THE DAILY CLIPS

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Adapted sports make recreation accessible

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, November 07, 2009

Playing sports is fun, whether enjoyed on one's feet or in a wheelchair, promoters of the 13th annual Adapted Sports Day at East Carolina University's student recreation center told the dozens of area people with disabilities who came to play Saturday.

The program provides sport workshops for people with a variety of disabilities. This year's theme is "total access to sports and recreation," said David Gaskins, associate director of the campus recreation and wellness program.

"It's about participation, not about being an elite athlete," Gaskins said.

The event lets others see and learn about how people with disabilities make use of recreational outlets and promotes an awareness of the need for more facilities and community participation with disabled people in a fun recreation environment, Gaskins said.

"It's all about possibilities for people with disabilities who might not be aware of the way sports can be modified to allow them to participate," Gaskins said.

Veteran and first-time athletes were able to test their skill and enjoyment level at a wide variety of games, including floor hockey, volleyball, bowling, billiards and wall climbing, with the aid of an ascending device that adapts disabled people for the vertical climb.

The annual recreation event also highlighted the many education programs that ECU has for students interested in careers related to recreation and occupational therapy, Gaskins said.

"Students who come to Adapted Sports Day get a chance to get practical experience outside the classroom working with people with disabilities and see some of the possibilities for applying their education with real people in their communities," Gaskins said.

Jamie Yahnker, a longtime activist for wheelchair recreation and community support, said this kind of activity changes lives.

"It's eye-opening," Yahnker said. "So many people with disabilities think they are confined to the house until they get out and among active people.

"You don't know what you can do, then you find out and that's the beginning of a move out of the house."

Lindsey Ellington, an ECU senior majoring in recreation therapy, agreed with Yahnker about the therapeutic value of recreational activity for everyone who participates, not just those in the wheelchairs.

"I really enjoy seeing participants being involved with each other and with the volunteers who help them get used to new activities and sports in their lives," Ellington said. "It's exciting."

Like Yahnker, Ellington said she has seen that recreation and sports affects people in wheelchairs exactly as it does able-bodied people.

"People are always nervous doing something new with people they don't know, but meeting new people and building a team together builds a strong bond and strips off the fear they have of not doing well or looking silly doing it," Ellington said.
Susan and Howard Kostelecky, adoptive parents of 10-year-old Phillip, who's congenital spina bifida keeps him in a wheelchair, have been participating in Adapted Sports Day as a family for years, they said.

"We're always interested in getting him involved with a wide range of activities," Susan Kostelecky said. "We came one year and stayed from beginning to end.

"Phillip wishes they had Adapted Sports Day every month." she said. "He absolutely loves it."

During a break in the action during a wheelchair hockey game, Phillip talked about his passion.

"I love playing games and doing different stuff with people," Phillip said.

He laughed watching his able-bodied dad fall out of a wheelchair several times while playing against him in the game.

"I don't help him too much. I like to win," Phillip said with a chuckle. "The best part is just getting out there and playing."

Adapted Sports Day is made possible each year through the campus recreation and wellness program, the recreation therapy department, the intramural and youth and family program and by several area organizations, including the North Carolina Office on Disability and Health. The event is sponsored by many area businesses.

For more information about adaptive sports participation, contact Campus Recreation and Wellness at www.ecu.edu/crw.

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WHEELCHAIR RUGBY was one of the options available for people with disabilities on Saturday at ECU's Adapted Sports Day.
Student betting on his future

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 08, 2009

Greenville's Drake Jackson feels most at home at the poker table.

Jackson, 22, will appear on an upcoming episode of NBC's Face the Ace, a show that pits amateur online tournament winners against seasoned professionals in a head-to-head Texas hold 'em match. The show featuring Jackson's appearance will air on Nov. 14 or Dec. 12, he said.

Jackson is a sports studies major at East Carolina University who is on his way to becoming a professional poker player after he graduates in December 2010.

"I will always be interested in poker," Jackson said. "Money is what makes me most interested in it because I can make more playing poker in one day than I make in a week at work."

Jackson worked for AT&T in Greenville before giving up his job to concentrate full time on school and poker. He is from a military family and has lived all over the country but lived in Fayetteville before coming to ECU for the men's soccer program. Men's soccer was eliminated at ECU before he could join the team in his sophomore year.

After graduating, Jackson plans to move near San Diego where he can make a real go at being a professional player. He started playing poker at age seven with his grandfather but he didn't get serious about the game until 2006.

"I think I can make a living off of it," he said. "I travel to the parts of the country where I can play every chance I get."

He plans on playing the World Series of Poker next summer in Las Vegas in the $1,500 and $5,000 buy-in tournaments.

"I will probably primarily play hold 'em because it has the biggest prizes and the worst players," he said.

Texas hold 'em is his least favorite style of poker, but he plays it the most because it is the most competitive and popular variation of the game right now.

Jackson was a top-ten player in a Fulltiltpoker.net tournament that brought him to Las Vegas this past summer to tape an episode of Face the Ace. He said the show's producers picked eight players to appear on the show after interviewing 30 top amateurs who had been invited to Vegas for the show.

Jackson got the nod to appear on the show and taped an episode where he faced a well-known poker player and held his own. He didn't want to reveal exactly what happened but the game was not discouraging, he said.

Jackson had to wait behind a door before it was his turn to play on the show.

"Behind there I was nervous and when I walked on stage I was nervous," he said. "When I sat down at the table I was no longer nervous."

Jackson plays poker every day, both live and on free online sites, so facing a seasoned pro was just another game, he said.

He has learned how to quickly calculate odds for each hand he draws, a trick he developed on his own.
“If you want to be good at poker you have to create your own game, you can’t play the same way all the time,” Jackson said. “It’s about who is at your table and what your table image is.”

Poker is like a job, but it’s a job he loves, Jackson said.

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Steinem: 'We truly are one movement'

By Kristin Day
The Daily Reflector

Friday, November 06, 2009

American feminist icon, journalist and political activist Gloria Steinem visited East Carolina University on Friday with one central message: linkage.

"We truly are one movement," Steinem said, recognizing the women's movement, civil rights, homosexual rights and even environmentalism.

"All movements of social justice are linked," she said. "... It is no accident that the movements for racial liberation and women's liberation have always come together."

Steinem attributes discrimination and the violence often associated with it to a learned desire for control. It was women's ability to bear children that first made them objects to be controlled, she said.

"Somewhere ... there came to be systems of patriarchy that insisted on controlling women's bodies in order to decide how many workers, how many soldiers, who owned them, and systems of legitimacy and so on" she said. "What doubled that was racism. If you're going to maintain a racist system, you have to maintain some degree of visible difference over the long term. And the only way you can do that is by controlling women's bodies as the most basic needs of reproduction.

"So it's no accident that in the South, the most punished crime was not murder or theft or arson. It was miscegenation (specifically a man of color having a child with or even approaching a white woman) — then most consistently, historically punished crime."

Steinem also spoke at length about what she calls a media myth that many times has claimed that the feminist movement is over, a statement she said Time Magazine has made 27 times.

"It goes deep, and we are subject to these myths," Steinem said. "And it's part of the human condition that the general social myth is so powerful for us that we sometimes think that we are the strange exception, when really, we are the majority."

Another part of the myth, she said, is that feminists are all "man-hating." But Steinem stressed that the movement's mission is to break gender roles and allow freedom for men and women.

"It's as if all of the human qualities were divided into masculine and feminine and about a third of them are considered feminine and about two-thirds of them are considered masculine," she said. "So it's true that women are more deprived by the feminine roles â but men are deprived of many human qualities, too. So all of us are striving to gain the full circle of human qualities."

The appearance of Steinem, who was welcomed to the stage of Wright Auditorium with a standing ovation, was part of ECU's Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. But she maintained that everything the audience came to discover, they already knew.

"I am here mainly as an excuse to bring you together and discover that you didn't need me in the first place," she said. "You have all the energy and creativity and hopes and dreams and anger and you know what needs changing here much better than I do."

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ECU literary magazine wins national award

Sunday, November 08, 2009

ECU News Services

East Carolina University’s student-run literary magazine, Rebel, won the Associated Collegiate Press Magazine Pacemaker award at the 88th annual ACP/College Media Advisers National College Media Convention held in Austin, Texas.

Rebel won for general excellence in the category of four-year literary magazine. The winning issue was Rebel’s 51st edition, produced and published in fall and spring 2008-09.

Chris Schwing was the edition’s editor. Paul Isom, director of the ECU Office of Student Media, and graphic design faculty member Craig Malmrose served as advisers.

The American Poetry Journal judged nearly 80 entries from throughout the country in the category of four-year literary magazines. This is the ninth time ECU’s Rebel has won the Pacemaker award. It was the only finalist from North Carolina.

"Being named one of the three best literary magazines in the nation is an amazing honor," Isom said.

"It recognizes the incredible talents of our ECU students who produced the book as well as the dozens whose works were included in the book."

This year, literary magazines were judged on content, quality of writing and editing, photography, art and graphics, layout, design, and overall concept or theme.

The winners were named during the 88th annual College Media Convention, attended by 2,200 students who work in college student media. Rebel staff members Courtney McAuley and Carson Copeland attended the convention along with students who produce the Buccaneer yearbook, Expressions magazine and WZMB-FM 91.3.

Recreation and Leisure Studies chair named

Deb Jordan has been appointed professor and chairwoman of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies by Glen G. Gilbert, dean of the College of Health and Human Performance.

Jordan comes to ECU from Oklahoma State University, where she served as the graduate coordinator for the leisure studies program and taught in the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs.

Throughout her career, Jordan has received funding for research grants and has been recognized for her achievements, including being one of eight people chosen by the National Recreation and Park Association in March 2009 to participate in a summit to develop online education programs for parks, recreation and leisure services professionals. In 2007, she was elected as a fellow to the Academy of Leisure Studies, a 100-member honorary academy for parks, recreation and leisure services scholars.

She has written or co-written six textbooks and chapters as well as numerous articles in scholarly publications and has been a guest speaker for organizations and universities across the country.

Jordan earned an undergraduate degree in parks and recreation with an emphasis in recreation resource management in 1980 from Slippery Rock State College in Pennsylvania. In 1983, she received a graduate degree from Western Illinois University and in 1988 she earned a doctorate from Indiana University, both in parks
and recreation administration.

"RCLS has an incredibly strong faculty and a tradition of being student-oriented. I am delighted to be a part of such a group of dedicated professionals," Jordan said. "I look forward to working with faculty and staff to increase the level of excellence we have in scholarship, teaching, and service.

"We have a lot to contribute to the region and the state in leadership development, quality of life and sustainability of the natural environment. We will be seeking ways to capitalize on the opportunities to evolve our program and the state of North Carolina," she said.

Her research interests include leadership, culture and diversity, and the social psychology of leisure behavior in natural settings.

Fall performance series premieres announced

The School of Music will begin its fall television concert series at 8 p.m. Monday with a performance by the ECU percussion ensemble, a student musician group under the direction of Jonathan Wacker.

The series, "ECU School of Music Presents," is a 30- to 60-minute music performance and interview show airing on Suddenlink Cable Channel 99, also known as ECU-TV.

The percussion concert will re-air at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Other featured concerts include the ECU saxophone ensemble on Nov. 18, 20 and 21; and ECU faculty member Jocelyn Nelson playing Renaissance-era guitar on Nov. 23, 25 and 28. These performances will air at 8 p.m.

After the premiere week, the concerts air at various times.

Many individual performance segments from the show are available for viewing on the School of Music concert site http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=69CB3D225AB4DC20. The entire shows may be viewed online when they air at www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/mts/EcuTv.cfm.

Latin, Caribbean communities meeting

ECU will host the sixth annual leadership assembly of the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, a network of more than 100 Latino and Caribbean immigrant-led organizations throughout the United States, Thursday through Nov. 15.

The Mexican Association of North Carolina (AMEXCAN), a member organization of NALACC, in partnership with the Office of Equity, Diversity and Community Relations at ECU, will host the meeting.

The event will begin 9 a.m. Friday at the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU, 115 Heart Drive, Greenville.

"The 2009 NALACC Leadership Assembly comes at a critical moment for our communities. Despite a wellspring of hope after the presidential elections, the year 2009 has been tumultuous and challenging for Latino and Caribbean immigrant communities," Oscar Chacon, NALACC’s executive director, said.

"The 2009 assembly will give us an opportunity to deepen our understanding about the current socio-political context surrounding immigrant communities as well as the potential threat to democracy in Latin America," he said.

"We will review and evaluate our accomplishments and challenges this past year, and agree on a collective plan of action that will bolster our potential to influence the policy-making process regarding immigration reform."

Juvencio Rocha Peralta, President of AMEXCAN, said, "We are excited to host NALACC’s sixth leadership assembly in Greenville, a place that has witnessed significant growth of the Latino immigrant community. We are very grateful to East Carolina University for its unflagging support in partnering with AMEXCAN and NALACC to organize the sixth leadership assembly."

For more information about the event, contact Peralta at 258-9967 or via e-mail at amexcan@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events:

Nov. 18 — ECU creative writing faculty reading, 7:30 p.m., Bate Building Room 1031. Participating faculty members will be Alex Albright, Christy Halberg, Marc Petersen, Bob Siegel and Liza Wieland.

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.
Event hopes to tackle challenges of immigration

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 08, 2009

The search for better ways to discuss and manage issues associated with the growing immigration into Pitt County and eastern North Carolina drew interested residents to a Saturday seminar at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Members of the local faith community joined representatives of the N.C. Council of Churches and educational representatives from East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to discuss a variety of challenges that people face when they come to the United States in search of a better life.

Americans face challenges as well living together with new populations, especially when they do not share a common language, guest speakers told attendees.

Bob Hudak, rector of St. Paul's and host of the event, said he was stirred to become involved in immigration issues by a series of essays he read by council representative David Liu-Beers.

The Council of Churches feels a responsibility to educate residents of the state and build bridges that connect the two populations, said Liu-Beers, speaking to seminar attendees.

"We're hearing from pastors about the way immigrants are being treated, and it's a difficult time. We believe we need to make North Carolina a more welcoming place for everyone," Liu-Beers said.

With education and awareness as its goal, the seminar presented area leaders with some of the more pressing challenges and tried to separate fact from myth about immigration issues.

"That's what today is all about, bringing folks in faith communities together to talk about a very difficult and controversial topic in a respectful way that will help us move forward," Liu-Beers said.

"When the subject is a complicated one, the rhetoric that gets lobbed back and forth is not very helpful. We want to take the time to sit down at a church with people over coffee and have a real conversation about it," he said.

The discussions focused on three pertinent aspects of immigration: social challenges facing immigration communities, with speaker the Rev. Cookie Santiago of the N.C. Conference of the United Methodist Church; immigration and the economy, with Amy Blizzard of East Carolina University; and immigrants in the education system, with Nayely Perez-Huerta of El Pueblo Inc.

The language barrier is the most obvious educational challenge faced by the children of Latino immigrants, and the financial challenge facing non-resident families to support higher education is nearly impossible to overcome, Perez-Huerta said.

Many teenage Latinos and Latinas must work while in high school to supplement family income, adding to the challenge of learning, she said.

After the break-out sessions, the seminar concluded with a discussion of state legislation that authorizes local law enforcement agencies to participate in immigration enforcement activities. The discussion was led by Marty Rosenbluth, an attorney with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and Hannah Gill, of the UNC-Chapel Hill Institute for the Study of the Americas.

"Many of the problems of the immigration issue are systemic and there are a lot of immediate needs in our immigrant communities," Liu-Beers said.
By engaging local citizens in conversations based on facts rather than misconceptions and stereotypes, communities might begin to bridge the cultural gap that exists between them and immigrants and find practical solutions to the many challenges they face together, the seminar leaders said.

Anyone interested in more information about immigration issues from the N.C. Council of Churches can visit at www.nccouncilofchurches.org or call (919) 828-6501.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9571.
NOW OPEN: COASTAL FOG

COASTAL FOG, an interior design and retail shop owned and operated by Jordan Vainright Proctor, right, and her mother, Marty Vainright, has opened in a remodeled historic home at 312 E. 10th St. The home, built in 1935, features brick walls, painted oak floors and textured wallpaper from the era in which it was built. White walls, sky-blue ceilings and lazy ceiling fans add a touch of Southern magnetism and a relaxing atmosphere. Selections include weathered antique furniture, upholstery, gourmet treats, and accessories from jewelry to tableware, ceramic serving pieces and coffee table books. Proctor, an ECU graduate, began her interior design career with Signature Jordan LLC, then opened a Coastal Fog retail store inside Artisans. Visit www.signaturejordan.com or call 752-1981.
Laurels — To a loud and rocking Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium on Thursday night as Greenville and East Carolina University received a close-up on national television. The Pirates may not have won the game against Virginia Tech, but fans' enthusiasm — particularly that of the students — showed the community in its best light. And that midfield logo is a keeper as it was a special touch for the game.
Community news

Sunday, November 08, 2009

Run to benefit wounded warriors

The second annual Wounded Warrior Run will be held Saturday around the Brook Valley golf course and subdivision. There will be a 5-mile run and 1-mile fun walk, sponsored by East Carolina University's Army ROTC "Pirate Battalion" and the Brook Valley Country Club. All proceeds will benefit the Ft. Bragg Soldier & Family Assistance Center which assists the Warrior Transition Battalion's Soldiers and their families as they recover from injuries suffered in combat. For more information, visit www.woundedwarriorrun.com.

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NSSE changes how colleges judge success, identify weaknesses

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

Online courses at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., have generated such rich student conversations that some faculty have started using electronic discussion boards in on-campus classes, too.

And after officials at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, N.J., discovered that students who don't interact much with other students outside of class are also among those least satisfied with their experience, and therefore may be more likely to drop out, they made an extra effort this fall to reach out to freshmen who had seemed a bit shy during summer orientation. Those students got an extra phone call inviting them to a campus-sponsored party.

DATABASE: Use survey results to identify schools that meet your needs
EXAMPLES: Engagement looks different at every institution

Those kinds of steps, however small, could be a key to helping undergraduates get the most out of their educations. Yet both schools might not have made those adjustments had they not participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an annual questionnaire by Indiana University researchers that helps colleges assess and improve student learning.

In the 10 years since it was first administered, NSSE (pronounced "nissie") has developed into something of a movement. Nearly 1,400 four-year colleges and universities have participated at least once, and about four out of five have done so multiple times. More than 2.4 million students have completed the survey, giving researchers a treasure-trove of data about how students spend their time in college. The survey also has provided a road map to help hundreds of campuses around the country pinpoint -- and focus efforts on -- both potential strengths and trouble spots.

"NSSE helps us get beyond just impressions and anecdotal evidence," says Monmouth associate vice president David Strohmertz. "It provides actionable items."

NSSE doesn't directly measure learning, the end goal. But what it does measure -- student engagement -- offers a dependable proxy. Decades of research show that the more actively students participate in their education, the more likely they are to learn. So NSSE's questions seek to gauge whether (and how often) students do things such as interact with faculty and classmates, use campus services and put effort into their studies.

Along the way, it has helped reframe the national discussion about what matters in college. Two examples illustrate how:

• For years, accreditors (who decide whether a school meets quality-control standards and should be eligible for federal funds) have asked schools how many books they have in their libraries. NSSE asks students how many books they actually read.

• U.S. News & World Report bases 25% of its formula for ranking colleges on how college presidents, provosts and deans rate their peers. NSSE asks students whether their classes have them memorize facts or analyze ideas, whether they have attended an art exhibit, and how many 20-page papers they have written.

"Ten years ago, nobody was asking those questions," says Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Universities.

NSSE is hardly the be-all, end-all for evaluating quality in higher education. It can't say, for example, whether students are writing good papers or retaining what they read. And Iowa State University professor Stephen Porter argues that NSSE and similar surveys aren't reliable, partly because students have problems correctly answering even simple questions about factual information.

But NSSE's influence can't be dismissed. Even Porter notes that it has become the "pre-eminent survey of college students." And in 10 years, Schneider says, NSSE has "helped drive a tectonic shift in our national priorities."

What NSSE has learned about measuring 'quality' in higher education:

1. Colleges want to know how they stack up.

NSSE is not universally used, but clearly the concept has struck a nerve. It has inspired similar surveys for community colleges, law schools and high schools. It has spawned companion surveys of faculty and subsets of students. And versions are now being used or explored in Australia, South Africa and elsewhere. Many schools use custom-designed surveys of their own schools, too, but part of NSSE's appeal is that it enables schools to compare themselves with peer institutions. In that regard, NSSE is "probably the best thing we currently have available," says Trudy Banta, a professor at Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis.

2. But few want to go public with their imperfections.

NSSE's early proponents hoped results would be made public, but "it became clear that NSSE would not likely survive and thrive if we reported scores," recalls founding director George Kuh. But as pressure grows on colleges to be more transparent, that is starting to change. Two years ago, for example, 257 colleges agreed to disclose their benchmark scores in a database published by USA TODAY; this year, 443 agreed. But with a few exceptions, comprehensive data on any one four-year school are hard to find. "NSSE shows that we can't rely on all colleges to voluntarily release information that might put them in a bad light," says Kevin Carey, a policy analyst for the non-profit Education Sector.

3. Traditional notions of 'best' don't say much about teaching and learning.

Many of the nation's big-name universities earned their reputation because of faculty research. But when it comes to educating undergraduates, NSSE data show that the average student at research universities is somewhat less engaged on a number of dimensions of engagement than students at schools where research is a lower
NSSE changes how colleges judge success, identify weaknesses...

4. Numbers cannot fully describe the student experience.

NSSE data show a range of experiences: Women tend to be more engaged than men. Students who work long hours off-campus tend to be less engaged. And while engineering and business majors report high levels of active and collaborative learning, they also report less faculty interaction. Focusing on rankings, says NSSE director Alex McCormick, "creates the false impression that every student who goes to a school ranked 30th is going to have a superior educational experience compared to every student going to a school ranked 35th or 50th."

5. All students benefit from improving engagement, but underprepared students may benefit most.

NSSE researchers in 2008 found that engagement yields larger-than-average gains in certain areas for the two groups of students they studied: black students and students who entered college with lower ACT scores. Because those students are typically considered at risk of falling through the cracks, Kuh urges schools to focus more effort on those students and other groups, such as first-generation and low-income students, who may be similarly vulnerable. "Unfortunately," Kuh says, "students from these groups are less likely to participate" in some of the activities that improve engagement the most.

6. 'High-impact' activities are especially engaging.

Studying abroad, service-learning activities, internships and doing research alongside faculty are some of the best ways to engage undergraduates, a number of studies have found. Other fruitful activities include creating "learning communities," through which groups of students take two or more courses together, and "capstone" experiences that encourage seniors to reflect on and synthesize what they have learned over the years. NSSE can't evaluate the quality of the experiences, but the data are so strong that even poorer programs may be better than none.

7. Many students don't seem challenged by their work.

In its first year, one of what NSSE calls its disappointing findings was that even though students perceived that their institution expects them to study a lot, relatively few did, according to a long-standing convention that suggests students spend at least two hours studying for every hour in the classroom. That would average about 30 hours for a full-time student. Yet fewer than 15% of full-time first-year students and seniors spent 26 or more hours a week studying. Other measures of effort, such as books read and papers written, are also "alarmingly low," Carey notes.

8. Faculty are central to, but often the last to buy into, the concept of student engagement.

When faculty do the kinds of things NSSE recommends, such as providing lots of feedback on papers and holding high expectations, students are more engaged overall, research shows. Yet faculty skepticism is frequently cited as the biggest challenge for administrators who want to use NSSE. "That's not surprising," says Kuh. "Teaching and learning are part of their domain. But Murriel Howard, who recently stepped down as president of Buffalo State College to lead the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, says faculty are doing what they're supposed to do -- thinking critically. "They want to make sure that this all means something, that it's leading to better teaching and learning for students."
Tar Heels warm to Thursday night lights

CHAPEL HILL -- There will be more Thursday night football in Chapel Hill.

UNC-Chapel Hill's Oct. 22 game with Florida State went smoothly enough - aside from a loss for the home team - that campus officials now say they want to host another midweek home game.

"It was a trial balloon, and we were really pleased with what we found out," said Dick Baddour, UNC-CH's athletics director. "We will do it again."

The Oct. 22 game was the first Thursday night game held at Kenan Stadium, in the middle of a congested campus. Planners had long feared the gridlock that might accompany such a large event on a workday. UNC Hospitals, which employs thousands, sits just south of the stadium and many workers get out around the same time as many fans would head into campus.

But this year's game was held during fall break, which meant fewer students would be in town. And employees were dismissed at 3 p.m. to lessen traffic.

"We were worried about backups along I-40," Baddour said. "But we were able to control the influx here enough that we didn't really see major backups. And we didn't have any accidents, so we got a little lucky."

Randy Young, a spokesman for UNC's public safety office, said the event went well in part because the university communicated well. In addition to e-mails, the university sent more than 15,000 postcards with game and traffic information to residents and businesses within two miles of campus.

The next Thursday night game may be a while, though. It probably won't be next year because the schedule won't allow it to be held during fall break, said Steve Reznick, a psychology professor and associate dean who chairs the university's faculty athletics committee.

"There's no way we're going to cancel classes," he said.

Thursday night football is a matter of debate on college campuses. It inevitably leads to grumbling about the weight given to athletics on college campuses.

Athletics officials say Thursday night games are great for exposure. They're televised nationally on ESPN and are generally the only college football game on during that time slot. Baddour said he has heard a lot of positive feedback from fans impressed with how the university, stadium, football team and crowd appeared on television.

"Hopefully, some people know more about Carolina football," he said. "Hopefully, some recruits have watched us and know more about Carolina football. It's a matter of exposure."

Florida State won, 30-27.
Calls from nurses cut heart risks

As Congress weighs options for cutting some of the $2.2 trillion Americans spend on doctors, surgeries, treatments and drugs, some solutions may be as simple as a phone call.

A team of Duke University Medical Center doctors and nurses has found they can help lower patients' blood pressure with a do-it-yourself monitoring plan and phone calls every other month from a nurse.

The intervention, which lasted two years, cost about $400 per patient -- including the blood pressure monitor bought in bulk at Costco. If the program keeps just one patient from having a heart attack or stroke, it pays for itself and then some.

High blood pressure is a leading contributor to cardio-vascular disease, a huge killer in North Carolina. Heart disease is the leading cause of death, and stroke is No. 3, behind cancer.

People can lower their blood pressure with drugs, as well as with exercise and a healthy diet.

But such efforts take diligence, and that's where the Duke project had its success, said Hayden B. Bosworth, a research professor and lead author of a study about the program published last month online in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

"I like to think what we can do is empower people to help themselves as much as possible to do what's needed, and in an environment that's best for them," Bosworth said.

The program divided more than 600 patients into four groups. The first got the normal intervention of drugs and periodic doctor visits. A second group was given home blood pressure monitoring devices and training to use them. A third was called at home by nurses to discuss healthy living options. The final group got both the home monitoring devices and the nurse calls.

The last group had the greatest reduction in blood pressure, with an average 11 percent drop. Others who simply monitored their blood pressure saw a 7.6 percent reduction in blood pressure, and patients who got the phone calls alone recorded a 4.3 percent decline.

Bosworth said the program proves that patients with high blood pressure benefit from frequent monitoring, not unlike diabetes patients taking blood-sugar readings.

For Christine Rodio, a patient in Durham, knowing when her blood pressure was elevated enabled her to take immediate action to exercise more, cut salt, eat healthy fruits and vegetables and try to reduce stress.

"I really began paying attention to the food I ate," Rodio said, noting that her goal wasn't to lose weight but to make sure she was making healthy selections.

She said the regular calls from nurses also helped keep her on track.
"It helped knowing that someone else was interested in controlling my blood pressure, and that I could do things to help," Rodio said, adding that she felt compelled to hold up her part of the bargain because the nurse was so invested in her progress. "I didn't want to let her down. She was working hard at this, too."

The Duke team hopes the program will spread. It has developed a training package and information to offer public-health clinics, hospitals and doctor's offices.

"If someone came and knocked on our door, we could roll it out," Bosworth said.

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Duke starts cancer center

DURHAM -- In a famous 1993 speech, cancer-stricken former N.C. State basketball coach Jimmy Valvano launched his research foundation with a plea for money that he said might not save his own life, but might save his children's lives.

Turns out, he was prophetic.

Valvano died that year, and 13 years later daughter Jamie Valvano Howard was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was 33, the mother of two young boys, and scared to death.

The cancer center at Duke - which has received money from the foundation named for her father - saved her life, she said Friday. Doctors there used genetic testing to find a gene mutation she inherited from her father; and from there, they were able to aggressively fight her breast cancer.

A healthy Valvano Howard presented her story Friday as proof of Duke's cancer-fighting abilities, and Duke Medicine used her tale to put a human face on its work.

Valvano Howard's story highlighted the groundbreaking for Duke's new cancer center, a seven-floor whopper of a project that will adjoin the current Morris Cancer Clinic and consolidate outpatient cancer services and clinical services currently spread across the medical campus.

Construction starts now and is expected to end in 2012, one part of a massive, $700 million Duke Medicine expansion that will also include a new medical pavilion focusing on surgery and intensive-care services.

The groundbreaking included a succession of Duke officials who spoke of the university's grand ambitions, and drew plaudits as well from Gov. Bev Perdue, who said Duke's brand is recognized as far away as Asia, where she recently traveled on an economic development trip.

Duke's cancer center plans follow the opening this fall of another major cancer treatment center just down the road at UNC-Chapel Hill. Officials at both universities say the two projects address a clear and growing need. In North Carolina, health department officials predict a 14 percent growth in new cancer cases between 2006 and 2011, and an increase of more than 20 percent in the Triangle over the same period.

"I don't ask if I'll be diagnosed, but when," Perdue told about 200 Duke supporters attending the ceremony. "Because it's so prevalent among us."

But Victor Dzau, CEO of the Duke University Health System, spoke in grand terms about Duke's research ambitions.

"Cure," he said Friday. "People are a little nervous about using the word. but we're not."
BLACKSBURG, Va. -- As Americans scrambled to make sense of the life of Army psychiatrist Nidal M. Hasan, who allegedly killed 13 people and injured 38 more at Fort Hood, Tex., last week, one fact stood out for those living here: Hasan graduated from Virginia Tech in 1995.

"We were like, 'Oh, jeez, not again,' " said Liana Bayne, a freshman communications major who was in charge of writing about the shooting for the campus newspaper, the Collegiate Times. The paper's student editors quickly re-framed their story to reflect the school's connection to another tragedy.

It has been 2 1/2 years since the nation's deadliest massacre involving a single gunman unfolded on Virginia Tech's campus. That traumatic episode, in which senior Seung Hui Cho, who had a history of mental health problems, shot and killed 32 people before committing suicide, shocked the campus community and led to many months of investigation and debate about mental health care, campus security and the college's role in keeping tabs on its students -- a public relations nightmare that would threaten the reputation of any institution.

The grim news sometimes seems as if it won't stop coming: In January, a graduate student from China was decapitated by another graduate student with a kitchen knife as they sat drinking coffee in a campus cafe. In August, two students were found slain at a campground about 15 miles from campus. Police are still searching for a Tech student who disappeared outside a rock concert in Charlottesville in October. And now, Hasan's connection to the university.

**Mutual support**

But even as some students describe the tragedies as a curse and some parents worry about their children's safety, many students and professors say the already close-knit university has found unity and mutual support in response to the wrenching events. That unity could be one reason enrollment has steadily increased at Virginia Tech. Immediately after the 2007 shootings, the school received a record number of applications; the burst of popularity was so intense that the school was unable to admit any of the more than 1,400 students on its wait list. This year, enrollment increased again, a spokesman said.

More than half of Virginia Tech's current undergraduates were still in high school the day gunfire broke out on the peaceful campus in southwest Virginia, yet they have had to learn to deal with the school's name being associated with violence. Each time Tech's name appears in connection with some tragedy,
sophomore Ellika Rasooly receives phone call after phone call, message after message, from relatives or friends at other universities.

"They are like, 'Oh my gosh, what is going on at Tech? What's wrong with the people there?" " said Rasooly, 19, who grew up in Oakton. "It's almost like they are joking. It's not as serious to them as it is to people at Tech."

Each time, Rasooly launches into a vigorous defense of the school she loves: How it is a beautiful campus. How bad things can happen anywhere. How people only pick up on the words "Virginia Tech" because of the shooting. How a tiny number of violent people cannot represent the overwhelming majority of students who lead peaceful, happy lives on campus.

Still, university leaders have become experts on tragedy, and after the shootings at Fort Hood on Thursday, about a dozen school officials briefed Pentagon officers and generals on how to sensitively communicate with and support victims and their families. Edward F.D. Spencer, the university's vice president of student affairs, said the school advised the Army to hold a candlelight vigil, which took place Friday, and reminded them to not "forget about [the uninjured bystanders] because they can deal with the long-term effects of it, too."

The series of violent incidents connected to the university has shocked PhD candidate Juan Carlos S. Sierra, 32, who is from war-torn Colombia and teaches a class on Latin American politics. Anytime there is a shooting anywhere in the world, Sierra said, he is taken back to the morning when he was traveling to campus on a bus to teach a Spanish class and learned that a gunman had gone on a killing spree.

Since the shooting, Sierra said, the university has taken the right steps to address student mental health issues and reach out to those who feel isolated or stressed. As the tragedies have continued to unfold, he wonders how one school can experience so many traumas in such a short amount of time. Blacksburg "is not exactly the place where you would usually find these situations," he said. "It's pretty weird."

'I knew they knew'

During his class Friday, Sierra saw that many of the students were carrying newspapers. "I knew they knew," he said, but he didn't bring up the Texas incident in class. He didn't want to say the wrong thing.

In another room, Susanna C. Rinehart allowed the 650 students in her introductory theater class to discuss the Fort Hood shootings. She found the underclassmen uneasy about seeing Virginia Tech's name "almost globally tied to these events." Those who were on campus in 2007 shared a collective sense of "Oh, please, no, let's please not have this man be connected to Virginia Tech," she said.

"It's almost surreal," said Rinehart, who is also the university's director of education for diversity and inclusion. "No one in their right mind would draw any straight line [from Virginia Tech] to what happened, but, on the other hand, it has created a significant amount of concern and conversation."

Ever since the massacre that began the series of recent tragic events at Virginia Tech, students have done everything they can to help each other, said Derek O'Dell, 22, a veterinary student who was shot twice in the arm by Cho during German class.

"The students have always come together on campus for the past couple of years, and we will keep doing so," he said. "We've always been resilient here."