter, cases that account for 17 percent of the 3,499 intentional killing convictions recorded during that period. Of the roughly 114,000 people on probation in North Carolina, officers cannot locate about 14,000 of them.

The lack of appropriate oversight over these criminals is due to numerous circumstances. There are only 2,281 probation officers to handle that abundant case load, and many positions remain unfilled. That may be due to the paltry pay involved; about 20 percent of officers hold second jobs.

However, when officers are on the clock, they are saddled with antiquated technology and possess a penchant for inattention. Countless reports are not filed and lengthy periods pass between meetings between officers and parolees. And though the first 30 days after an offender leaves jail are the most critical to reintroduction, it is also the time that many officers fail to act with needed urgency.

That is not to say that all probation officers are at fault or are letting down the public. Rather, responsibility should be more fairly placed on the shoulders of elected officials who neglected a system they knew to be broken.

Radical reform is needed to reduce case sizes, update equipment, pay competitive wages and add new officers to make certain that this critical part of the criminal justice system works effectively. This should be a key charge of lawmakers in the new year because, as the numbers prove, this is a matter of life and death.

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Grads face a new challenge: Landing job in tough times

BY GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Reflector

The excitement radiating from the four young women standing together outside Minges Coliseum on Saturday was so great, the glittering confetti in their hair was dulled.

Lindsay Hallimore, Heidi Deshiasey, Rachel Jarrett and Amanda Sovacool were newly minted graduates of East Carolina University’s College of Nursing, turning their tassels during the school’s 100th fall commencement ceremony.

Along with celebrating their graduation, the four young women have accomplished a goal still elud-

See GRADS, A7
East Carolina celebrates fall commencement

The Daily Reflector
Saturday, December 13, 2008

East Carolina University’s 2008 fall graduating class has achieved an American dream that even in the 21st century remains out of reach for far too many, speakers at Saturday’s commencement ceremony said.

“You have what everybody wants, what everybody values,” said Louis Warren, this year’s speaker, a professor in the College of Education and recipient of the UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching, the highest teaching award given at the university.

“Earning a degree is a big deal,” Warren said. “You have earned something no one will ever be able to take away from you.

“I’m not asking you to go out and be successful because you already are.”

Few people ever earn a college degree, said Phil Dixon, an ECU alumnus who currently served on the UNC Board of Governors. Recent statistics show out of 100 ninth graders only 58 finish high school. Out of the 58, only 38 will begin college, 28 will return for a second year and only 18 will earn a degree in a six-year period, Dixon said.

“This puts you in very unique company,” he said.

Warren went on to praise the class of 2008, the school’s 100th fall commencement class, for being conscientious, hard-working, responsible, generous, compassionate and unpretentious.

“You know you attended the best university in the state and you’re not snotty about it,” he said.

Warren illustrated the generous nature of ECU students by telling the group how he lost his home in the 1999 floods following Hurricane Floyd.

“To my surprise the people who really stepped forward, unsolicited, where the students I was teaching at the time,” he said. “I was humbled to know at the lowest point in my life my students came forward.”

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East Carolina's Second Century campaign on track

The Daily Reflector

Saturday, December 13, 2008

East Carolina University's Second Century campaign is moving ahead as scheduled despite the country's economic woes.

The number of donors giving toward the university's $200 million goal is increasing, said Mickey Dowdy, ECU's vice chancellor for university advancement.

While giving is certainly down, and the university may fall behind on the goal by the end of the next semester, right now donations are actually a little ahead of schedule, Dowdy said.

The goal of $200 million was announced in March when the public part of the Second Century campaign began. The capital campaign is the first for the university in 15 years.

To date, $117 million has been raised toward the $200 million goal.

"Some programs around the country have seen a shut off and we have slowed, but it certainly hasn't stopped," Dowdy said. "Our approach is to press ahead and meet with people to talk about the campaign, and we have tried to be sensitive to what is going on in people's lives."

Dowdy said a successful football season is probably contributing to giving, though it likely affects the Pirate Club more, Dowdy said.

"There is more of a direct effect on the Pirate Club, but for sure it is a point of pride for all alumni," Dowdy said. "It probably helps us to get first-time gifts, and there are certainly new people coming into play for the first time."

Dowdy said making donation calls is easier when the football team is successful.

"When you call someone, it is good way to start conversations," he said. "People will love their university no matter what, but it is a point of pride right now."

ECU raised nearly $84 million during the private phase of the campaign, which opened when Chancellor Steve Ballard came to the university in May 2004.

All gifts to the university are counted toward the $200 million goal.

Fifteen percent of the total goal will go to student support, scholarships, financial aid and study-abroad funds, according to university documents. An additional 28 percent is to fund professorships and faculty research, and the rest is set for facilities and specific strategic goals of each ECU college.

The campaign also includes funding for the new Access Scholarship, a need- and merit-based scholarship worth $5,000 to attend ECU.

Eventually, the university plans to offer 100 of the scholarships, one for each yearly class in the university's history, Dowdy said.

Around $91 million was raised before the campaign was publicly announced in March.

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Janet Storm: Grads take note: Don't fear failure and get off that cell phone

Saturday, December 13, 2008

Graduation day is one of those occasions where the buildup often seems out of proportion with the actual event. I remember my graduation ceremonies from high school and college as pleasant occasions but neither was "the most important day of my life," as various adults insisted it would be.

In my experience, it's simply not very exciting to hear hundreds of names read off, one after another, until it's time to shuffle on stage and have a diploma stuffed into your sweaty little hand.

But I'm convinced the tedium of the occasion would vanish given the right speaker, or barring that, the right speech.

Just off the top of my head I can name several ideal speaker candidates. Robby the Robot from "Forbidden Planet" would be a lot of fun: "After the cere-mon-y I will be giv-ing you all dia-mond and star sapphire neck-faces." Or how about Betty Crocker? "Cupcakes are the key to happiness!" Want a speaker who isn't fictional? OK, I choose B.B. King: "Lucille and I would like to tell you that it's all right to have the blues." Or perhaps hockey great Gordy Howe: "Sometimes it's worth two minutes in the penalty box to knock someone's block off."

Whoever delivers the speech, I'd urge him or her to focus less on pie-in-the-sky idealism and more on the nuts and bolts of life.

Among other things, tell graduates to brace themselves for failure.

No, really.

I read a lot of biographies and one thing I've noticed is that most successful people failed — and failed big — before achieving fame and glory. They achieved success, ultimately, because failure didn't frighten them away from their dreams. When failure doesn't scare you, anything is possible. Remember that, Class of 2008.

Here are a few other tips speakers might do well to mention:

Get off your cell phone. New employees who are constantly taking personal calls are perceived caring more about their social lives than their work. In today's job climate, that's not how you want the boss to see you. Make calls during your leisure hours, lest you find your entire life is one long leisure hour due to lack of employment.

Stay away from credit cards. A fist full of cards is a huge temptation to live beyond your means. Don't fall into that trap. Most recent grads are already struggling to pay back college loans. The last thing you need is more debt hanging over your head because you decided to splurge on a big screen TV.

Learn to take criticism. Like failure, criticism is one of those things it's best to make friends with early on. Listen carefully when people correct you, no matter how much they seem to relish the task. As a young reporter, I turned in what I thought was a masterpiece to a stern, veteran editor. He handed it back to me in shreds. His infamous comment: "Janet we have two words for this kind of writing: trite and verbose." I was stunned silent (highly unusual for me), but I learned to tame my verbosity. Well, sometimes.

Trust your instincts. If you get a bad feeling about a company during the interview process, keep looking. If a job you used to enjoy becomes a stress-filled nightmare, get out. Don't ever tell yourself you have no
other options. Talent and hard work will provide you with opportunities. Believe that you deserve a happy life. You didn’t slog through school to settle for less.

Now toss that hat in the air and celebrate your day. And don’t forget to pick up your cupcake and diamond necklace as you exit the coliseum.

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East Carolina honors 5 students for heroics

By ECU News Bureau

Saturday, December 13, 2008

Five East Carolina University students were honored Dec. 2 for responding to two emergency situations on campus.

During a recognition event in the lobby of Fletcher Residence Hall, Chancellor Steve Ballard praised the students for stepping up to the challenges.

"We are here to thank (these students) for intervening," he said. "These situations could have been a lot worse if they had not had the courage to step up. And that is the mark of personal courage.

"You are all examples of the ECU spirit. You are part of a truly unique community here at ECU."

In February, two students responded when the driver of the ECU transit bus they were riding on lost control of the bus while attempting a turn onto Charles Boulevard from 10th Street.

Cameron Kirby of Cedar Grove and Chelsea Mungal of Winterville were recognized with the ECU Hero Award for their efforts to stop the bus and aid the driver. Ballard was assisted in the presentation by Charles Royal, president of the ECU Parents Council, and Kemal Atkins, vice chancellor for student affairs.

Mungal is a junior recreational therapy major. She is involved in Victory Campus Ministries and Recreation & Leisure Studies Undergraduate Society. A 2006 graduate of D.H. Conley High School, she is the daughter of Terry and Deb Mungal of Winterville.

Also recognized were Mike Rose of Newport, Jacob Powell of Raleigh and Nickolas Benfield of Taylorsville, who came to a fellow student's aid in late August when a non-student attacked her in a Fletcher Residence Hall bathroom. They were able to subdue the attacker until ECU police arrived.

The three men also received the "Medal of Valor Citizen's Award" from the ECU Police Department. The medal is the highest civilian award a police department can bestow; this was the first time it has been awarded at the university, according to ECU Police Chief Scott Shelton.

The police chief praised the students' quick action and appropriate measures "to save another student's life. They changed the outcome of a crime," he said.

Mayor Pat Dunn, a retired ECU faculty member, praised the students' quick responses.

"You saw someone in need and came to their aid," she said. "We care what happens to all of our citizens, and you are part of our city. You saw yourselves as your brother's keeper."

ECU-Girl Scout project wins award

A community service project introducing Girl Scouts to nursing at ECU has won an award.

ECU's Beta Nu Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the international honor society of nursing, received Sigma Theta Tau's regional excellence award for their project "Fostering Community and Service through Leadership: Scout Out Nursing Event."

The College of Nursing hosted more than 110 Brownies and Girl Scouts who explored nursing as a career and earned a patch for their participation. Beta Nu chapter will hold another Scout Out Nursing Day for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts on March 28.

Gina Woody, clinical assistant professor of nursing and Beta Nu president, accepted the award on behalf of
the 585-member organization at the Sigma Theta Tau International Leadership Academy in September in Indianapolis, Ind. Sigma Theta Tau, one of the largest international nursing groups, works to foster, develop and connect nurse scholars and leaders worldwide to improve health care.

The award was one of only a few given by the honor society this year to recognize outstanding programs organized by local chapters.

ECU ARAMARK employees THRIVE

ARAMARK Campus Dining employees at ECU have been recognized nationally for positive employee relations and their employee recognition program.

The employee recognition program receiving the most attention is THRIVE, which began in October 2007. THRIVE stands for the six attributes of the company: Thoughtful, Heartfelt, Results Driven, Innovative, Valued and Trusted, and Engaged.

Employees are recognized with hand-written thank you notes from their managers when they exhibit behaviors true to the attributes. Based on the number of thank you notes received, each employee has a chance monthly to win prizes locally and $2,500 in an annual national drawing.

In November, Mike Lysaght, resident district manager, accepted two awards at the ARAMARK Higher Education National Conference in Orlando, Fla. The two awards received were the “Most THRIVE Thank Yous” submitted for the 2008 fiscal year and the “THRIVE Innovation Award,” which recognized the ECU work group’s implementation on campus of original initiatives.

Student inducted into Golden Key society

Leigh A. Simpson of Winterville was inducted into the Golden Key International Honour Society during a ceremony at East Carolina University. Golden Key is the world’s premier collegiate honor society which provides recognition to top-performing college and university students. Membership is by invitation only.

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Looking good

**Laurels** — To the preponderance of holiday decorations giving a brighter look to the community. From Greenville’s tree that shines each night in front of the Sheppard Memorial Library to the lights that illuminated homes across the city, area residents are clearly in the holiday spirit as Christmas and Hanukkah draw ever closer.

**Up and away**

**Laurels** — To fall commencement exercises at East Carolina University, taking place on campus today. About 3,000 students are set to receive degrees during the fall graduation, an achievement worthy of celebration by family and friends. A college degree opens countless doors and represents years of hard work and determination. Congratulations to all the graduates.

**Darts** — To another deadly car accident on Dec. 5, a tragic accident that again highlights the need for care and caution on area thoroughfares. Pitt County appears poised to suffer a record number of deaths on area roadways this year, terrible events that rob families of sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers. Please take care out there, particularly with roads so crowded at this time of the year.

**Laurels** — To the 22 Pitt County teachers who received National Board Certification this year, an achievement that reflects considerable study, evaluation and peer review. Those instructors are eligible for higher salaries, but they will also bring new strategies to the classroom to improve the quality of public education here.

**Darts** — To vandalism at two Pitt County high schools this week. Graffiti at D.H. Conley and South Central was discovered early Tuesday morning, and area law enforcement later confirmed that the symbols used were gang related. How unfortunate that people would act in such fashion, and one hopes that the miscreants responsible are swiftly brought to justice.

**Laurels** — To creation of the Pitt County Economic Development Partnership Group, which intends to keep local developers abreast of new rules governing construction and to discuss with elected officials any decisions that might affect their work. Developers are critical to the community’s continued growth, and their input is valuable as local boards make planning and zoning decisions.

Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@cnow.com
UNC panel to study hate crime practices

BY MARLON A. WALKER
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — The University of North Carolina System said Friday it would review its student codes of conduct in reaction to the racially charged graffiti found at North Carolina State University after Barack Obama's presidential win.

System President Erskine Bowles said Friday he created the UNC Study Commission to examine the codes as they related to hate crimes. The panel's 11 students, faculty and system staff will study whether a systemwide policy is needed to address hate crimes and acts of violence and intimidation.

"The issue of what happened at North Carolina State was a very visible example, but the focus of the commission will not be specific to the incident," UNC System spokeswoman Joni Worthington said.

The panel will meet next week and present its recommendations to Bowles in March.

"We think that's an important step," said Rev. William Barber, president of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP, who met with N.C. State Chancellor James Oblinger shortly after the comments were found.

"The concerns we raised were really a fundamental question for North Carolina and our campuses about public safety. And that is: Is hate speech and speech that communicates threats and creates a hostile environment protected speech?"

The graffiti, which included "Let's shoot the N---- in the head," was spray-painted in the Free Expression Tunnel, which is on the university's Raleigh campus.

The student who accepted responsibility for the comment has apologized and is expected to participate in diversity training and community service. Three other students with the student also issued written apologies.

Many students, community members and others wanted the students expelled. The university accepted the lesser penalties because, as N.C. State Chancellor James Oblinger said in a statement last month, the primary purpose of disciplining a student on campus is education.
Secret to man's longevity: turnips greens, exercise

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Friday, December 12, 2008

For one 96-year-old local man, the secret to living a long and healthy life isn't that complex.

"I think it is because I eat turnip greens and exercise," Bill Finch says.

Finch, a world-record breaking runner and champion badminton player from Greenville, is spotlighted in the most recent issue of Newsweek magazine as part of a story on ways scientists are trying to slow aging.

Since the issue hit news stands, Finch says he has been fielding dozens of phone calls from friends and comments from his friends on the "Ain't Dead Yet" group on ham radio.

Finch moved to Greenville in 1997 after spending several years in Fayetteville as a civilian worker for the U.S. Army. He was born in Raleigh.

Throughout most of his life, he has tried to maintain a healthy diet that he says includes very little red meat.

He also exercises regularly.

Twice each week, Finch meets with fellow senior citizens at the East Carolina University Recreation Center for badminton contests. On other days, he runs around his block or hits the treadmills at the Greenville Aquatics and Fitness Center.

"I feel pretty good, and I think I take good care of myself, but I was kind of surprised when someone from Newsweek called to talk to me about it," Finch said. "I'm not sure why they chose me and the others that were (in the magazine)."

It could have been last year's shattering of the world record in the 1,500-meter run which garnered the attention for Finch.

During the National Senior Games, Finch finished the race in 13 minutes, 7.12 seconds — the best time ever for 95-to 99-year-olds.

He said a story published in The Daily Reflector highlighting his achievement generated a lot of interest from other news outlets.

Newsweek listed Finch's secrets to long life as staying active in the dating scene and enjoying ham radio. He says he is not sure how beneficial those activities are for longevity, but "they don't hurt."

Finch first obtained an amateur radio license from the Federal Communications Commission in 1935. He chats regularly with a pocket of friends in the Fayetteville area and beyond.

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COX NEWSPAPERS
East Carolina graduates more than 3,000 today

The Daily Reflector

Friday, December 12, 2008

Family and friends of graduates are converging on Greenville today for East Carolina University's fall graduation.

ECU will hold commencement this morning in Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum beginning 10 a.m. The program will start with a band concert at 9:30 a.m.

More than 3,000 students are eligible to participate in commencement. There are about 2,218 students for the fall semester and 889 graduates from the summer, according to the ECU registrar's office. Of those, 2108 will be awarded bachelor's degrees; 951 will receive graduate degrees and 48 will earn professional degrees.

The commencement speaker is ECU College of Education professor Louis Warren, who recently received the UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching, the highest teaching award given at the university.

Warren teaches curriculum and instruction and holds an undergraduate degree from UNC-Chapel Hill, a master's degree from UNC-Pembroke, and a doctorate in education from the University of Georgia. After teaching in middle schools in rural North Carolina and serving as an assistant professor at Georgia Southern University, he joined the ECU faculty in 1994.

Many of ECU's colleges, schools and departments held unit ceremonies Friday.
Seeking immortality? Well, along came a spider

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Friday, December 12, 2008

The biology department at East Carolina University is offering donors a shot at immortality.

To celebrate the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin, the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of Biology is offering the public a chance to become part of evolutionary history by naming a spider discovered by biologist Jason Bond.

Now through Feb. 4 individuals or organizations can make donations to support fellowships for students who conduct biodiversity research at ECU and the highest donor will get to name one of Bond’s recently discovered spiders, several of which have been named for celebrities including Neil Young, Stephen Colbert and Angelina Jolie.

The name given to the trapdoor spider from California will forever be listed in text and reference books.

“It is an opportunity for immortality,” Bond said. “I don’t know anything that compares to it. Species names are a permanent fixture for as long as humans are on the planet.”

Bond discovered about 25 new species of trapdoor spiders in late 2007 and is in the process of naming them.

The fundraiser is an effort to celebrate Darwin’s birthday and to raise funds for a fellowship in the biology department to allow for more discoveries.

“Folks think that new species are relatively uncommon,” Bond said. “But we know relatively little about the diversity on our planet. There are so few people that are doing this kind of work today. It used to be more common.”

The biology department will hold an open house Feb. 12 to announce the winning spider name and honor Darwin and his contribution to biodiversity.

Tours of the Howell Science Complex on the ECU campus will be held from 6-7:30 p.m., beginning outside room B103. Tours will offer participants a chance to see and learn about spiders, fish embryos, bird behavior, greenhouse plants, biotechnology and more.

At 7:30 p.m., Bond will present “Spiders, Biodiversity and the Future of Life,” a presentation that will focus on biology, the biodiversity crisis and the links between biodiversity and human welfare.

Jeff McKinnon, chair of the biology department, said he wanted to do something fun on a day that will feature somber lectures all over the country.

But the main purpose of the event is to raise funds for future biologists at ECU and awareness of biodiversity concerns.

“People are increasingly concerned about environmental issues — and that is excellent — but we are kind of forgetting that at the same time a lot of plants and animals are going extinct,” McKinnon said.

“A lot of them don’t even have names, they have never been looked at by scientists. We want to raise some money for research that will allow us to describe biodiversity, figure out what is out there and ultimately help preserve it.”

The event is free and open to the public. Biology faculty members also will offer workshops from 4-6 p.m. to
elementary, middle and high school teachers on how to teach evolution in the classroom.
Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or 252-329-9565.
Holtz: We're still building

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Friday, December 12, 2008

Simply put, Skip Holtz doesn't see a finished product when he looks at his East Carolina football team.

Following a week of uncertainty about the ECU head coach's future in Greenville — which included a Monday interview with Syracuse Athletic Director Daryl Gross about its top football post — Holtz put to rest any remaining rumors Friday.

Conference USA champion East Carolina (9-4) will take on Kentucky (6-6) at the Jan. 2 Liberty Bowl in Memphis, and Holtz will be on the sideline.

"I'm committed to being here," Holtz said Friday after his team's return to the practice field. "I had the opportunity to leave, and I turned them down because I wanted to stay here and be around these guys and continue building this program. We're not done building yet."

It now appears, despite some lingering reports of interest from Auburn regarding its coaching vacancy, Holtz is reunited for at least another season with the team he's guided to three consecutive bowl games.

Heading into the Liberty Bowl, Holtz is 29-21 in four seasons with the Pirates.

"Everybody says we've taken this program as far as we can take it, and I don't agree," Holtz said. "I think we can keep building."

The coach stressed his focus is now squarely on beating the Southeastern Conference's Wildcats in the Pirates' first-ever 14-game season.

While Holtz spent the week in New York City attending father Lou Holtz's induction into the College Football Hall of Fame, and considering the Syracuse job, his team was understandably left waiting.

"Coach Holtz made it plain and clear he wants to be here," junior free safety Van Eskridge said. "He made it clear he's had opportunities to go elsewhere, but he turned those opportunities down. I really respect that."

Holtz said he addressed the team prior to Friday's practice, assuring his players he was not planning to leave ECU at this time.

While that was likely music to the ears of many players, some seem to understand already that coaching changes are often the nature of the modern game.

"It was worrisome, but at the same time it's a business," sophomore cornerback Travis Simmons said of not knowing what his coach would decide. "You have to do what's best for you at times. I was pretty sure we'd still be a good team (if Holtz left), but you always want to keep the coach you came in with.

"I have a lot of trust in coach Holtz, and I knew he was going to make the best decision for him."

The ECU players will return to a two-a-day format today and Sunday before embarking on a 10-day holiday break.

Holtz said the interest from other institutions is a credit to the performance of his players and assistant coaches.

"I'm right here, and this is what I'm planning on doing," Holtz said of ECU. "If that changes, I'll let everybody know."
Calm presence is honored teacher's mark

MARTI MAGUIRE, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Bryan Holley's voice never wavers as he guides his fourth-grade students through an elaborate academic routine that they navigate effortlessly.

The even tone he uses to explain each of the four activities they will perform over the next hour is the same one he employs when, later, a student talks a bit too loudly during one phase of the drill. It's the same low pitch that he uses with adults, and when he praises students, it comes out the same way: "Good job," he tells a boy who got a perfect score on a reading exercise. "Now find a harder book."

It's hard to imagine a teacher more laid-back, less ruffled by the ups and downs of the classroom day. It's even harder to imagine Holley speechless with excitement. But that's how he reacted when he heard the news, at a school assembly in October, that he had won one of the nation's most prestigious teaching awards.

Holley, in his sixth year at Corinth-Holders Elementary, is the first Johnston County teacher to win a Milken Award. Known as the "Oscars of teaching," the honors come with a $25,000 award and membership in a group of about 80 teachers nationally who have won since the awards began in 1985. Holley, 30, was the only North Carolina teacher to win this year.

Born and raised in Wilson, Holley always planned to work with kids. He decided on teaching when he was tutoring classmates in middle school. He has been at Corinth-Holders, a rural school in north Johnston, since earning his teaching degree at East Carolina University.

A steady hand

The school, which has a high percentage of poor students and students who speak little English, has been plagued by high teacher turnover and low test scores. There has been improvement on both fronts in the past two years. Holley never considered going to another school, even as fellow teachers transfer to schools with fewer challenges.

"It was really sad to see people leave the way they did," Holley said. "I felt like this school and these students needed stability."

Principal Betty Bennett has seen Holley's commitment to students firsthand. Though Holley is young, he coordinates the school's mentor program for new teachers.
"It's just his personality," Bennett said. "He's just the kind of person these new teachers feel comfortable with."

But what makes him a great teacher, she said, is his passion.

"Once you have that passion, you'll read and you'll study and you'll figure out what you need to do to reach children," she said.

Holley did his student teaching at the high school level but decided that he preferred to work with younger kids.

"With younger kids, everything is brand new," he said. "For our kids, when they see a new concept, you can see the light bulbs go off."

Like many teachers, he keeps his classroom hyper-organized. But, he says, teachers also need to be flexible. And, he adds, calm.

"I made a decision early on that I would not get upset," he said. "If you're going to be uptight about every little thing, you're never going to make it."

It's an approach his students appreciate.

"Every time he gets mad, he's still nice," said 10-year-old Bella Felix.

Challenges to his seemingly endless store of patience abound. For his birthday, some fifth-graders hid pieces of his extensive Mickey Mouse collection throughout the school. He didn't even mention it, but his students were horrified. In a move that they still recall with glee a month later, he blocked off 20 minutes of class time to search the school for the rest of his stuffed Mickeys, Mickey lunch boxes and Mickey statues.

Holley and his wife, Carrie, a teacher assistant at the same school, are expecting their first child in March. He plans to use much of his award to start the child's college fund and will give some to his church.

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Merry vs. happy

BY J. PEDER ZANE, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Has the Triangle become the latest battleground in the "War on Christmas"?
That's one reading of UNC-Chapel Hill's ban on holiday displays at its two main libraries.
In a move that strikes many as grimly Dickensian, the twinkling trees that had long graced the Wilson and Davis libraries in December have become ghosts of Christmas past.
Officials said queries and concerns from patrons and librarians pushed them to ax the tree.
"We strive in our collection to have a wide variety of ideas," said Sarah Michalak, associate provost for university libraries. "It doesn't seem right to celebrate one particular set of customs."
Of course, by assuaging one group, she angered another.
Feeling the heat from scores of people questioning him about the ban, UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp tried to cool the flames by issuing a public statement.
Noting that the library had instituted the ban-- not the school -- he observed that Christmas-related displays -- from the decorated facade of Memorial Hall to the "Christmas wreath with a Carolina-blue ribbon on it in the Student Union" -- still swaddle the school.
"Christmas is recognized on this campus," he wrote. "Have a joyous Christmas."

Christmas holds strong

Thorp's comments, especially his fearless invocation of Christmas not once but thrice, underscore the bogus nature of the "War on Christmas" trumpeted by Bill O'Reilly and other shouting-heads.
From the moment our Snickers-induced bellyaches subside after Halloween, we are force-fed a smorgasbord of holiday symbols: mangers, wreaths, ugly sweaters, iPods, Webkinz and GPS systems. The air is filled with the "S" words that define the season: Santa, sale and, once in a while, even savior.
The American Christmas -- three parts commercial juggernaut, one part sacred celebration -- is thriving.
Even as we debunk those who cry war, we shouldn't dismiss their claims. They may be aiming at the wrong target, but their angst reflects the deep strengths and inevitable tensions that shape American history.

Change as tradition

The power and paradox of the ideals that have always bound our nation is that they are remarkably fluid and set in stone. Change is our bedrock tradition.
Since the first colonist landed here, America's story has been a tale of people insistently re-imagining themselves and their nation.
Immigrants from far-flung corners of the globe -- including my ancestors from England, Scandinavia and Italy -- brought new customs, ideas and hopes.
Many of them faced hateful hostility. But acknowledging that painful past should not blind us to the primary direction of American society, which has been toward an ever-expanding sense of inclusion. Just ask President-elect Obama.

Our history has been so inspiring and tortured precisely because change is almost always discomfiting. Even as we embrace the idea of it, its reality is often hard to swallow. This is natural and probably unavoidable, which is one reason that immigration is always a hot-button issue.

In the past, the larger culture tended to cut the traditionalists too much slack, defending their opposition to change. In recent decades, the tide has shifted. Nowadays, we are more likely to ascribe dark motives of bigoted small-mindedness to people who, in their all-too-human way, want some things to stay the same. We should not celebrate this impulse, but neither should we reflexively demonize it.

The UNC Christmas tree kerfuffle is a telling illustration of this dynamic. For many, trees have been lovely adornments for the season. Their appearance each December conjured warm memories and the call of their better angels. In an increasingly rootless world, the trees were grounded in tradition.

Who could argue with that?

At first glance, no one should. Except that Christmas trees are not just fragrant ornaments. They are also powerful symbols of community.

**Very different views**

For those who celebrate the holiday, Christmas trees convey a sense of belonging. As Michalak suggested in defending the holiday display ban, they send the signal that the world shares values and customs with those who celebrate Christmas.

Christmas trees can send the opposite message to non-Christians. The ubiquitous pines are reminders of traditions they do not share. The sight of these trees is probably not a traumatic experience for them. But I understand why some of them (as well as Christian sympathizers) think there ought to be fir-free public spaces.

An editorial in The Daily Paper argued that instead of banning holiday displays, the library should supplement them with the symbols of Hannukah, Kwanzaa and other winter rites. This solution ignores the fact that many Americans have no faith at all.

In all honesty, I might feel differently if the tree-cutters were truly engaged in a war on Christmas, attacking every symbol and arguing (heaven forbid!) that Dec. 25 should no longer be a national holiday.

But in our Noel-saturated world, the removal of a tree here or a crèche there seems a small accommodation to make. I know why this change bothers some, but they’re mistaking a tree for the forest.

Those mulling this controversy should recall some recent history. Just a few decades ago, "Merry Christmas" was the common December greeting in our nation. But as long marginalized groups demanded recognition and equality, and mainstream culture became more sensitive to their claims, "Happy holidays" became de rigueur.

Those simple words send a powerful message about respect. They remind us that the best American tradition is embracing change that makes room enough for everybody. Happy holidays!

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A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
For now, ECU is the right fit

CAULTON TUDOR, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

This was the most interesting e-mail I received Friday: "So what happens now if Notre Dame gets trashed by Hawaii in the bowl game?"

It was from an Irish fan in New York, a guy who has long been convinced that Charlie Weis evolved directly from a pond-scum lab culture and should spend the rest of his natural life worshipping at the feet of Tom Brady.

There was no easy reply to that question. I'm of the opinion that Skip Holtz is the second coming of Lou Holtz and would quickly lead the Irish back into national championship contention.

That's no stab in the dark, either. Skip Holtz is an exceptional football coach. His accomplishments at East Carolina rival those of anyone in school history, and the Pirates have had more than their fair share of quality football coaches.

When Holtz took over that program after the 2004 season, there were ample reasons to believe it couldn't be revived, and certainly not to where it had been under Clarence Stasavich, Sonny Randle, Pat Dye, Ed Emory, Bill Lewis and Steve Logan.

The day Holtz was introduced as coach, I remember him saying, "I think I can coach and find good assistant coaches, and I know Terry Holland is a good athletic director. Those are the keys in football. ECU will be back. This going to be fun. Believe me."

Four years later, Holtz is still having enough fun to stick with the task. That says a great deal about Holland's steady hand at the top and the unwavering determination among ECU fans to excel at the sport that has been their first love since the 1950s.

When Holtz eventually shunned advances from Syracuse last week, it reminded me of a line from former N.C. State coach Dick Sheridan said when he pulled out of an apparent agreement with Georgia in 1988.

"The longer you stay, the more reasons there are to stay," Sheridan said. "When you're happy where you are,
everything has to be right -- exactly right -- to justify making a move."

Sheridan was speaking in hypotheticals, but it was his way of saying that things weren't exactly right regarding the Georgia job. The back story is that UGa insiders leaked information about Sheridan's intention to take the job before he had the opportunity to update his bowl-bound team back in Raleigh on the situation. Sheridan then made a 180-degree turn that left Georgia flabbergasted.

There's a chance Holtz will find that "exactly right" job in the future. No one would be surprised if turns out to be Notre Dame, either. It's his alma mater and probably his dream job.

But timing is the great equalizer in college sports. If Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick stands by his word, Weis will return as coach in 2009. Now would that commitment change if the Irish take a bad beating in Hawaii on Jan. 24 and end the season 6-7?

Maybe. Notre Dame obviously isn't the Notre Dame of lore, but it's still the most unusual animal in the college football zoo. Among old-line coaches, there's a classic description about coaching the Irish: It's the best job in the business, but it's the worst job in the business.

If Weis wins his bowl game and then wins eight or nine in 2009, the long-term winner just as easily could be ECU as Notre Dame.

But as long as Holtz wins, and wins with honor, which seems to be the case, there will be suitors. Auburn is still looking right now. Virginia may be on the hunt a year from now. But for the here and now, there seems to be a lot of Sheridan in the Skipper. The longer Holtz stays, the more difficult it's going to be for him to leave.

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A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Manage College-Application Anxiety

BY ELLEN GAMERMAN

For many high-school seniors, fall is a time of un-knowns: how will they afford school, can they get into their top choice, will they be happy once they get there?

Advice is everywhere. Kids can plug their test scores into online college "calculators" to run the odds of getting into competitive schools. They can seek suggestions on sites like College Confidential, where students trade angst and wisdom. Or they can pay a professional coach; the number of kids with private counselors has doubled in the past five years, according to the Independent Educational Consultants Association.

The tough part, other than actually getting into college, is figuring out which tips to listen to and which to ignore. We've asked college counselors, admissions officials and current college freshmen to take a stab at some frequent questions.

1. How will we pay for it?
   Advice: Some private colleges with higher sticker prices may end up offering more financial aid, so they would ultimately cost less than public universities, says Steven Roy Goodman, an educational consultant in Washington. He says you should apply first and make decisions about affordability later. "This is the time of year to go fishing."

   Katherine Cohen, co-founder of ApplyWise.com, an online college counseling program, says students might consider finishing college in three years instead of four by using credits from Advanced Placement exams or by taking community college classes during the summer.

   She also suggests that students consider moving to less expensive off-campus housing, or eat breakfast in their dorm rooms so they'll only pay for a two-a-day meal plan.

2. Is this school the right fit?
   Advice: Tina Bu never visited New York City or talked with students before enrolling at Columbia University. Now a freshman, she says the school can be intense and stressful. The student from Greenville, S.C., says she was so flattered by the university's offer, she barely paused to consider how she would feel once she got there.

   If high schoolers don't have time or money to visit a college, then they should seek out current students through the admissions office or via Facebook to get an idea of campus life, Ms. Bu says.

   She urges a healthy dose of realism: "Try not to believe all the propaganda that colleges send out," she says. "They're full of superlatives."

3. How do we know when the application is finally done?
   Advice: Harry Kisker, a college counselor at the Branson School in Ross, Calif., says students and their parents can read an application so many times that their eyes glaze over by the final proofreading.

   At that point, he recommends students read the essay backward, from the last paragraph to the first, because it's sometimes easier to spot errors when looking at the page in a new way.

   Not every question requires an answer, says Bev Taylor, founder of the Ivy Coach, a New York counseling service.

   For instance, she says, some colleges ask applicants to list all the other schools to which they've applied—which Ms. Taylor believes can hurt an applicant if the college concludes the student is treating it as a safety school. She suggests skipping the question.

   She also urges the children of business executives to leave out titles like "CEO" when applications ask for parents' occupations because she believes students may put themselves at a disadvantage if they appear highly privileged.

4. Can you go too far showing a college it's your top pick?
   Advice: Hank Herman, who wrote the book "Accept My Kid, Please! A Dad's Descent into College Application Hell," about his son's college-application experience, says he urged his child to write weekly emails to Emory University in Atlanta expressing his enthusiasm for the school.

   It was only when Mr. Herman attended a presentation to parents and high schoolers by an Emory official that he realized his error. "One of the first things the admissions representative said was, 'It's very good we're getting 80,000 emails, but we're basically not reading them."

   Stu Schmill, dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, agrees that email campaigns and other gimmicks won't work. "We try to really look at students' long-term potential," he says. "It's not about the flash of an application."

5. How do you get excited about a school that wasn't your first choice?
   Advice: Mr. Goodman suggests students imagine themselves in the college dining hall and then ask if they see themselves feeling comfortable and happy.

   Similar visualization exercises worked for Kristin Drouin. Initially, she was so biased about Macalester College that she threw her acceptance letter on the floor after she read it. But then she researched the school and started picturing herself there.

   The open-minded effort worked. Now a freshman at the college in St. Paul, Minn., she says, "I'm 100 percent happy."
Holtz plans to stay put, for now

Pirates coach gets back to Liberty Bowl business

A.J. CARR, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

GREENVILLE - After a whirlwind week of suspense and speculation, Skip Holtz was back directing East Carolina's football practice Friday and talking - for the most part - like a coach planning to stay.

Earlier in the day, Holtz said he informed players at a team meeting that he's "committed" to coaching the Pirates and continuing to build the program.

"I told them I had an opportunity to leave, turned it down, that I wanted to stay here," said Holtz, who had talked with Syracuse officials. "I told them as a football coach I had been blessed to have been given an opportunity because of the good job they did."

Offensive lineman Terence Campbell said the players' reaction was one of "relief."

When asked about other job possibilities, however, Holtz laughed and said: "If there are any changes, I'll let everybody know."

"I went through that whirlwind; I'm done with it," he said. "We are talking football, talking East Carolina football, talking Liberty Bowl football, talking Kentucky."

The Pirates, who carved a 9-4 record and won the school's first Conference-USA championship, are pitted against Kentucky (6-6) in the Liberty Bowl Jan. 2 at Memphis.

It will be the third straight postseason appearance for the Pirates under Holtz, who is completing his fourth season at ECU.

He aims to do more.

"I want to continue building this program," he said. "We aren't going to maintain. Everybody is saying we have taken this program as far as we can. I don't agree. We can keep adding."
Holtz, whose contract extends through 2013 and could be worth $9.4 million with incentives, has a strong nucleus returning next year. And Friday, he appeared to be in his element, enjoying practice and then participating with Pirate players in one of the 100-yard conditioning runs.

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Two held in student's slaying

Police won't comment on motive in May 5 killing of 20-year-old UNCC student from Chapel Hill

JOE DEPRIEST AND CHRISTOPHER D. KIRKPATRICK, The Charlotte Observer
Comment on this story

MOUNT HOLLY - Police charged two cousins Friday in the seven-month-old murder of Irina "Ira" Yarmolenko -- the UNC-Charlotte student from Chapel Hill who left a university-area coffee shop and was found dead two hours later on the banks of the Catawba River.

Mount Holly police arrested Neal Leon Cassada Jr., 54, of Mount Holly and Mark Bradley Carver, 40, of Gastonia early Friday.

Police and the Gaston County District Attorney's Office wouldn't say if Yarmolenko, 20, was a random target or might have known the suspects. They also refused to give a possible motive for the May 5 killing.

Family's persistence

The case was marked by the vocal determination of her family to keep her death and the mystery in the public eye.

Pavel Yarmolenko, the victim's brother and a Duke University graduate student, said Friday the arrests brought long-awaited relief even though a long legal process is ahead. "We'll carry this with us until the day we die," he said.

At a news conference, Mount Holly Police Chief David Belk said Cassada and Carver were arrested around 4:30 a.m. He wouldn't comment on the possibility of more arrests.

Gaston County District Attorney Locke Bell said the case doesn't qualify for the death penalty under state statutes.

On the morning of her death, Yarmolenko left campus and dropped off donations at a Goodwill store. A
surveillance video showed her driving off at 10:33 a.m.

She then stopped at Jackson's Java, a coffee shop where she had worked and often socialized. She left there alone around 10:50 a.m.

About two hours later, in a lonely spot along the Catawba River in Mount Holly, a couple in their personal watercraft spotted Yarmolenko's body beside her car, about 30 miles from campus.

Her four-door Saturn had plunged down a steep, weed-covered embankment a half-mile from any paved road. It lodged on a stump just short of the water.

The couple found tall grass trampled around her body, a sign of a possible struggle. Police said she died of asphyxiation and treated the case as a homicide.

In July, Mount Holly police released an analysis by N.C. Highway Patrol experts of her Saturn's computer system or "black box." It showed someone was sitting in the front seat when Yarmolenko's car plunged down the embankment.

It also showed that someone started the car again and tried to back it up from the riverside stump, where it became stuck.

On Friday from his jail cell, Carver said that he and his cousin were innocent. On the day of the killing, he said, they were fishing near where Yarmolenko's body was found, according to a report from the Gaston Gazette.

Carver and Cassada have been arrested before -- Cassada on charges of assault and Carver on charges of assault with a deadly weapon. But the charges in those cases were dismissed.

**Son: Suspect innocent**

At Cassada's home in a rural area of Gaston County, a young man named Shawn, who said he was Cassada's son, said his father had cooperated with police and had provided a DNA sample.

Shawn Cassada said his father was innocent: "If you just knew the man, you'd know this was ridiculous, and it should come out at trial."

Over the past seven months, the victim's brother, Pavel, gave media interviews and spoke to students at UNC-Charlotte about the case. He produced a Web site about his sister and organized self-defense training classes for women at Duke University.

At a news conference Friday, he thanked investigators for solving the mystery that haunted his family.

Though he said there will always be questions about the case, "it's very good to see the people who did this facing justice."

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GREENVILLE, N.C., Dec 12, 2008 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Officials from East Carolina University and University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina dedicated the East Carolina Heart Institute today. Several hundred invited guests joined leaders from the two organizations to celebrate the facility. The Heart Institute puts ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital "at the forefront of progress and the cutting edge of the future," said Dr. W. Randolph Chitwood, director of the East Carolina Heart Institute.

"What we dedicate today is a concept called the East Carolina Heart Institute that encompasses these new facilities, dedicated to the people of this region, and to the physicians, researchers, educators and staff devoted to their care," said Chitwood, who is cardiothoracic surgery and vascular surgery at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. He is also senior associate vice chancellor for health sciences at ECU.

The dedication ceremony, held at the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU, capped more than four years of work to bring a world-class cardiovascular disease institute to eastern North Carolina. In 2004, the General Assembly approved $60 million for a research, education and outpatient care facility at ECU. Pitt County Memorial Hospital secured private funding for a $160 million bed tower. Today, leaders from the two organizations celebrated the end of construction on both facilities.

Many who attended the ceremony also toured the two facilities after the event ended. The crowd included local and state officials, donors and other friends of each organization. The celebration marked "the most significant collaboration University Health Systems and East Carolina University have ever undertaken," said UHS CEO Dave McRae. "It's the biggest step of a journey we started more than 30 years ago, when a small county hospital and a fledgling medical school committed to forming the world-class academic medical center we're part of today," McRae said.

ECU and PCMH have been "joined at the hip" for decades, ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard said. "The East Carolina Heart Institute is the latest partnership between us, and it will make a major and lasting impact in eastern North Carolina, the entire state and beyond," Ballard said.

The new buildings aren't the only sign of a new approach to heart disease for ECU and PCMH. The two organizations have also redefined their model for treating cardiovascular illnesses. Both have organized their clinical staffs around illnesses and disease processes, rather than following a traditional model based on academic specialties. That new model encourages more information-sharing among doctors and puts new emphasis on patients' best interests, Chitwood said. "This new model of care delivery is an innovative way to blend the science and art of medicine so that we add value to the patient," Chitwood said.

The prevalence of cardiovascular disease in North Carolina justifies the massive
investment in treating and researching heart and vascular illnesses. Cardiovascular disease is the second-leading cause of death in the state, and nearly a quarter of N.C. residents suffer from cardiovascular ailments.

Planning for the East Carolina Heart Institute dates to early 2003. ECU and PCMH held a groundbreaking for the Heart Institute in March 2006. In addition to the six-story 375,000-square-foot bed tower, the Heart Institute at Pitt County Memorial Hospital spawned a pair of companion projects: construction of a massive central utility plant to power the new building and the relocation of Moye Boulevard.

The Heart Institute at Pitt County Memorial Hospital has 120 cardiovascular beds, six operating rooms, seven interventional laboratories, three electrophysiology labs and a heart-healthy cafeteria, all designed to create the optimal patient care environment.

The four-story, 206,000-square-foot East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU houses science and clinical research, robotic-surgery training, future space for simulation laboratories, a clinical outpatient facility for cardiovascular diseases, a database center, offices and an auditorium.

The Heart Institute at Pitt County Memorial Hospital will open Jan. 5. ECU physicians have been seeing patients at the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU since September.

SOURCE: East Carolina Heart Institute

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Camden: Rec facility not priority

Water-sewer projects more pressing need

By JENNIFER PREYSS
Staff Writer

Sunday, December 14, 2008

CAMDEN — County residents’ desire for a large recreational facility is likely to take a back seat to Camden’s dire need for infrastructure improvements like water and sewer, county commissioners said last week.

Students at East Carolina University recently completed a four-month study of recreation needs in Camden that found large interest in the county having its own multi-use indoor recreation complex.

Residents surveyed said they favor a 19,000-square-foot indoor facility, complete with a 13,000-square-foot gymnasium, classrooms and walking trails. The study placed the price tag for the facility at approximately $5 million.

But given the county’s other needs, developing a recreation facility might be a long time coming, county commissioners said.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Phil Faison said the county already has put as much money as it can afford into parks and recreation projects since the parks and recreation program got off the ground two years ago.

While Faison supports the idea of an indoor recreation center sometime in the future, now may not be the time for investing in a project of that magnitude, he said.

“We just formed a county sponsored Parks and Recreation Department (two years ago) and we have already put hundreds of thousands of dollars into recreation employees, field improvement, and equipment,” Faison said. “Their needs are satisfied for now.”

Faison said the county’s need for water and sewer infrastructure must be the county’s primary focus right now.

“(The ECU project) is not going to die, but that building they came up with has got to be paid for and our county borrowing power is maxed out,” he said.

Commissioner Sandy Duckwall said she, too, supports recreation efforts, but believes it will be difficult funding a $5 million recreation complex when the county isn’t meeting its revenue goals.

“I do support recreation in the future, but with money the way it is right now, we’re not meeting our forecasted revenue goals, and we may not need to spend money we don’t have,” she said.

New Commissioner Garry Meiggs says the board will look at projects next year that are similar to the one proposed in the ECU study. However, his attention will be focused on ways to diversify the county’s tax base, he said.

“Recreation will be looked at, but infrastructure is the only way to diversify our tax base,” Meiggs said.
Michael McLain, like Meiggs a new commissioner, said if Camden reaches consensus to use the Golden LEAF Foundation's $2 million grant on a recreation-oriented project, he will support it.

However, if the county chooses to use the grant dollars for another project, the $5 million recreation facility is unlikely to be built anytime soon, he said.

"It’s a viable project, but (without Golden LEAF) we would have go through the process of finding additional grant money," McLain said. "The issue is the cost of the building, and with a dwindling revenue, it will be difficult, if not impossible to fund it."

Commissioner Melvin Jeralds was unavailable for comment.

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