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Holtz hopes to keep Hudson

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Monday, December 21, 2009

As the East Carolina football team romped through the last of a five-day practice swing before its holiday break Monday morning, the rumor of the possible departure of defensive coordinator Greg Hudson served as the undercurrent.

A strong connection between the fifth-year coordinator and new Florida State head coach Jimbo Fisher has put Hudson in the rotation of coaching rumors, some suggesting Hudson is close to a taking a job with the Seminoles.

For all that talk, Hudson, who has been at all of ECU’s postseason practices, seems more concerned with a different, more certain departure.

When it comes to the loss of much of his senior-heavy defense to graduation, Hudson doesn’t hesitate to express himself.

“It stinks that they’re leaving,” he said. “The majority of them have been here since the first recruiting weekend we had. They’ve done it the right way.”

Times have changed quite a bit since the initial recruiting class of head coach Skip Holtz took on its first tutelage.

According to Hudson, the 2009 seniors had to learn winning from scratch back in 2005.

“The one thing that we had to teach when we got here was the standard of play, the preparation and the mindset we have as a defense and as a program,” said Hudson, whose defense will face one of its toughest tests yet when the 9-4 Pirates lock horns with 7-5 Arkansas at the Jan. 2 Liberty Bowl.

Not only did his upperclassmen help lay a foundation for success, they helped to make believers out of the players poised to replace them.

“Now we have enough visual evidence that those players can see, and we can say, ‘Do you see how Jay Ross does that? Do you understand how Nick Johnson prepares, and do you see how Van Eskridge and Jeremy Chambliss are always in a good stance?’” Hudson said of some of his senior mainstays. “We finally have some things that are great physical evidence for the young guys on how to do it. Before, we had to be good salesmen and creative in our coaching.”

The drive for a first-ever 10-win season in the Holtz era is alive and well, and the BCS-heavy non-conference schedule the Pirates have endured since Holtz and Hudson arrived has conditioned them to playing teams the caliber of the Razorbacks.

The experience never makes beating such a team any easier, however, and Hudson said there are common qualities in most BCS programs, and coach Bobby Petrino’s team is no different.

“The first difference you see in talent is the quarterback and then the offensive line,” Hudson said. “When we’ve had problems against BCS teams it’s usually been because the quarterback is just a good football player who’s made plays. We match up good against offensive lines, but this is probably the best coached, best technique, most aggressive offensive line we’ve seen since 2007 with West Virginia.
"With coach Petrino and that offense, it's a different formation and an adjustment on every snap."

The latest

Hudson was with the Pirates for their fifth practice in five days late Monday morning, and Holtz said afterward he still had not been approached by Hudson to discuss his possible departure.

But later in the day it was reported Hudson might be headed to Florida to meet with FSU officials.

"Right now, we're going business as usual," Holtz said, reiterating that when there is something to report, he'll report it.

Grades

According to Holtz, final grades are expected to be known today, and naturally he said some players will be pensively awaiting the results of their semester's schoolwork.

Holtz said he planned to discuss his team's academic standing when the grades were finalized.

"There are always surprises," he said, "You've got 110 young men that are over there going to class â if you've got to do well on a final exam to make a C in a class so it can count toward a degree. It's not just making six credits a D. You make two D's in major courses, they don't count. You've got to have C or better in your major courses, so there are some guys who are going to have to do well on their final exams."

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Cancer hospital gets $2 million

CHAPEL HILL -- The new cancer hospital at UNC-Chapel Hill has a little more spending money now.

The N.C. Cancer Hospital's endowment doubled Monday with a $2 million gift from the U.S. arm of Sanofi-Aventis, a global drug manufacturer with headquarters in Paris and New Jersey.

"The gift is a recognition of the very strong research being done here and our desire to work with UNC," said Chris Viehbacher, the drug company's chief executive officer. The company has previously provided funding for at least one professorship and scholarships.

The cancer hospital's endowment is now worth about $3.9 million. Generally, universities spend about 5 percent of their invested money each year, and officials say the Sanofi-Aventis money will be used for clinical research and programs and services for patients and their families. It will not be used for payroll, even though the new hospital, which opened this fall at a cost of $207 million, will add 190 workers over the next year, officials said.

A hospital committee will determine exactly how the endowment money is spent. Some will probably pay for new research or therapies not currently funded through federal grants, said Richard Goldberg, the hospital's physician-in-chief.

"It will let us diversify our research and treatments," said Goldberg, who specializes in gastrointestinal cancers.

The money also will help pay for services for patients' families, such as a support center where visitors can connect to the Internet, get a gas card or find other resources.

The donation indicated the pharmaceutical firm's desire to link itself more closely with academia, said Viehbacher, the Sanofi-Aventis CEO. Cancer research and treatment have grown so complicated and specialized that academic research and private industry need each other more than ever. The company hopes discoveries made at UNC-CH could lead to new drugs the company could develop.

"The days when pharmaceutical companies said 'we can do this on our own' is done," Viehbacher said, adding that his company is forging new working relationships with Cal Tech, Johns Hopkins and several other universities. "We are looking at a more collaborative approach."

While universities often solicit private donations to help defray the cost of new construction or facility expansion, the new cancer hospital was funded by the state, a detail university officials were quick to point out repeatedly Monday during a brief ceremony announcing the gift.

"At a time of financial stress when other states are pulling back on health care, North Carolina is stepping up, and so is private industry," said Holden Thorp, UNC-CH's chancellor.
December 22, 2009

**Pittsburgh Mayor Strikes a Deal to Abandon Tuition Tax**

By IAN URBINA

In what he described as a “leap of faith,” Mayor Luke Ravenstahl of Pittsburgh agreed on Monday to shelve his plans for the nation’s first tax on college tuition in exchange for an increase in voluntary contributions from local colleges and universities to the city.

City officials said the mayor also had a promise from university officials to help lobby state lawmakers in Harrisburg for changes to enable the city to raise certain taxes and fees.

“This is a leap of faith for us all; the future of our city and of our citizens is riding on it,” Mr. Ravenstahl said. “But it is a leap of faith that, if successful, will result in the revenue, $15 million annually, that Pittsburgh needs to solve our legacy cost problem.”

City and university officials declined to offer details about the commitment, but at a joint news conference on Monday morning, officials from the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University said they had pledged to make larger voluntary donations to the city than they did from 2005 to 2007. In addition, some local corporations, including the insurer Highmark, are contributing additional money.

Earlier this month, Mayor Ravenstahl said that he had asked the universities and other tax-exempt nonprofit organizations to pay $5 million annually to the city, and that in lieu of the tax, he would find the other $10 million by dipping into reserves, cutting services and pushing the state legislature to increase the commuter tax rate.

The deal Monday ends a standoff between the city and officials from its 11 colleges and universities that was being watched closely by other cities struggling with similar budget gaps.

The so-called Fair Share Tax sought a 1 percent levy on college students’ tuition, which city officials said would raise $16.2 million annually.

Students and college officials in Pittsburgh had argued that the tax would set a bad precedent in altering the tax-exempt status of nonprofit organizations and pose an unfair burden on institutions that already contributed substantially to the city.

After universities initially turned down his request to increase their payments to the city, Mr. Ravenstahl said he was left with no alternative to imposing a tax. He said the money was needed to pay for pension costs and to offset the roughly $50 million in property taxes that the city forgoes from the tax-exempt status of nonprofit institutions.

Mary Hines, chairwoman of the Pittsburgh Council of Higher Education and president of Carlow University, said the announcement was a step in the right direction.
“This time, the efforts will not be to plug a hole in the budget,” she said, “but to work together to find permanent funding streams to resolve the pension problem.”

But Ms. Hines was quick to emphasize that the deal involved entirely voluntary contributions, not long-term legal commitments.

“There has been no ‘agreement’ established between the city and the other member institutions,” she said. “Even the statement made today by the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University identified ‘handshake agreements,’ not finalized until the tax was actually removed from consideration.”

Mr. Ravenstahl said the city had already begun tightening its belt.

“We continue to consolidate services with other governments, achieving cost savings through joint purchasing, joint provision of services and any other avenue we can pursue,” he said. “We have reduced our work force by about 1,000 employees. We have stopped issuing new debt, going to a ‘pay as you go’ capital budgeting system.”

He added: “We have cut everything we can to the bone. Today is not the end of our work together. Today is only the beginning.”
State university fee hikes are a test many families can't pass

As California's promise of affordable higher education slips out of reach for many, some parents urge making a noise in Sacramento.

By Carla Rivera

December 21, 2009

The budget crisis afflicting California State University could not have come at a worse time for Berenice Vite and Rafael Curiel, whose son Alonso is a sophomore at Cal State Long Beach. As the university was imposing a 32% student fee hike this year, Curiel underwent two shoulder surgeries and lost his job at a medical equipment firm.

The family has missed three house payments to scrape together tuition to continue educating their son, who does not qualify for financial aid. They are frustrated and worried, and they believe that their voices have not been heard as fast-moving decisions have been made to raise fees, cut enrollment and eliminate programs.

"All of these things are coming at the same time, and I'm really concerned," said Vite, 46, an instructional aide for the Los Angeles Unified School District. "I was raised learning about the importance of education, and I want my children to be educated. But we don't know if we're going to have a house or not."

Vite and Curiel echo the voices of families throughout the state who are being severely tested by the budget cuts at the Cal State, University of California and community college systems.

The fee increases, as well as mandatory staff and faculty furloughs, steep reductions in enrollment (40,000 otherwise eligible students will be turned away in the next two years at Cal State) and elimination of programs and majors have spurred student and faculty protests on many campuses.

But now there is an emerging movement of parents who are speaking out and assuming a bigger advocacy role.

Time for protest
Emma Hernandez, 56, took a page from her younger days supporting the United Farm Workers when she attended a recent rally in front of the governor's downtown Los Angeles office to protest the cuts. Her family is using the equity in its home to help pay tuition for son Tomas Diaz, 22, who attends Cal State Long Beach, and daughter Sonja Diaz, 24, who attends UCLA's graduate school of public policy.

Hernandez's youngest, Cerena Diaz, 17, an Alhambra High senior with a 4.4 GPA, wants to attend UC Berkeley. Hernandez, a retired program coordinator with the L.A. housing authority who is disabled, isn't sure if she and her husband will be able to afford the tuition.

"She tells me, 'Mom, I'm reading about the budget cuts and the enrollment cuts, and I'm not going to get in,' " said Hernandez. The former migrant worker said she and other parents should be role models for the younger generation. "I think it's so important that people get up there and start talking. I feel like the university and state leaders have let us down."

Average undergraduate fees at Cal State rose this school year to nearly $4,900, not counting books, transportation and housing costs, which can add $10,000 more. Basic undergraduate fees at UC next fall will be about $10,302 a year, with about $1,000 in additional campus-based charges; and room, board and books could add $16,000 more. Community colleges increased fees 30% from $20 to $26 per credit.

Critics of the fee hikes fear that more low-income students will be shut out, but middle-income families who don't qualify for need-based financial aid say they are being equally squeezed. Curiel and Vite are awaiting word on their application for a mortgage modification. They are reluctant to saddle Alonso, a pre-nursing major, with student loans. Meanwhile, the couple are waiting to find out if they can make installment payments for spring fees. A payment is due this week.

Bob Combs, president of the parent advisory council at Cal State Chico, is organizing a campaign to contact state lawmakers.

"We elect these officials, we donate money and we are the voice of our children," said Combs, a real estate agent. "If one of us is calling an Assembly member or Congress person, we're certainly much stronger if 10 of us are calling."

**Looking out of state**

Combs' son is a junior at Chico. But with that campus and others tightening acceptance criteria, he fears that his daughter, a high school senior with a 3.2 GPA, will not be admitted.

The family is considering out-of-state schools, including the University of Nevada, Reno, which offers to residents of California and other Western states a tuition discount that compares favorably to Cal State fees.

"The reason California's public higher education system has been so successful is that it provided a good education for a reasonable price, but that is changing," said Combs.

Steve Maples, director of admissions at the University of Nevada, Reno, said increasing numbers of California students are taking advantage of his school's tuition break; 200 enrolled in the fall and that
number is likely is to increase with the budget crisis.

"It's certainly an unfortunate situation in California," said Maples. "I hate to use the word 'benefit,' but if it leads more qualified students our way, it will be something that helps our university."

That is the kind of news that Ken Stone dreads hearing. President of the Cal State University Alumni Council and father of three Cal Poly San Luis Obispo students, Stone has been working to create a new alumni website and Facebook group to help alumni, parents and students share information.

"There are things we can do at a grass-roots level, like talking with friends and neighbors about the threat to higher education, and we want to make sure we can talk from a knowledgeable base," said Stone, who is vice president and director of sales and marketing for a national architectural and engineering firm.

His biggest concern is the rollback of access to the university. Both he and his wife, Jeanne, who teaches at UC Irvine, are Cal Poly San Luis Obispo graduates.

"Tens of thousands of students who want to get an education and contribute to the California economy are being told no," said Stone. "If they go to school in another state, ultimately that's where they're going to end up entering the workforce. All Californians should find that unacceptable."

**Thrown off course**

Pamela Anderson is heartbroken by the distress the budget cuts are inflicting on her daughters. Erica, 22, a psychology major at Fresno State, was due to graduate in May -- until three mandatory classes were cut.

"She is devastated that she will have to spend another year in school," said Anderson, a member of the campus parent group. Daughter Leslie, 20, a community college student, wants to transfer to San Francisco State or San Diego State, two Cal State campuses that will be exceptionally hard to get into.

Meanwhile, Anderson's income as a senior computer analyst for Fresno County Superior Court disqualifies the family from financial aid, so she is struggling to pay not only tuition but an estimated $1,500 to $2,000 for books for next semester alone.

"It is putting the whole family through pain," she said.

Some parents are not only protesting but also bolstering fundraising efforts and giving from their own pockets to help hard-hit campuses.

Officials in the UC system are appealing to parents and alumni to make donations and lobby the governor and state lawmakers.

Howard and Jill Singer have opened their checkbook to support the career services office and programs serving disabled and foster students at San Diego State. Singer, 59, an executive at IBM who lives in Laguna Hills, also got his company to provide a matching grant for computer equipment.
The foster program is dear to them, he said, because the couple's foster son, Joel, 17, a high school senior, wants to enroll there. The Singers are incensed by cost-cutting measures on campuses, such as staff and faculty furloughs that mean less classroom time for daughter Jaclyn, 20, a journalism major.

They spoke at a recent campus rally about the issue.

"Our students aren't just competing against other students in the community but from all over the world," Howard Singer said. "Do you think in other states and countries students are only getting 80% of an education? I don't think parents realize yet the impact these budget cuts are going to have on their children. Many parents can't open up their wallets, but they can bombard the governor and legislators."

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Weighing the Value of That College Diploma

By SUE SHELLENBARGER

As millions of students labor over college applications this month, they and their parents are pondering just how big a tuition bill they want to pay.

Students are increasingly skeptical about the value of a college degree; the proportion who are willing to borrow money for college if necessary has fallen to 53% from 67% in the past year, based on a survey of 800 college students by Sallie Mae, Reston, Va.

Parents are thinking harder, too, about why they sign big tuition checks, based on a steady stream of email I have received since writing about the college cost-to-value equation a few months ago. Here is a look at a few perspectives on the issue:

- **A path to a better-paying job**: College graduates in general earn at least 60% more than high-school grads on average, both annually and over their lifetimes, and the income gap has been growing over time, says a 2007 report by the College Board, New York.

Beyond that, students who major in science- or math-related fields tend to earn more right out of college, compared with other majors, research shows. Phillip Hamilton, a St. Louis stockbroker, values the earning potential of a degree from a top professional school for his son, a high-school junior, over any prestige or network a degree from an elite liberal arts college might confer. "Is a degree in sociology, English or communications from a 'door-opening' school really going to help with that landscaping job that awaits you?" he asks rhetorically. He hopes his son, 17, chooses a college based on the quality of its engineering, food science or accounting program, and majors in one of those subjects. "Then if you decide to work at a surf shop after graduation, you can still snap out of it at 27 and get a real job," he says.

For parents who want to refine the cost-to-income analysis, a new tool is available that predicts how much money a student is likely to make after graduating. The online calculator, HumanCapitalScore.com, will generate a 10-year range of students' likely postgraduation income based on their test scores, high school and college attended, grades and major.

Developed by People Capital, New York, a peer-lending concern, as a tool to predict students' creditworthiness, the calculator can also be used to compare the likely outcome of various possible choices of colleges and majors. It makes projections based on data sets from more than a half-dozen government and private-sector sources, encompassing hundreds of thousands of actual grads. Prices start at $19.95 to compare two scenarios.

I tested the calculator by entering information on six actual college graduates who voluntarily shared their data, and comparing the HumanCapitalScore.com projections to the grads' actual earnings. The grads' pay fell within the range projected by the calculator in five of six cases. The exception was a young entrepreneur who chalked up a mediocre record at a little-known college but blossomed later, when working for himself. The projections are based on what "an individual with certain attributes can reasonably expect to earn," says Alan Samuels, People Capital's chief product officer. "Clearly, some will do better than expected, while others will do worse;" the projections are likely to be accurate about 80% of the time, he says.

HumanCapitalScore.com's projections can also help a student figure out how much money to borrow for college. Many experts say total student loans shouldn't exceed a grad's first-year income after graduation.

More information on postgraduation pay can be found at Payscale.com/best-colleges, which offers general information on median salaries of actual grads by college, type of college, major and job.

- **Preparing for a rich, well-rounded life**: To Megan DeLamar Schroeder, Texarkana, Texas, planning the college experience based entirely on future income demeans its true value. "The intangible benefits ... cannot be reduced to some kind of short-term cost benefit-analysis, as though one is purchasing a piece of property or an expensive sports car," she says.

She borrowed $40,000 to earn an economics degree from Stanford University in the 1980s, which landed her only an entry-level job at a bank upon graduation. She spent 10 years paying off her student loans. But the experience was worth every penny, she says. The opportunity "to 'marinate' for four years in an amazing
environment" served as a "springboard to lifelong learning and inquisitiveness," she says. She will encourage her 10-year-old twin daughters to hew to similar values when they start their college search, she says.

Research supports Ms. Schroeder's viewpoint. College grads generally show higher rates of civic participation, engaging in volunteer work and donating blood at more than twice the rate of high-school graduates, says the College Board study. They are less likely to smoke and more likely to exercise daily. College grads also have a much higher likelihood of being happy, says a 2005 survey of 3,014 adults by the Pew Research Center; 42% of college grads reported being very happy, compared with 30% of those who only finished high school or less.

• **Finding work you love:** James Landon, Apache Junction, Ariz., says this is a good reason to attend college, and he sees big public universities as the best and most cost-effective place to conduct such a search. Four of his five children attended big public universities. Two of them had no idea as freshmen what they wanted to do, Mr. Landon says, and the universities' broad offerings of programs, majors and facilities helped them figure it out. One wound up in finance and is a successful real-estate broker; the other majored in psychology and political science and is now pursuing a foreign-service career in graduate school.

College degrees can guide students' career choices in subtler ways. Jason Wotman, 24, loves his work as a co-founder of Tailwaiters, a Great Neck, N.Y., startup that runs tailgate parties for clients at sporting events and concerts. "It's mine, it's my baby. Every step, every ounce of progress, feels good," he says.

His degree in human and organizational development from Vanderbilt University helped launch him as an entrepreneur, he says. His courses in marketing, human-resource management and leadership equipped him well to size up opportunities and run a startup. "Taking it from an idea to an actual business, I felt like I had the tools," he says.

• **Gaining an influential network:** Many graduates of elite colleges swear by the value of their network of campus buddies in opening doors after graduation, and say striving to gain admission to such schools is worth the effort. However, a long-term study of 6,335 college grads published in 1999 by the National Bureau of Economic Research found graduating from a college where entering students have higher SAT scores—a sign of exclusivity—didn't pay off in higher post-graduation income.

What matters more, it seems, is graduates' personal drive. In a surprising twist, a stronger predictor of income is the caliber of the schools that reject you. Researchers found students who applied to several elite schools but didn't attend them—presumably because many were rejected—are more likely to earn high incomes later than students who actually attended elite schools. In a summary of the findings, the Bureau says that "evidently, students' motivation, ambition and desire to learn have a much stronger effect on their subsequent success than average academic ability of their classmates."

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