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East Carolina University program targets rural dentist shortage, plans learning clinic in Sylva

By Jon Ostendorff

A clinic planned for Jackson County is part of a new strategy for addressing a shortage of dentists in North Carolina's most rural areas.

East Carolina University will use Sylva, along with three other towns in the eastern part of the state, as a site for one of its planned community service learning centers.

The university will open a dental school, the second in North Carolina, in 2011. Some dental school faculty members would be based in the centers, which will provide real-world training for advanced dental residents and senior students.

ECU plans to admit 50 students a year to its dental school and hopes to one day have 10 clinics in some of the state's smallest counties.

The move comes as North Carolina and other states grapple with a shortage of dentists in rural communities and the impending retirement of older dentists who make up the work force in those places.

Four N.C. counties, all of them east of Interstate 95, have no dentist at all, according to a report this year by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at UNC.

The center found that dentists in rural counties are three years older on average than those in urban areas. In 12 rural counties, the average age was 55.

The Tar Heel State is not alone.

Health officials in Kansas this year found that 91 out of 105 counties there have a dentist shortage and that retiring dentists will soon make that problem worse in rural areas. In California — home to 14 percent of the nation's dentists — 233 communities have a shortage of dentists, according to a UCLA study this year.

That's where ECU's idea can help, said Dr. Alec Parker, the executive director of the N.C. Dental Society, which represents 3,500 dentists. He said the plan is probably the first of its type in the nation.

A typical dental student leaves school with $150,000 in education loans and then has to raise half a million dollars to open a practice.

"It makes it very difficult for someone to go into an area that is economically depressed and make ends meet," he said.

On top of that, people in rural counties sometimes aren't aware of the importance of dental services so even if a dental practice opens, they don't go, Parker said.
The clinics could solve these problems by educating rural residents on the importance of dental examinations — priming the market for a commercial dental practice — while showing students that there are quality-of-life benefits to living in rural areas.

Parker said the learning clinics will also have to stand on their own, which will be good training for up-and-coming dentist interested in managing a practice in the country.

And the clinics also have a short-term, public health benefit.

“The need is just tremendous,” said Karen Minton, director of the Blue Ridge Free Dental Clinic in Cashiers. "Any help we could get would be great."

That clinic has seven volunteer dentists who work about two days a week. It has a backlog of 400 patients and gets 50-75 calls a week, Minton said.

ECU hasn't determined prices at the clinics. But university spokesman John Durham said ECU is committed to offer dental service regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

The university has looked at two sites on the Southwestern Community College campus. Western Carolina University's Allied Health Center is also a possibility. Medical offices near Harris Regional Medical Center might also be considered.

Mixed reactions

Cecil Groves, president of Southwestern Community College, said the center will be welcomed in Sylva.

“We are very excited about what they are doing, especially in rural areas,” said Groves. “Good dental health is important for overall health and we are looking forward to working with ECU in any way possible.”

Paula Carden, director of the Jackson County Health Department, which runs a dental service, said the clinic is needed in the western end of the state.

“The farther west you go from Buncombe and Haywood counties, the fewer dentists you have,” she said. “The demographics show that a lot of the dentists will be aging out. Without new guys coming in, you are not going to have enough.”

Some dentists, though, are skeptical of the idea.

Dr. Larry Barbles, who moved to Franklin four years ago after practicing in Houston, said he's not so sure North Carolina needs more dentists in rural counties.

Up to 10 practices already serve the Macon County area, he said.

He said more dentists mean more involvement from health management organizations, which tend to push lower-quality services.

New dentists often contract with HMOs to get their practices started because the companies bring them customers.

He said he watched a similar trend in Texas as the state's multiple dental schools produced too many doctors for the market.

“When you have that type of situation the quality of dentistry goes down and the patient loses,” he said.
Barbles said it will take more than just spending time in a clinic to get more dentists to open practices in the country.

"The only way you can get something like that to really work is you have to have a commitment from these guys to go back to that town," he said.
Holland keeps consistent approach with Holtz’s courtship

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Monday, December 14, 2009

East Carolina athletic director Terry Holland remained consistent Monday on the status of head football coach Skip Holtz.

As has been the case the last couple of seasons, Holtz’s name has been mentioned in connection with numerous coaching vacancies across the country, including Cincinnati this week. Holland, who hired Holtz to take over a losing team in late 2004, said he’s always had the same feeling when it comes to his coach participating in courtship with other schools.

“He has not sought another position but has my permission and, to some extent, my encouragement to listen to those who wish to tell him why he should consider their opening,” Holland said of Holtz. “He has listened, to varying degrees, to a relatively small number of AD’s with openings over that time period and so far he has concluded that ECU and Greenville are the best fit for him and his family professionally and personally.”

Holland said any change in that status will be reported through ECU’s sports media relations department.

Holtz has been targeted by numerous schools, including Syracuse last year, after his unprecedented success at ECU.

The Pirates, winners of two straight Conference USA championships, will play in a school record fourth consecutive bowl game when they take on Arkansas Jan. 2 in the Liberty Bowl.

“The Pirate nation, the athletic department and the football program under coach Holtz have established a mutual bond that has been the foundation for spectacular results,” Holland said. “Each entity has made a 100 percent commitment to that mutual bond and also to supporting each other’s best interests to the best of our ability.”

Holtz is 38-26 in five seasons with the Pirates, including 9-4 this year.

Freeney unleashed

Darryl Freeney undoubtedly was the biggest offensive surprise of the season for East Carolina, and he arrived at the perfect time.

The sophomore wide receiver showed flashes of greatness last season, but it wasn’t until this year and until senior Jamar Bryant was sidelined by injury that Freeney’s true worth was revealed.

Entering the Liberty Bowl, Freeney is second on the Pirates in receiving behind leading man Dwayne Harris, having made 42 catches for 642 yards and three touchdowns. Being on such a hot streak at the end of the regular season, Freeney hopes the layoff before the bowl won’t cool his pace.

“This is going to be slight adjustment for us because coming into the conference championship game, we were used to playing every week,” said Freeney, whose team will be back on the practice field Thursday following exams. “We’re going to have a couple of weeks off, and hopefully we’ll take that time and get some film work done over the break.”

With Freeney and Harris both playing so well, senior quarterback Patrick Pinkney having found his groove and
senior back Dominique Lindsay having been in a groove all season, Freeney believes there are plenty of possibilities for the Pirates Jan. 2 in Memphis.

"We still feel we haven't played our best game yet on offense," he said. "We had a lot of plays left on the field, but we can take this opportunity, adjust and get better from it and try to get a win at the Liberty Bowl."

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Simple rules: Straightforward measure boosts safety

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

There is a great deal riding on efforts to improve public safety in downtown Greenville, but few have a more vested interest than the restaurant and nightclub owners who depend on those establishments for income. They need to help cultivate a crime-free environment if their businesses are to thrive.

The City Council’s imposition of new rules to govern who can be employed as bouncers should help in reaching that goal since it would provide training and knowledge to individuals uniquely situated to prevent trouble before it starts. The ordinance is by no means the solution to the downtown problem, but it is a step in the right direction.

The shooting deaths of two men on a Fifth Street sidewalk this summer launched a long overdue discussion about public safety in the heart of the city. Changes were needed if Greenville wanted to preserve the downtown district as a destination for commerce and entertainment, though opinions varied dramatically as to the most appropriate and effective course of action.

At a public meeting in August, the City Council began the process of considering four ordinances aimed at reducing crime in that area and improving the sense of safety enjoyed by those who frequent it. One was quickly dismissed, but the council proceeded with remaining items that would change the zoning rules for clubs and bars, would require those establishments to staff off-duty law enforcement officers at key times and would establish guidelines for hiring and training bouncers.

Last week, the council approved that final ordinance that will require completion of a four-hour training course, conducted by the Greenville Police Department free of charge. It also prohibits those downtown businesses from hiring bouncers convicted of certain criminal acts, such as assault or criminal street gang activity, with the intention of putting more responsible and mature people in those positions.

The passage of this law represents an important first step in the city’s efforts to improve safety downtown. Trained bouncers can better spot the first signs of trouble in a bar or club and act before problems escalate. That will certainly help law enforcement, and create a better atmosphere for customers.

The city has yet to determine the most equitable way to pay for more expansive police patrols downtown, or whether changing the zoning in that district represents the most appropriate approach to fighting crime. But this ordinance shows the council remains focused on the city’s crime problem and will adopt thoughtful initiatives that can help cultivate a safer community.

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Nun weaves colorful threads into one whole

By Amanda Greene
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Published: Monday, December 14, 2009 at 1:05 p.m.

Sister Rosemary McNamara is finally taking a breath.

The last college students studying for exams at the Newman Center Catholic Campus Ministry house, where she is the new director, have all gone home for the holiday break.

Last week, a group of 10 students and faculty listened as McNamara renewed her vows as a sister of St. Ursula during Holy Communion on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. On Sundays, about 80 students attend Mass at the center.

"Through the intercession of Mary, I ask you, Lord, to give me enough love to respond to your call every day of my life. Amen," she said, taking the communion wafer from Father Al Dash, the center’s sacramental minister.

We caught up with McNamara before the break to ask about her first semester ministering to students at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Q: The Newman Center looks really different these days. What have you been doing?

A: "Well, the junipers in the front of the house were 15-feet tall, and you couldn’t tell what the house was. That was not welcoming or accessible and it was covering the ramp out front. So we trimmed that and reclaimed the front yard. Then I had a new roof put on, and the Knights of Columbus built a deck for us out back. Next semester, I want to convert the garage into a prayer space available to any..."
pedestrian walking up Racine Drive. Just a quiet place to pray.”

Q: You’ve been here before, right? What made you return to Wilmington?

A: “I was the director of social ministry at St. Mary Catholic Church 1991-1998, and my community (of St. Ursula) asked me to be the treasurer for the congregation, managing the retirement fund for the sisters and the property. After my second term as treasurer, I asked to go to full-theological study at Western Jesuit School of Theology in Boston. I’ve always had students with me in my ministry, and my thought was it’s the college students who have the greatest need,” she said. So she applied here after the former campus minister Rev. Seung Yu resigned.

Q: What are the challenges of ministering to college students?

A: “When students land on campus, there’s a whole series of questioning that goes on. I thought would it be possible to put myself in a position where I can be in conversation with students when they’re deciding their path? It’s an opportunity where nothing’s taken for granted. The vast majority of students here in the South have never met a sister. So I make no assumptions.”

Q: How have you been reaching out to the community?

A: “I wanted to find out how do we make ourselves known and respond to the Catholic needs on campus. See, I’m basically a weaver. I like to take lots of colorful threads and weave them all together. So I invited the youth group at St. Mark Catholic Church to come to a pumpkin carving party here. I asked kids from St. Mary Catholic Church to collect food for our Thanksgiving service. I wanted them to know what we do here, but if you give young people one good experience at a Newman Center growing up, they might look for one on their campus in the future.”

Q: What are your non-bricks-and-mortar plans for next semester?

A: “Some of our students, for one reason or another, never got confirmed so a few of them are working on that for next year. I want to bring in a lecture series and work with the Newman Center at ECU (East Carolina University) on a mission project. I want to teach them that we’re about love and being the people God intended us to be and giving an account of the hope that is within us.”

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Proposed merger worries Duke minority students
Effort made to lay off staffers and consolidate

BY VIRGINIA BRIDGES, Correspondent

For Jack Zhang, Duke University budget cuts are hitting home.

Since his first week of school, the 20-year-old junior says, he has found a second home at the university's Center for Multicultural Affairs, an organization that supports minority students from this country.

"I feel like the center provides a valuable refuge and resource, and mentoring for students like me," said Zhang, an Asian-American from Pittsburgh who is a work-study student at the center. "You have time to explore things that matter to you, and you have time to explore your identity."

Now Zhang is part of a group protesting a decision to lay off two of the center's four staff members, including longtime director Julian Sanchez. Students say they don't understand why Duke wants to merge the Multicultural Center with the International House, which serves mostly foreign students.

Assistant Vice President for Campus Life Zoila Airall prefers the word integration to merger. She proposed it after researching methods to bridge cultural divides.

"I thought it was something new and cutting edge," she said.

Regardless, Airall halted the proposal late last month after objections from Duke Student Government and other groups.

"Proposed merger worries Duke minority students"
The new plan calls for a study team to determine how to move forward, she said. Until its report is finalized next spring, the organizations will operate as they have in the past, Airall said.

Historically, the Multicultural Center has fostered dialogue by hosting dinners and discussion groups, and funding organizations such as the Center for Race Relations, students said. The International House provides educational and other services, guiding international students and their families through orientation, according to the organization's Web site.

The layoffs of Sanchez and his secretary, Juanita Johnson, will stand as Duke looks to conduct business on leaner budgets, Airall said.

Students, however, said they don't trust the process.

"Even thought the administration will not go forward, the fact that the layoffs are continuing seems to predict the outcome no matter what," said Spencer Eldred, Duke Student Government's vice president for student affairs.

The announcement

Kirby Erlando and Lucas Lallinger, co-presidents of the student-run Center for Race Relations, said they learned of the merger in an e-mail from Student Affairs Vice President Larry Moneta. It noted Duke's goal of cutting its budget by $125 million, a staff reduction effort - including 20 positions in Student Affairs - and the student pharmacy's closing Dec. 18.

"Second, the Center for Multicultural Affairs will merge with the International House to form a new unit, tentatively named 'The Global Cultures Center;" the e-mail said. "This integration will intentionally consolidate the support and delivery of many cultural programs and services to students of all backgrounds ... while ensuring the continuity of programs offered by CMA and I-House."

International House Director Li-Chen Chin did not return messages. Alexis Rosenblum, president of the International Association, said the organization initially opposed the merger but is satisfied with the new plan.

Center for Race Relations

The Center for Race Relations' co-presidents' main concerns are the loss of two "vital" staff members and the lack of student input and transparency in the process. Sanchez, the Center's faculty sponsor, and Johnson were key components to the Multicultural Center's effort to improve race relations on campus, Erlando and Lallinger said.

"We are very [grateful] that the decision has been postponed, but they have been given very little information as to why these staff members," Erlando said. "I think it is unfair for the administration to want us to move forward without a fully functioning MCC."
Students also said they didn’t understand why other cultural groups such as the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture were excluded from the merger. A new student organization, the Self-Determination Council, has evolved out of the dissent to protest the changes. Sanchez didn’t respond to messages. Johnson criticized university officials for not figuring out details such as who would cover her duties, before they made the announcement.

"The diversification that the Multicultural Center presents is something that the International House is not a part of," she said. "Their issues are totally different issues."

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Exam stress gone in a flash

By now you've read about the flash rave event held last night/this morning at Davis Library at UNC-Chapel Hill.

You haven't? Here's how it went. You can click on the Video tab above to watch it, and click on the Gallery tab to see photos.

Davis Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

10:30 p.m.

All is quiet. It's finals, so there are plenty of students here, clickety-clicking away on their laptops. Nothing seems amiss in this vanilla, institutional facility with bright walls and floors that echo loudly with the squeaking of shoes.

But it's a library, which means people talk mostly in whispers and little is heard aside from the occasional buzz of a ringing cell phone and the bright, cheery 'ding' that accompanies the opening of an elevator door.

It doesn't exactly scream "Dance Club."

It will get louder.

11 p.m.

Three students march some heavy audio equipment across the second-floor landing, aiming speakers towards the floor below.

Several people look up and, unfazed, go back to their work.

The floor, a long walkway, is deserted. For now.

11:30 p.m.

There will be no more studying tonight. Not with the buzz growing louder. Students are jockeying for position now, lining up elbow to elbow along the second-floor railing for the best view of the madness to take place below.

This is Rave Night at UNC-Chapel Hill.

11:45 p.m.

Students have packed the main floor. Arm to arm, shoulder to shoulder. It's hot. Moist. Humid. Loud. Because students will grab any opportunity to dress in costume, there are bananas on the loose, and dudes in '70s costumes, and a guy in a fake beard holding aloft an inflatable woman. Yes, that sort of
inflatable woman.

And suddenly, it's midnight. The lights go down and the music goes up. The thump-thump-thumping beat of a techno-pop mix blares and the mass of students starts jumping, shaking, screaming, yelling.

A young woman is raised aloft and crowd-surfs her way across the room, occasionally tugging at her T-shirt, trying to stay clothed.

A dozen more crowd-surfers are passed, hand over hand, through the maelstrom. They're laughing, but there are plenty of dicey moments.

The crowd sways ominously, its momentum stronger than any one person. At least crowd-surfing student gets dropped and slams to the floor.

He gets up, smiling.

In 10 minutes, it's all over. The music stops, the students sing the UNC fight song, and leave. That's the idea of the flash rave, a massive tension-buster held now each semester during final exams.

The idea is to assemble several thousand of your best friends, converge on the library and dance around like crazy people for 10 minutes. You know, to get it out of your system.

"It was definitely cathartic," said Elizabeth Merritt, a freshman, minutes after emerging from the mosh pit. "Everyone needs to let off some steam and this is a pretty healthy way to do it."

The UNC Flash Rave began three semesters ago. It was somewhat covert then and surprised some students and library staff.

But the rave is no longer a secret. It has a Facebook page, where at least 5,600 students had pledged their participation, and was the subject of a recent story in the Daily Tar Heel, which reported on it as it would any other campus event expected to draw thousands of participants.

"The goal was definitely to make this a regular event and I think that is what it has become," said Bobby Nieland, one of the student organizers, prior to the chaos. "I think I does provide a lot of stress relief. This year, especially, people know it's coming. They are excited for it. They get to do something out of the ordinary; be extremely loud in a library."

Swiftly, the dozen or so students who put the event together are in clean-up mode, rearranging chairs, sweeping dirt and gathering up their sound equipment. By 1 a.m., the library will be silent once again.

No students appeared visibly injured in the moments after the rave ended. But plenty had their chances, given the overpowering swaying of a crowd that numbered in the thousands.

A lot of students said they were happy to observe from above, on the second-floor overlook.

"We went to the first one and it was much tamer," said Arielle Wright, a sophomore. "That wasn't fun [tonight]. It was dangerous."
New Rules for Colleges on Defaults

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More than one in five borrowers of federal student loans who attend commercial colleges default within three years of beginning repayment, according to new figures being made available on Monday by the Department of Education.

Historically, the government has reported such figures in terms of how many students default within two years — a figure that stands at 6.7 percent of student borrowers over all and about 11 percent at commercial colleges.

But the new three-year numbers, though preliminary, give a clearer picture of whether a student at a particular college will default, and the government will soon begin using them to help decide which colleges qualify for taxpayer-supported student-aid programs.

Currently, colleges with default rates over 25 percent for three straight years can be disqualified, but experts argued that colleges were manipulating the two-year figures.

So, starting in 2012, colleges will be judged on how many students default within three years of starting repayment, though the new threshold default rate for penalties will be 30 percent instead of 25 percent.

Nearly 12 percent of borrowers who began repayment in the 2007 fiscal year defaulted within three years — up from 9.2 percent for 2006. But at commercial colleges, the rate was 21.2 percent within three years, The Associated Press calculated from the government’s data. That was up from 18.8 percent for the 2006 fiscal year.

Harris Miller, president of the Career College Association, which represents commercial colleges, said the increase reflected the poor economy. He also said that high default rates did not measure an institution’s quality, and that his group’s members enrolled large numbers of low-income students.

“If you accept low-income students, you’re going to have high default rates,” Mr. Miller said.

In recent years, only a handful of institutions have lost eligibility for federal aid because of high default rates.

The new data, however, show that more than 300 colleges — more than 85 percent of them commercial — had three-year default rates higher than 30 percent. Those colleges will have to improve when the rules take effect or risk losing federal aid.

Most of those colleges, however, are smaller, local institutions and not the giant national chains. Among the better-known institutions, the data indicate a three-year default rate of 15.9 percent at the University of
Phoenix, 23.2 percent at Kaplan University and 17.1 percent at DeVry University.

Still, the three-year rates at those institutions are all rising. The figures do not include private student loans.