ECU grad walks away from paralysis
Saturday, December 17, 2011

ECU News Services

Students of sociology are familiar with the Thomas theorem. “If men define their situations as real,” it states, “they are real in their consequences.”

That premise and her family’s prayers are what carried East Carolina University graduate Jill Allender through an injury few people survive. Allender was confined to a hospital bed when she officially graduated in May. This week, she finally celebrated the completion of a master’s degree with honors in applied sociology.

Doctors once doubted she would ever move, walk or even breathe on her own again. Her family refused to believe it. They wouldn’t let that prognosis become real.

Allender suffered an internal decapitation April 30 when a vehicle traveling 60 miles per hour struck the passenger car she was driving near her Beaufort County home. Four broken vertebrae prevented her spine from supporting her head.
She doesn’t remember the wreck. First responders arrived quickly, located a pulse and she was transported to Pitt County Memorial Hospital. Allender woke up in a “locked in” state, she said, meaning she only could move her eyes.

“She’s the youngest of six,” her mother, Beth Allender, said. “She was put here to fight, and maybe to fight this particular battle.”

Beth, who also is an ECU alumna, has a notebook in which she recorded her daughter’s daily progress. The outside is plain, but Beth Allender considers the timeline inside miraculous.

Declared a quadriplegic, Allender moved her left foot slightly just one week after the accident, her mother said.

“It was just enough to let you know it was possible, that (recovery) was coming,” Beth Allender said. Allender soon came off the ventilator and was moved out of the intensive care unit. A Greenville orthopedic surgeon was able to fuse her head to her spine by modifying a hipbone plate. On May 18, Allender said hello to her mother.

With a little more time and some physical therapy, Allender stood up. She walked 30 feet and then 180 feet. She ate pizza again.

“I thought (my recovery) was slow, but they kept telling me how fast it was,” Allender said.

There were hiccups along the way, including a respiratory failure in mid-May. Her mother never lost hope, and never let the doctors tell Allender what her limitations might be.

On June 10, Allender walked out of rehab.

Few physical reminders of the accident remain. Allender bears the scars from the tube that enabled her breathing and a metal halo that held her head in place as her bones healed. Skin and tissue on her left arm are scarred. Still, she’s quick to remember how fortunate she is in the face of frustration.

“I woke up smiling and I’ve been smiling since,” Allender said.
Family members weren’t the only ones by her side as she regained movement and confidence. Sociology Department faculty started visiting Allender in the hospital less than a week after the accident, bringing food for family members, money and words of encouragement.

“They’re all such good people,” Allender said. “I knew that. But the fact that they all came out? That was surprising.”

Both Allender and her mother had the opportunity to offer their gratitude Friday, in the process of accomplishing something she was meant to do in May. She walked at graduation.

“Everyone in my family and then some are going to be there,” Allender said, prior to the event. Scheduled to speak to her classmates as part of the departmental ceremony, Allender said she would tell them about her reaffirmed belief in the Thomas theorem.

“If you define it as real, it’s real in its consequences,” she paraphrased. “They never told me I was paralyzed. They left me hope.”
Dr. Tom Irons, professor of pediatrics, director of ECU's Generalist Physician Program and associate vice chancellor for regional health services, gives the keynote speech during the ceremony Friday. (Rhett Butler)

**ECU graduates 'ready to set sail'**

“*I hope you will choose to be forces for change, to work to make a difference, to take your talents and use them in the service of others.*”

* Dr. Thomas Irons
  commencement speaker

By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Saturday, December 17, 2011

After an action-packed semester, graduation ceremonies went smoothly for the East Carolina University Class of 2011 in the 103rd fall commencement.

More than 3,300 graduates were awarded degrees on Friday at the conclusion of a semester that included an earthquake, a hurricane, a campuswide lockdown over an umbrella mistaken for a rifle and a football game streaker.

“We can look back on these four years with a smile,” senior class officer Casey Anthony said. “Life will throw us a few curve balls ... We’re finally ready to set sail. Congratulations seniors, we did it! Go Pirates!”
Delivering some life advice to graduates was commencement speaker Dr. Thomas Irons, associate vice chancellor for health sciences and professor of pediatrics at the ECU Brody School of Medicine.

“I hope you will choose to be forces for change, to work to make a difference, to take your talents and use them in the service of others,” Irons said. “Whatever your chosen business or profession, I hope you will remain in a posture of service all your life.”

Graduates were eager to get to work on the next steps in their lives.

“I’m so relieved and excited,” said Jordin Mack, who received a Bachelor of Science degree in interior design.

“I’m excited. I’m glad it’s over,” Melinda Wooten, who earned her master’s in health education and promotion, said. “I’m looking forward to new things.”

Construction management major Matt Noonan said he was “ready to move on. I had a great time at ECU but I’m ready for the next chapter.”

Graduates were upbeat about venturing into the job market in a bleak economy.

“I was worried, but I got an offer this week as a project engineer for a general contractor,” Noonan said. “I’ve been working hourly with that company for a few months and they’ve seen a lot of business lately, I think things are turning around.”

Wooten said networking was key. “You’ve just got to get out there and look.”

“I’m taking a break for a while,” Mack said. “But I’m optimistic.”

Parents were feeling their share of Pirate pride.

“The pride was awesome,” said Alta Andrews, whose son Adam graduated with a Bachelor of Science in nursing.
She also is a member of the nursing faculty at ECU. “And it was a special sense of pride since he was in my area,” she said.

Adam was “not bothered at all” by being a male in a female-dominated profession, his mother said.

“There are more men in his class than ever before, and the numbers continue to grow,” she said. “They’re looking for more nurses. The graduates are very fortunate to have this opportunity.”

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
ECU graduates in the Department of Nursing have their caps decorated during commencement. (Rhett Butler)

**Grads celebrate with caps, shoes**

By Jackie Drake  
The Daily Reflector  
Saturday, December 17, 2011

East Carolina University class of 2011 graduates are stepping off on the right foot in both life and footwear. Underneath the rows and rows of uniform purple robes was a huge variety of shoes: everything from basic business shoes and practical boots to high-fashion heels.

Not limited to standard academic regalia, shoes showed up in everything from animal print and patent red leather to checkered black and white and dove gray suede.

“I wanted to stand out,” said Laura Beth Harrell, who rocked a pair of gold sparkling peep-toe slingbacks.

Graduates also had their thinking caps on when it came to headgear. Construction majors wore hard hats and nurses wore
white caps. Traditional academic mortar boards were decorated with stickers, messages, lights, glitter, feathers and more.

Staci Frison, who earned a Bachelor of Science in sociology, filled her graduation cap to the brim with gold stickers and lettering including memories and music notes and a Bible verse, Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”

It didn’t take that long to make, she said, and she wanted to show her individuality.

“I just wanted to express what helped get me through school,” she said.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
Having attended the NAACP meeting on gang violence Dec. 6, I came away with several unanswered questions. Greenville Police Chief Williams Anderson was asked what percentage of murders go unsolved. His answer was, “We solve 95 percent of them.” Funny, but the FBI reports the average number of murders solved each year at only 62 percent. That means we are way ahead of everyone else in the United States and with a police force that is at only 90 percent strength. You see we are supposed to have 210 officers here based on the national average for a population of 82,000 instead of the 187 we have. As for our 82,000 population census, there is no way of telling how many students are not recorded in the census here since it was optional for them to use their dorm address or family home address.

When asked how many larcenies are solved Anderson replied, “that number is very low.” Do you reckon that’s because our resources are squandered giving drinking tickets to ECU students?

I just don’t understand the chief’s reluctance to ask for more men. Larceny and drugs are the bread and butter of gang subsistence. If we are going to overcome this gang violence that began 20 years ago, there is going to have to be a surge of boots on the ground. Thinking our churches can solve this is just wishful thinking. These gangs are organized crime on an adolescent level. They operate in the stealth of darkness and you can’t reason with them.

For the record, two years ago Chancellor Steve Ballad had a gang-related shooting behind his house. At a public safety forum the chancellor held on ECU’s campus, Anderson reported that it was an isolated incident and no reason for alarm. You be the judge.

**VAN BROWN**
*Greenville*
Mayville wins scholarship
Sunday, December 18, 2011

Bryan Mayville, a junior at East Carolina University, is one of five students selected from across the country to receive a $2,000 scholarship from the American Proficiency Institute (API) in Traverse City, Mich. “Laboratory testing is the cornerstone for most medical decisions,” said Daniel C. Edson, president of API. “We believe it is important to support future professionals entering this critical field of medical laboratory science.” When asked about his decision to study medical laboratory science, Mayville said, “I see myself improving the overall quality of care for each patient whose lives are directly affected by the hands of the laboratory team.” He added that his degree will allow him “to be an integral part of the healthcare team by helping to detect, diagnose and treat patient illnesses.” Kathleen Schulman, MS, MT(ASCP), Interim Chair of the Department of Clinical Laboratory Science at East Carolina University, noted that Mayville will “be a great asset to the clinical laboratory.” The American Proficiency Institute is one of the largest proficiency testing providers in the world serving more than 17,000 laboratories.
ECU program to hold open house

Dec. 19 — Calendar
Monday, December 19, 2011

JAN. 7: East Carolina University’s Lifelong Learning Program will hold a free open house from 2-4 p.m. at the Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation Center, 4561 County Home Road. “America’s Music Down to Its Roots” will be presented by Willie Nelms. LLP members and others also will have an opportunity to register for spring courses and events, meet program instructors, and view program partners’ exhibits and services. Refreshments will be served. Register by Jan. 3. To register or for more information, call 328-9198 or visit www.ecu.edu/llp.
Behavioral medicine specialist joins staff at medical school
Monday, December 19, 2011

Dr. Benjamin Gersh, a behavioral medicine specialist, has joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Gersh joined ECU as an assistant professor with joint appointments in the Department of Psychiatric Medicine and the Department of Family Medicine.

He also is associate medical director for inpatient psychiatry services at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Gersh has a medical degree from the Brody School of Medicine. He completed a five-year residency program in psychiatric medicine and family medicine at ECU and PCMH.

His clinical interests are psychiatry in primary care and preventive care in psychiatric patients. Gersh sees patients at the ECU Family Medicine Center in Greenville. Appointments are available by calling 744-4611.
ECU College of Business offers HR certification prep course
Monday, December 19, 2011
WorkWeek

In partnership with the national Society for Human Resource Management, the College of Business at East Carolina University is offering a three-weekend, 27-hour review course to prepare human resources professionals for two certifications: the professional human resources (PHR) and the senior professional in human resources (SPHR) designation.

The course will be held the weekends of Feb. 10-11, Feb. 24-25 and March 16-17 and will be led by ECU instructor Sharon Justice, a human resources professional with 15 years of experience with Wachovia and Wells Fargo.

Several other College of Business faculty members with extensive human resources experience will teach various sections of the course.

Course participants will benefit from experienced instructors, networking opportunities with peers, potential tuition reimbursement, 3.5 CEUs, and access to instructors via email after course completion to help answer questions.

The registration deadline is Feb. 1. The cost is $1,100 by Dec. 31 and $1,250 after Jan. 1. For more information, contact Anne Fisher at 328-6377 or e-mail fishera@ecu.edu. Online registration is available at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-bus/shrm.cfm.
How big?

Consider two recent quotes regarding big-time college sports.

The first is from UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp: "We need every tool we can get. Getting people attached to the university through intercollegiate athletics is something that every public university has to do and do it well."

The other is from William Friday, retired president of the UNC system: "It has been said that when responsible people fail to speak or act, bad things happen. Bad things have happened in intercollegiate sports; now responsible officials have the duty to speak and act."

The two statements aren't necessarily incompatible. Friday, who has pressed for reform ever since helping start the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, wouldn't eliminate football. And Thorp did "speak and act" when he sized up the situation with his school's football program and fired Coach Butch Davis, on whose watch the program committed serious violations, some involving academic matters, that caused UNC to vacate 16 victories. The NCAA hasn't said whether UNC's self-imposed sanctions are sufficient, but nonetheless it seems to be business as usual for the athletics program. The school recently selected a new football coach (paying him $1.7 million a year, plus) who seems long on enthusiasm and, presumably, coaching ability, but whose interest in confronting problems that led to an NCAA investigation has yet to become apparent.

The entertainers

The deeper questions - does the campus really gain by seeking to enter football's top rank? - are being raised not at the upper levels of UNC's administration but by a handful of faculty members and, independently, by Bill Friday. Yet these are the questions that a serious university should ask.

Writing in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Friday last week pointed out that "Big-time college sports today bears only slight resemblance to the goals and objectives for which intercollegiate athletics were begun in America." Amateur college sport is preserved mainly in intramurals and club teams. Varsity sports "are in another world for the most part. They are great
entertainment conducted under the name of the universities," driven mainly by TV revenue, shoe and apparel companies, and boosters. Though scandals have plagued college sport for decades, their frequency today suggests that the entertainment enterprise is increasingly in control.

Anyone who's attended a "big-time" football game lately, with its ear-splitting music, video replays and interminable TV timeouts, can say amen to that.

**Study guide**

Should athletics dominate campus life? That's at the heart of questions posed recently by five Chapel Hill faculty members (Lewis Margolis, Jay Smith, John McGowan, Kenneth Janken and Andrew Perrin). They hope to start a campus conversation that delves into first principles. Among other things, they ask campus trustees, "How will the university continue to adhere to the core values of academic integrity in the competition to move ever higher in football polls?" and "How do large-scale corporate sponsorships and the professionalization of college football and basketball affect the integrity of our university?"

Unfortunately, for UNC and many other universities, the "academic integrity" answer has basically been to set up elaborate tutoring-study centers for athletes, in parallel to facilities used by other students, that serve to further separate the student body. And corporate sponsorships are now so extensive that at times the tail seems to be wagging the dog.

Right now, with NCAA discipline looming and a new athletic director on campus, is the time to rethink the answers of the past few years.

One approach, suggested by Bill Friday, is for greater transparency in the sports enterprise - more details about revenue, salaries, indebtedness, "exceptions to admission policies" and "cost of remedial instruction." It would be good to get all that out, and having the information might help everyone rethink the costs and benefits of the big time.
The Wilmington Star News

Published: Friday, December 16, 2011 at 1:14 p.m.

**UNCW trustees approve 10.7% tuition increase**

By Pressley Baird
Pressley.Baird@StarNewsOnline.com

With emphatic endorsements from multiple board members and the student body president, University of North Carolina Wilmington trustees voted unanimously Friday to raise tuition and fees for in-state students by about $600 a year.

Trustees accepted a proposal of a 10.7 percent increase for in-state students and a 4.6 percent, or about $800, increase for out-of-state students in tuition and fees for the 2012-13 school year.

The plan now goes before the UNC-system Board of Governors, which is expected to vote on the proposals for final approval in February.

UNCW students already saw a 6.5 increase in their tuition this year, coming after UNCW tightened its overall budget by 15.8 percent. UNCW Chancellor Gary Miller said those cuts had resulted in 78 fewer faculty positions and 558 fewer course sections for students.

"I'm sorry that working families and working students in this state are going to be forced to bear the brunt of political problems in this state," trustee Gary Shipman said, referring to state funding cuts.

Revenue from the new increase from student tuition and fees will be directed toward lowering class sizes and increasing the number of course sections. Some revenue will also be directed toward increasing academic advising capacity.

Brooke Britt, student body vice president and co-chairwoman of the tuition and fees committee, said a big student complaint about this year's cuts centered around the advising program.

"If you're in a big major, like business or communications, one adviser has 100 advisees," she said. "You go in, you watch a Powerpoint and you get a number. You don't even get to talk to them."

Some revenue will also fund UNCW's applied learning programs, Miller said. Provost Cathy Barlow said the goal of applied learning programs was to make sure students had "actual experiences" in their field in a job or research setting.
The UNC system allowed its campuses across the state to increase tuition by 6.5 percent next year. But it gave them a little leeway, saying that schools could put higher increases into place to "catch up" with peer schools. Peer schools are defined as having similar missions; overall quality of faculty, students and programs; and research productivity.

UNCW's peer schools include James Madison University, College of Charleston and the College of William and Mary. About $400 of the $600 proposed increase for in-state undergraduates fell in that catch-up category. Board of trustees member Ronald McNeill asked Miller if putting funding toward applied learning programs would make UNCW "better" than its peer schools.

"If that's additional, and you just take roughly half of the total increase to keep doing what we're doing, is that a possibility?" McNeill asked.

Miller said every school in UNCW's peer group had similar programs in place and that those comparable programs were the reason the additional increase was proposed.

Student body president Sammy Pisano told the trustees that he felt the increases were necessary in order for UNCW to grow.

"The general consensus is that no one's really excited about tuition going up, but I think there are a lot of things that tuition is affecting that they can be more understanding of," he said.

Board member David Swain said the trustees, in considering the increases, had been "severely hampered by the state."

"This university has stepped up in the last four years, and they have reduced everything possible within their means to still provide the same quality of education," Swain said. "None of us want to do this, no question about that. But this is a must for us."

Pressley Baird: 343-2328; On Twitter: @PressleyBaird
UNC study to boost genetic medicine

A federal grant will allow researchers to scrutinize DNA to try to find genetic causes for illnesses.

BY JAY PRICE - jprice@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL–Researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill have won a $6.4 million grant to help transform the long-promising technology for studying human genes into practical methods for helping patients.

The four-year grant is from the National Human Genome Research Institute, part of the federal government's National Institutes of Health. It will allow the UNC team to determine the sequence of key parts of the DNA of 750 patients and use the results to try to identify genetic causes for their illnesses.

The researchers also will explore some of the complex ethical, logistical and legal issues involved in handling patients' genetic information, said Dr. James P. Evans, the principal investigator for the study.

They will target patients who couldn't be diagnosed with standard techniques, and whose illness seems likely to have a genetic cause or trigger. Examples include people who have an illness common in their family and young patients with forms of diseases such as heart disease or cancer that normally are more common in older patients.

The project, which UNC calls the N.C. Clinical Genomic Evaluation by NextGen Exome Sequencing (NCGENES), will study a portion of the DNA called the exome, the full set of protein coding sequences for the body.

Recent technological advances have lowered the cost of such sequencing to about $1,000 per person, said Evans, head of the Clinical Genetics Program at Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center and a professor of genetics at UNC's medical school.

This drop in cost has turned genetic sequencing into a reasonably priced tool with exciting potential for treating patients.

"As a scientist, I'm all about figuring out how things work and how we can better understand the universe," Evans said. "But as a doctor, I want to see it applied and see it help people, and that's what this is about."
Other goals of the project include exploring tricky issues such as how to deal with detailed information the sequencing reveals about a patient's genes that's unrelated to their illness. For example, it might show they're at high risk for Alzheimer's disease, but not all patients will want to know that, Evans said.

The researchers will study how often such "incidental information" is found during sequencing, and whether or how patients want to know.

The team also will study how to handle the massive amounts of data involved - trillions of pieces of digital information for each person - at a time when creating and protecting even the most basic version of electronic patient records is still a challenge.

The grant is among five the National Human Genome Research Institute made to different institutions to explore various aspects of using genetic information in clinical situations.

"At NHGRI, we foresee genome sequencing becoming a routine part of medical care," said Brad Ozenberger, the program director for genomic medicine. "We regularly now hear anecdotal accounts of people who have already made remarkable recoveries from illness thanks to applications of genomic medicine, especially for some types of cancer and acute diseases. These projects are exploring the best ways to widen the use of genomic medicine in an effective, responsible, respectful way."

Tight government budgets make grants ever more scarce. But these, totaling $40 million, underline the importance the NIH places on real improvements in health from the heavy investments it has made in mapping the human genome, Evans said.

The researchers hope to begin sequencing the exomes of patients in January.

In choosing patients for the project, researchers will pick not only those likely to have genetic causes for their illnesses, but also emphasize diversity by including blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans.

"We don't want the benefits of this new genomic technology available to just a select group of people," Evans said.

Price: 919-829-4526
Louisville Master Chorale director, Mark Walker, leads a practice at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

**Louisville Master Chorale hopes to find an audience with wide-ranging repertoire**

When the Louisville Master Chorale makes its debut today in a performance of Handel’s “Messiah” at the Cathedral of the Assumption, it will mark the consummation of a 20-year musical crush for Mark Walker, the group’s conductor and artistic director.

It was a performance of “Messiah” by the Louisville Bach Society in 1990 that first inspired Walker to become a conductor. A high school senior at the time, Walker was studying organ with Melvin Dickinson, the founder of the Bach Society.

“I was simply enthralled,” Walker said. “‘Messiah’ is my favorite piece of all time.”

Handel’s most well-known work, “Messiah” covers the whole life story of Jesus Christ, but it has become a concert staple around Christmastime, and its annual performance was a Louisville Bach Society tradition.

Walker went on to study organ at Western Kentucky University and East Carolina University, eventually returning to Louisville as the director of
music and organist for St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church as well as becoming assistant conductor of the Louisville Bach Society in 2008.

That meant that Walker got to conduct his favorite piece two years running — until Melvin and Margaret Dickinson decided to end the Bach Society’s 47-year run earlier this year.

Dickinson cited health problems and weak fundraising as reasons for the end of the group. But the demise of the Louisville music institution also had to do with a difference in vision.

“The thrust of the Bach Society was Melvin and Margaret’s vision for educating the community about Bach and his legacy,” said Nancy Morris, a member of the Bach Society’s board of directors and a founding member of the Louisville Master Chorale’s board. But while the Bach Society had at one time filled Whitney Hall, the audience for baroque music had declined.

“Those people who were true Bachophiles are leaving us,” she said. “They’re dying.”

If the audience has moved on, Morris reasoned, arts groups ought to adapt.

“You’ve got to reinvent yourself to offer what the community wants, without bastardizing the product,” she said. “If they don’t like it, they’re not going to come.”

But the Bach Society, as the Dickinsons conceived it, could not expand its repertoire. “Our bylaws simply state that we are devoted to the music of Bach and his contemporaries,” Dickinson said. “That just wasn’t the primary goal of Mark Walker.”

When the Dickinsons decided to shutter the Bach Society, Walker began holding exploratory meetings for a new group that would continue the tradition of oratorio — choral music with orchestral accompaniment — but that would consider music written since Bach’s death in 1750.

The Master Chorale’s second program, on March 18, will include Mozart’s “Coronation Mass” as well as “Lux Aeterna” by the contemporary composer Morten Lauridsen.

“I think we have a greater freedom now to maybe encompass a few more composers, and particularly 20th- and 21st-century composers,” Walker said, carefully, of founding the new group with a more expansive mandate. “Nothing lasts forever, and things have to evolve.”

Dickinson said he supports the new group, and Walker expressed his gratitude to the Dickinsons for their decades of hard work.
“I’m very proud to have a linked history with the Bach Society,” he said. The Louisville Master Chorale was incorporated in June, and received nonprofit status a few months later. Walker incorporated many former members of the Bach Society into the new chorus — he estimates 35 percent to 40 percent of the 55-member group are Bach Society alumni.

“We have young college freshmen, post-graduates, people in their 30s, moms and dads of small kids, and we have some grandparents as well,” Walker said of the Master Chorale.

But, as with the Bach Society, fundraising during tough economic times has been a challenge.

“We’ve probably put as much emphasis on fundraising as we have on anything else,” Walker said. “You have to have an orchestra. Orchestras cost money.”

Morris confirmed that fundraising had been difficult, but hoped that the Chorale’s first performance would help spread the word about the new group. “We’ve lost a lot of our big supporters, but there is a lot of money in Louisville, and if we can tap into it by offering a product that is outstanding, we’ll get their attention.”

Still, it’s an open question whether the Louisville Master Chorale’s inclusion of more contemporary composers will succeed in reaching a larger audience.

“It depends on fate, actually,” Dickinson said. “If it’s not supported, then it won’t last.”

To Morris, the eventual fate of the Master Chorale depends on its ability to bring in new listeners.

“We’ve got to get young people interested in classical music,” Morris said. “If we could fill the cathedral like they fill the (KFC) Yum! Center, wouldn’t that be great?”
The New York Times

December 19, 2011

Florida A&M President to Keep Job During Hazing Investigation

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida A&M's president will keep his job after the university board of trustees Monday rejected a call from Gov. Rick Scott that James Ammons be suspended while the hazing death of a band member is investigated.

The decision comes three days after the state medical examiner ruled that 26-year-old Robert Champion's Nov. 19 death was a homicide. Officials say he was beaten so severely that he bled internally and went into shock. He died within an hour.

"We will stand firm against outside influence, no matter how well intended," Solomon Badger, the FAMU board chairman, said during a board meeting that was held by conference call.

Scott said he would abide by the board's decision.

Ammons and other university leaders have been criticized for not doing enough to stop a culture of hazing within the university's famed "Marching 100" band. Band director Julian White has been placed on temporary leave and the board had already publicly reprimanded Ammons.

Students had largely stood by both leaders. Students protested outside the governor's mansion on Thursday to show support for Ammons, and the president of the national alumni association at a news conference Sunday contested Scott's involvement and recommend Ammons not be suspended.

Badger said that the board should keep Ammons status unchanged until an investigation with all the "official facts" was concluded. None of the FAMU board members disagreed with Badger.

"I think we all have the number one priority of keeping the university strong as we move through this challenging time," said Kelvin Lawson, a board member from Jacksonville.

The only action related to the investigations that the board took was to agree to meet weekly for the next day 60 days while the investigations continue.
There was scant discussion of the homicide ruling or the opening of a new criminal investigation into the finances of the Marching 100.

Scott said in a statement issued before the meeting that he was not singling out FAMU and called on all universities in the state to examine their hazing and harassment policies. He said he was offering his opinion and counsel regarding Ammons and would abide by the board's decision.

"I merely suggested it would be wise for Dr. Ammons to step aside until these investigations are completed," Scott said. "It is up to the FAMU Board of Trustees and Dr. Ammons to determine how to proceed. I have not and will not try to influence their decision."

Champion died after falling unconscious on a bus outside an Orlando hotel after the school's football team lost to rival Bethune-Cookman. Witnesses told emergency dispatchers that he had been vomiting.

The medical examiner's office in Orlando found that Champion had bruises to his chest, arms, shoulder and back and internal bleeding. No charges have been filed.

Champion's death exposed years of hazing that has plagued the band and left several students injured. In 1998, Ivery Luckey, a clarinet player from Ocala, Fla., was hospitalized with kidney damage after being paddled as part of an initiation to become a member of a group known as "The Clones." Three years later, band member Marcus Parker was also hospitalized with kidney damage after being paddled.

Ammons, a FAMU alumni, became president in 2007 at a time when the university was under considerable distress. There had been four presidents within the previous six years and an audit in 2007 uncovered 35 findings, including $4.5 million in unaccounted sports tickets and lost equipment. The university was placed under probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Under Ammons' leadership, the university's accreditation was restored and its finances improved. An audit done two years later found the university still needed to do a better job at paying bills on time and keeping a closer eye on employee use of state-owned cell phones, but those problems paled in comparison to the previous report.

But hazing continued to be a problem. White has provided letters of suspension issued to dozens of band members for hazing, including many of which Ammons was reportedly provided a copy.
Less than two weeks before Champion's death, band member Bria Hunter was hospitalized with a broken leg and blood clots in what authorities say was another act of hazing. Three band members have been charged in the beating.

And two days before Champion died, White sent a letter to alumni, urging them not to "return and perpetuate the myth of various sectional names."

But FAMU alumni have insisted that the problem of hazing is widespread across the country and that too much attention is being focused on their university.

"Name another university president that suspended a president for hazing," said Tommy Mitchell, president of the FAMU National Alumni Association. Mitchell also went so far as to question "why is that this hazing has gotten so much attention?"

Ammons suspended the band after Champion's death, dismissed White and expelled four students in connection with the hazing. White was later placed on temporary leave and the students were allowed to attend class after state authorities urged the university not to take disciplinary action before the investigation was complete.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges has warned Scott's push to suspend Ammons could affect the school's accreditation because of "undue influence" on the board from outside.
After Yearlong Competition, Mayor Is Said to Pick Cornell for Science School

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg plans to announce on Monday that he has chosen Cornell University to create a new science graduate school on Roosevelt Island, capping an intense yearlong competition in his ambitious bid to spur a boom in New York City’s high-tech sector.

For the mayor, it is a chance to leave a lasting legacy that he hopes will make the city a world leader in computer engineering and transform the city’s economy. For Cornell, it could mean a chance to be the kind of incubator for new businesses — and the lucrative patents that come with them — that Stanford University has been in California and M.I.T. in Massachusetts, and to elevate its already-prestigious engineering and computer science programs to the uppermost ranks.

The announcement, to take place at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center on the Upper East Side, according to people briefed on the plan, will come three days after Stanford pulled out of the contest, and Cornell announced a $350 million gift, the largest in its history, to help bankroll its proposal.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk about the matter publicly, those briefed said that Cornell had long before emerged as the front-runner. “It was already very much along the way to this result,” one said.

Still, they said, the mayor may not have ruled out the possibility of anointing two winners: the other contenders are Columbia University, a consortium led by New York University, and Carnegie Mellon.

Cornell proposed a campus with 2.1 million square feet of building space at a cost of more than $2 billion, accommodating more than 2,000 students, with classrooms, laboratories, housing and a conference center, among other facilities. The project, to be built over a generation, would include a range of unusual environmental features, like heavy use of solar energy and geothermal wells.
City officials had originally planned to choose a winner by year’s end. But after seeing the voluminous proposals submitted on Oct. 28, they warned not to expect an announcement until January, so the timing of Monday’s announcement was a bit of a surprise.

Yet Cornell is in a hurry: it has promised to have classes running by next September, a year ahead of the date the city had requested.

“There’s a lot of work to do, and a real desire to get things rolling in the time the mayor has left in office,” one person briefed on the plan said.

The city is providing the land on Roosevelt Island, currently occupied by a little-used hospital, as well as $100 million in infrastructure improvements to ease building.

Stanford, seen as an early front-runner, balked at meeting some of the city’s conditions during negotiations in recent weeks. City officials also said it was not clear that Stanford’s entire team — administration, faculty and alumni — was as wholeheartedly behind the project as Cornell’s people were, measured in part by Cornell’s ability to raise money for it.
M.I.T. Expands Its Free Online Courses

By TAMAR LEWIN

While students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology pay thousands of dollars for courses, the university will announce a new program on Monday allowing anyone anywhere to take M.I.T. courses online free of charge — and for the first time earn official certificates for demonstrating mastery of the subjects taught.

“There are many people who would love to augment their education by having access to M.I.T. content, people who are very capable to earn a certificate from M.I.T.,” said L. Rafael Reif, the provost, in a conference call with reporters Friday.

M.I.T. led the way to an era of online learning 10 years ago by posting course materials from almost all its classes. Its free OpenCourseWare now includes nearly 2,100 courses and has been used by more than 100 million people.

But the new “M.I.T.x” interactive online learning platform will go further, giving students access to online laboratories, self-assessments and student-to-student discussions.

Mr. Reif and Anant Agarwal, director of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Lab, said M.I.T.x would start this spring — perhaps with just one course — but would expand to include many more courses, as OpenCourseWare has done.

“The technologies available are much more advanced than when we started OpenCourseWare,” Mr. Agarwal said. “We can provide pedagogical tools to self-assess, self-pace or create an online learning community.”

The M.I.T.x classes, he said, will have online discussions and forums where students can ask questions and, often, have them answered by others in the class.

While access to the software will be free, there will most likely be an “affordable” charge, not yet determined, for a credential.

“I think for someone to feel they’re earning something, they ought to pay something, but the point is to make it extremely affordable,” Mr. Reif said.
“The most important thing is that it’ll be a certificate that will clearly state that a body sanctioned by M.I.T. says you have gained mastery.”

The certificate will not be a regular M.I.T. degree, but rather a credential bearing the name of a new not-for-profit body to be created within M.I.T; revenues from the credentialing, officials said, would go to support the M.I.T.x platform and to further M.I.T’s mission.

Educators at other universities applauded the M.I.T. move.

“It seems like a very big deal because the traditional higher education reaction to online programs was, yeah, but it’s not a credential,” said Richard DeMillo, director of the Center for 21st Century Universities at the Georgia Institute of Technology. “So I think M.I.T. offering a credential will make quite a splash. If I were still in industry and someone came in with an M.I.T.x credential, I’d take it.”

M.I.T. said its new learning platform should eventually host a virtual community of learners around the world — and enhance the education of M.I.T.’s on-campus students, with online tools that enrich their classroom and laboratory experiences.

The development of the new platform will be accompanied by an M.I.T.-wide research initiative on online teaching and learning, including grading by computer.

And because the M.I.T.x platform will be available free to people around the world, M.I.T. officials said they expected that other universities would also use it to offer their own free online courses. Mr. Reif said that M.I.T. was investing millions of dollars in the project, and that it expected to raise money from foundations and others.