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State revenue shortfalls hindering PCC's growth

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Monday, December 15, 2008

WINTERVILLE — Pitt Community College often sees greater demand during tough economic times, its president says, but state revenue shortfalls are starting to hinder its growth.

The college earlier this month was required to send an additional 1 percent of its allocated funding back to the state, increasing its cumulative reversion for the current fiscal year to 3 percent.

PCC President Dennis Massey said the cuts come at a time of steady growth for the college, as people scramble to acquire new job skills in rocky economic conditions. Less funding means fewer people and equipment to meet those needs, he said.

“We are reaching a point where our capacity is being exceeded by demand,” Massey said.

Each of the state’s 58 community colleges was required to return funding, and Massey said state budget officials have told them more cuts could be on the way.

PCC received just more than $28 million in state funding this year, an increase of approximately 3.7 percent. But the college grew by 9 percent in the fall semester, and a 7.5-percent enrollment increase is expected in the spring.

Massey said the college has altered some of its plans for the spring semester, including instituting a freeze on new hires.

Funding earmarked for equipment and technical education also has been trimmed.

There have been no changes in the status of current staff, Massey said.

“Things are clicking along in terms of our services we are providing, but with the current economic conditions, there is a likelihood that demand will increase as we see more dislocated workers,” Massey said. “There is a limit to what we can absorb in terms of reductions.”

Massey said the North Carolina Community College System Office told colleges in August to hold 2-4 percent of state funds for a possible reversion.

Colleges which grew by more than 5 percent this year did receive a portion of Enrollment Reserve Funds last month from the state, but Massey said PCC sent back the more than $200,000 it received.

The state budget cuts have been hitting all levels of education.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction last month notified state school systems that they would be responsible for sending back a combined $58 million in state budget allotments. For Pitt County Schools, that meant $912,035.

East Carolina University also had to return around $10 million to the state.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletcherw@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
Local artist’s ornament hangs at White House

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Monday, December 15, 2008

Holly Garriott didn’t realize what an honor it was to design an ornament for the White House Christmas tree.

She assumed there would be thousands pouring in from across the country. Instead, there were fewer than 400.

The ornaments would surely be sprinkled throughout the residence, she thought, rather than be the sole decor for a towering central tree that scraped the ceiling.

But all was illuminated Dec. 2 when she stepped into the White House Blue Room — after extensive security clearances, of course — to be greeted by First Lady Laura Bush and spot her ornament nestled among the others.

U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones had chosen her, and her alone, to design a Christmas ornament on behalf of his entire district.

“That’s when I really started to get excited,” said Garriott, executive director for Emerge Gallery and Art Center and faculty member at East Carolina University. “The White House was really impressive. (The ornaments) were just all so different.”

A few weeks earlier she had been mailed a round, silver ornament, given a “red, white and blue” theme and told to “express the spirit of your state.”

Garriott looked at her face reflected in the shiny orb and drew a blank. She’s no painter, she claims, and would have preferred to “stick things to it.” But images representing North Carolina are plentiful and well-known, and she soon set down to work with several ideas.

The backdrop of the ornament is the North Carolina flag, over the top of which she painted state symbols: cardinal, dogwood, Hatteras lighthouse, tobacco leaf, pottery. But there are also tiny details easily overlooked.

Garriott printed off facts about North Carolina — weird things, she said — to form borders between different colors. The paper strips include how many roads the state maintains, and historical data on the North Carolina Art Museum in Raleigh.

“It was exciting to do something creative and something that transcended political issues,” Garriott said of the experience. “It didn’t matter so much who was in the White House. All it was about was these ornaments and talking to different artists.”

An aide at Jones’ Greenville office said Garriott was chosen based on her talent and the role she plays in the local arts community. Jones works with Emerge annually to organize the Congressional High School Art Competition — a partnership both parties say works very well.

“She was the first person that came to mind,” William Moore said. “Choosing Holly meant knowing she would represent the Third District well.”

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at k kennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.
Sporting News honors Holtz, Wilson

The Daily Reflector

Monday, December 15, 2008

East Carolina football coach Skip Holtz and defensive end C.J. Wilson were both honored by the Sporting News on Monday.

Holtz was named Conference USA’s coach of the year, while Wilson earned the league’s nod for defensive most valuable player.

Holtz, who led the Pirates to a 27-24 victory over Tulsa in the Conference USA championship game, has led East Carolina to a 9-4 record so far this season. The nine wins are the program’s highest single-season total since 1999.

The Pirates will meet Kentucky in the Liberty Bowl on Jan. 2 in Memphis. A victory would give the Pirates 10 wins for the first time since the 1991 season.

Wilson, a junior, added to his hardware collection last week when he was named to the All Conference USA first team by the league’s coaches and Phil Steele Magazine.

The Belhaven native has started 22 consecutive games and this season has recorded at least one sack in nine of the team’s 13 games.

He currently ranks among the NCAA active leaders in assisted sacks (eighth), assisted tackles for loss (12th), total sacks (12th), total sacks per game (12th) and solo sacks (20th).

Wilson helped the East Carolina defensive unit force at least two turnovers in 10 games, hold three opponents to less than 100 yards rushing (Tulane, UCF and UTEP) and two opponents to 100 yards or fewer passing (WVU and Memphis).

The Pirates will take the next 10 days off for the holidays before returning to the practice field on Dec. 26 to prepare for the Liberty Bowl.

— ECU Media Relations
2008 — A Reflection

As the year comes to a close, we reflect on the interesting and somewhat frustrating changes 2008 brought. It was interesting in that our nation, state and community elected new public officials and our community has continued to grow and prosper in so many ways. Frustrating in that the economy has taken a serious downturn, which presents particular challenges for each of us. Throughout these changes, your Chamber has held steadfast to its mission and has helped shape the positives for our business community and the quality of life in Greenville and Pitt County. My personal priorities during the past year have been to: 1) walk the talk of the Chamber's mission through strengthening the business environment, enhancing the quality of life, communicating the views of business and supporting constructive initiatives on major issues of public policy 2) provide leadership to our community in what we do; and 3) to embrace inclusiveness through the inclusion of businesses with owners who represent the ever-changing nature of our population and making sure that every member has the opportunity to be a part of the American dream.

When we review the accomplishments in our Program of Work, it is evident to me that your Chamber held steadfast to its mission and its priorities. From establishing a vibrant Young Professionals Group, to participating in the community's Latino initiative, to establishing a Minority Business Council, taking important stands on matters of federal and state legislation, to hosting a community-wide issues forum on our schools, the lay leadership and the professional staff have represented your Chamber very well, indeed. Thanks to each of you who contribute in unheralded ways and for your continuing support of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce. Join me in recommitting to our work in the coming year.

Austin W. Bunch
ELLIS F. HALL JR.

Ellis F. Hall Jr. Col. (Ret.) Ellis Franklin Hall Jr., 82, died Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008. The funeral service will be conducted Monday at 3 p.m. in Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church. Burial will be held Tuesday at 2 p.m. in God's Acre in Salem, in Winston-Salem. Ellis was born in Winston-Salem to Ellis Franklin and Rachel Evans Hall. He received his education in the schools of Winston-Salem; North Georgia College; a BS from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC; an MBA from Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, and an Honorary Member of the ECU Alumni Association. On Sept. 4, 1948, he was united in marriage with Miss Barbara Alice Ward of Salisbury. He served for 32 years in the United States Army, Medical Service Corps, retiring in April, 1981, at Fort Bragg. He then pursued a career at East Carolina University with The Brody School of Medicine. He then retired from ECU in June, 1992, as Associate Vice Chancellor for Administration, Health Sciences Division. His community involvement included serving as the chair and committee leader for many Michael Jordan Celebrity Golf Tournaments, benefiting the Ronald McDonald Houses of North Carolina. He is survived by his wife with whom he shared 60 years of happy marriage, Barbara W. Hall; daughters, Judith Anne Hall Desper and husband, Steve, of Chapel Hill, Patt Evans Hall Haun and husband, Tom, of Arnold, Md., and Dana Williams Hall Gallagher, of Rome, Ga.; son, Ellis Franklin Hall III and wife, Sherri, of Franklin, Ind.; sister, Mrs. R. W. "Betty Ann" Wilkinson, of Wake Forest; and five grandchildren. The family will receive friends Sunday from 3 to 5 p.m. at Wilkerson Funeral Home. Memorial contributions may be made to the Salem Congregation, Provincial Treasurer, 459 South Church St., Winston-Salem, NC 27101. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

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State's wants dwarf its means

Reports from public meetings across N.C. show many needs. It's unlikely the state can afford them

BENJAMIN NIOLET, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

RALEIGH -

Gov.-elect Beverly Perdue wanted to know what needs fixing in North Carolina, and in a series of meetings open to the public, her transition staff heard an earful.

Many of the challenges are well-known -- there is a desperate need for more community-based options for mental health care, the state's probation system is struggling and the state's mechanism to pay for building roads is coming up short.

But 14 reports released by Perdue on Monday offer a much broader look at the issues facing the next governor, from whether to buy more hybrid cars for the state's motor pool to whether the legislature should ban trans fats in restaurants. One report called for a new Cabinet-level position to deal with military issues in North Carolina. Some of the ideas dealt with ways the state could scale back on costs, such as a recommended 10 percent cut in travel by government officials.

The overwhelming majority, though, would cost more money. And money figures to be scarce with the state facing a potentially large budget shortfall next year.

Perdue, a Democrat, said the reports were meant to give her administration public input to go along with the bureaucratic view of what government should be doing.

"I am going to expect folks to listen to the citizens," Perdue said in an interview. "I think that's good for the state."

The meetings, held across the state, attracted 500 to 700 people. They heard presentations from state officials and then had an opportunity to suggest and discuss priorities. The reports, most 10 pages or more, summarize
who was there and what was said. They often contain bureaucratic jargon, such as one suggestion that the state should "incentivize DOT to partner."

What doesn't work

But on the whole, the reports are a summary of many of the things that don't work in state government. They don't cover all criticisms. Rep. Alice Bordsen, a Mebane Democrat, said she was disappointed that the report on the Department of Correction did not present a big-picture view of how the department should be operating or discuss removing offenders younger than 18 from the adult justice system.

"Let's see what comes of it all," she said of the reports.

The education report recommends expanding the state's early childhood services, among other changes that will cost money the state doesn't have, said Terry Stoops, an education policy analyst with the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh think tank.

"It looks expensive," Stoops said. "It's going to sit on the shelf until economic conditions improve."

Perdue said she intends to study the reports during the holidays. Her agency heads will receive a copy.

"It's a great way to start for a new administration," she said. "We've got it from the bureaucratic perspective and the people's perspective. Now we've got to figure out how to make it work for everybody."

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Staff writers Ryan Teague Beckwith, Lynn Bonner, Mark Johnson, Dan Kane and Wade Rawlins contributed to this report.

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Holtz: No raise needed

Football coach Skip Holtz did not ask East Carolina for a counter offer while Syracuse courted him. coach

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

East Carolina did not need more money to persuade Skip Holtz to remain its football coach.

Athletics director Terry Holland said Monday that Holtz -- who was recently courted by Syracuse -- did not ask to change his contract again or for ECU to make a counter offer.

East Carolina already had rewarded Holtz in September with a revised contract that could pay him $9.4 million with bonuses through 2013.

Honored Monday as Conference USA Coach of the Year by The Sporting News Magazine, Holtz announced Friday that he had turned down the Syracuse job.

"We are happy for him to stay here," Holland said. "He made this decision."

"We certainly think it is the right one."

The fourth-year Pirates coach guided an injury-riddled team to the Conference USA East Division title, the league championship and a berth in the Jan. 2 Liberty Bowl (5 p.m., ESPN) against Kentucky at Memphis, Tenn.

A bowl victory would give ECU 10 wins for the first time since 1991, when coach Bill Lewis led the Pirates to an 11-1 record capped with a Peach Bowl triumph over N.C. State.

Holtz is giving his players a 10-day Christmas break before resuming pre-bowl practice Dec. 26, two days before they fly to Memphis.

There will be no such break for Holtz -- who has led the Pirates to three straight winning seasons and three consecutive bowls -- and his staff, however. They are out recruiting this week.
They hope to find more players like junior C.J. Wilson, who on Monday was voted C-USA's defensive MVP by The Sporting News.

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