Second student dies from wreck injuries

By Kathryn Kennedy
Monday, November 22, 2010

A second passenger in a Saturday morning wreck died Sunday at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Briana Latrice Gather, 20, of Kernersville died from injuries sustained when the car she was traveling in ran off the road about 6:30 a.m. at Greenville Boulevard and Rosewood Drive, according to the Greenville Police Department. The vehicle struck a tree in the side yard of a house.

Her death follows the passing of fellow backseat passenger Victoria T'nya-Ann Carter, 20, of Raleigh. Carter was pronounced dead at the scene Saturday.

The police department's traffic safety unit is investigating the incident. They do not believe alcohol was a factor.

Greenville Mayor Pat Dunn held a moment of silence for the two East Carolina University students at an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service held Sunday at First Presbyterian Church.

Both young women were members of the 17-person pledge class for sorority Delta Sigma Theta. The driver, Kamil Shaunay Arrington, 20, and the front seat passenger, Taylor Nicole King, 19, also are students and pledges.

They were transported to the hospital from the scene along with Gather. Police said no update on their conditions is available.

Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church welcomed 200 people Saturday to pray, sing and comfort one another after knowledge of the wreck and Carter's death spread.
University officials opened a portion of the nearby Brody School of Medicine, providing counselors and ministers.

A memorial service is scheduled for 6 p.m. today on ECU’s campus in Wright Auditorium.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
ECU student dies in wreck

By Ginger Livingston
Sunday, November 21, 2010

Members of an East Carolina University sorority and their friends mourned the death of a pledge and prayed for her injured friends during an impromptu vigil at a local church Saturday afternoon.

Victoria T'nya-Ann Carter, 20, of Raleigh died at the scene of a single-vehicle crash that occurred about 6:30 a.m. Saturday on Greenville Boulevard near Rosewood Drive, according to the Greenville Police Department. The vehicle ran off the road and collided with a tree in the rear side yard of a house.

Three other women in the car were transported to Pitt County Memorial Hospital for treatment. They are the driver, Kamil Shaunay Arrington, 20, of Nashville; front seat passenger Taylor Nicole King, 19, of Greenville; and Briana Latrice Gather, 20, of Kernersville, who sat in the backseat with Carter.

No information was available about their conditions.

It does not appear alcohol played a role in the wreck, and the incident is still under investigation, police said.

Deborah Green, a home health aide, works at the Rosewood Drive house where the car hit the tree. Green said no one in the house heard the crash.

“I got up a little after 7 (a.m.) and when I opened the window (shades) there was a car and all these police cars,” Green said. Then she noticed a sheet on the ground and realized a body was underneath.

“I was like, ‘oh my God.’ I was shocked,” Green said. Police told her one young woman was dead and several others had been taken to the hospital.
“It's so sad,” Green said. “I feel sorry for her people.”

Carter and the other women were ECU students and members of the 17-person pledge class for Delta Sigma Theta. As news of the accident spread Saturday morning, other pledges, sorority members and alumni and other friends gathered at the hospital to comfort their families and wait for updates on their condition.

The Rev. Sidney A. Locks Jr. with Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church said the university opened part of the nearby Brody School of Medicine building for the group and brought in counselors and local ministers.

“What happened at the Brody Building was super important because it was the immediate embrace of community that I think young people never realize they might need that some day,” Locks said.

Several sorority members later approached Locks about arranging a more private gathering. He made the church available and by 4:30 p.m. about 200 people had gathered to pray, sing and comfort each other. Locks spoke briefly, acknowledging the difficulty in understanding why a vibrant young woman should die.

When one young woman started crying a cluster of her friends surrounded her. A woman could be heard singing and comforting another group. Two young men were seen propping up a crying friend as he left the sanctuary.

Carter was a member of ECU’s Black Student Union and the organization’s president sat in disbelief.

“I got a text message this morning,” said Brandon Sanders, who met Carter when she was a freshman. At first she seemed shy, he said, but soon he felt like he had met a sister he never knew he had.

“I couldn't grasp that it had actually happened,” he said. “Victoria, her personality draws you to her. It's impossible not to like her.” She loved to organize dinner parties. She was part of a group planning to meet today and hold a potluck luncheon, he said.

“I don't know if we're still going to do it,” Sanders said. “I don't know how the others will feel.”
Cynthia Butler-McIntyre, national president of Delta Sigma Theta, spoke via telephone to a smaller group of young women after the vigil.

“This is a terribly sad day for their families and for us as Deltas,” she said.

Delta Sigma Theta is a community service organization and looks for young women who are eager to improve their communities. Carter and her three friends exemplified the bright futures the sorority promotes.

“We are saddened by this tragic loss and our hearts are heavy,” Butler-McIntyre said.

A memorial service is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Monday at Hendricks Theatre in Mendenhall Student Center.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or (252) 329-9570.
An approximately $300 increase in tuition and fees was approved by the East Carolina University Board of Trustees at its meeting Friday morning.

The 2011-12 tuition and fee proposal next goes to the University of North Carolina system Board of Governors for approval and recommendation to the North Carolina General Assembly, which sets final tuition rates at the state's public universities.

The proposal increases tuition by $204 and fees by $100. This is on top of a $263 supplemental tuition increase already approved by the Legislature set for implementation next year, for a total increase of $567.

Tuition and fees for full-time resident undergraduates will go from $4,947 per year to $5,514 per year.

“It pains me to recommend what was passed; it does have an impact,” Chancellor Steve Ballard said. “We have to balance access and affordability with quality of experience. We will continue to do all we can to balance affordability with quality.”

Ballard said the hardest part is still ahead. The state is facing a more than $3 billion gap next fiscal year, and 10-18 percent cuts are expected, Ballard said.

“We're having to make some very tough decisions well before we have any certainty (in the state budget),” Ballard said.

Ten percent cuts “we could handle,” Ballard said, but cuts above that “will be tough.”
Ballard said he did not support across-the-board cuts or letting every area fall back at the same rate. “We'll have to do things differently and make some tough choices,” he said.

The state shortfall means that the university will not be able to pursue a new biosciences building for another two years. Academic and research buildings are generally funded by state appropriations. The UNC Board of Governors is not requesting any state funding for new construction projects for the next biennium (2011-12, 2012-13). A new biosciences building has been a university priority for several years to replace the Howell Science Complex built in the 1960s.

The trustees did approve a motion to have concepts drawn up for a proposed new student center, to be brought back in the spring. A new student center would be funded by student fees, as are recreation centers and dining halls.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or (252) 329-9567.
ECU students pack boxes for center
The Daily Reflector
Monday, November 22, 2010

Greek students at East Carolina University packed 200 Thanksgiving meals on Friday to benefit families at the Little Willie Center.

Each basket includes food for side dishes such as macaroni and cheese, green beans, stuffing and even cake and icing.

About 100 of the baskets also include turkeys, and the other 100 will be used to supplement turkey donations that the center receives through other organizations.

The ECU student participants represent the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Council and the Multicultural Greek Council.

The Daily Reflector
Kristyna Cooper, Alley Montenez and Amanda Mutio with Lambda Theta Alpha sorority load boxes with food at the Mendenall Student Center at ECU friday night to donate to the Little Willie Center. (Scott Davis/The Daily Reflector)
Local programs receive $100,000 grants
ECU News Services
Monday, November 22, 2010

Two grants will help a pair of local programs further their goals of healthy weight and access to care for eastern North Carolinians.

MATCH, a program involving the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, and Access East, which serves people without health insurance in 27 counties, each received $100,000 from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. The grants were announced Tuesday at an event in Chapel Hill.

MATCH (Motivating Adolescents with Technology to Choose Health) is an approach to student wellness that combines physical activity, nutrition education and technology. The first two years of the MATCH program improved the weight status of more than two-thirds of all participating overweight students. It was started in 2006 by Tim Hardison, then a science teacher at Williamston Middle School and now director of the MATCH program at ECU.

Hardison and Dr. Suzanne Lazorick, program evaluator of the MATCH program and assistant professor of pediatrics and public health at ECU, have expanded the program beyond Williamston to seventh-graders at schools in Ayden, Robersonville, Jacksonville, Hertford County, Washington County and Pamlico County. They are assessing body mass index measurements, eating choices and other factors.

Access East will use the grant money to increase access to primary and specialty care, case management, medication assistance and preventive health services for 400 low-income, uninsured Pitt County adults at the Bernstein Community Health Center.

Access East, along with Greene County Health Care, operates the Bernstein Center, a full-service, federally qualified health center that is a medical home for 3,500 low-income North Carolinians. Access East serves 130,000
people through its community care plan, the largest such network in the state.

Dr. Tom Irons, ECU associate vice chancellor for regional health services, chairs the Access East board. Jim Baluss, administrator for regional health plans at University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, serves as executive director.

Through the grant, Access East will reduce the need for emergency care by providing new access to primary and specialty care, case management, medication assistance and preventive health services for 400 low-income, uninsured Pitt County adults.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the BCBSNC Foundation is investing $1 million in 10 nonprofit organizations across North Carolina. Each organization is a former BCBSNC Foundation grantee and received $100,000 to continue efforts that positively impact the health of their local residents.

“After 10 successful years, we reflect on the partnerships and relationships that are making strides in access to care, healthy eating, physical activity and enabling nonprofits to do their good work throughout North Carolina,” Kathy Higgins, president of the foundation, said.
Sleep-out event helps the homeless

By Jennifer Swartz
Saturday, November 20, 2010

Hundreds of items were collected and a collective sleep out was set under the stars as part of a citywide effort Friday aimed at aiding and understanding Greenville's homeless community.

Organizers with the fraternity Phi Beta Sigma and the sorority Zeta Phi Beta spent Friday afternoon at the Town Common sorting an estimated 500 items already in hand as they kicked off the first-ever event, which featured a “sleep out,” calling on supporters to overnight outside as a symbolic gesture aimed at better understanding what it's like to live on the street.

Hundreds more items, including clothing, bedding, food, educational materials, toiletries, toys and baby and children's items were expected to be collected during the 24-hour event ending at 1 p.m. today.

“We're going to sleep out in the open air,” Lamarco Morrison, a city parks planner and chairman of the fraternity's social action committee, said Friday afternoon as temperatures, expected to bottom out in the low 30s, began to drop. “I doubt I'll sleep, but it'll give me empathy and give me a good idea of what it feels like,” he said. “It's the least we can do.”

The sour economy has fanned the flames in recent years, adding sometimes surprising people to the ranks of the homeless, including families, single mothers and the newly jobless.

Through the effort, the sorority is meeting one of its goals to address the growing needs in the community, said LaTonya C. Gaskins, president of the local Zeta chapter.

“Zetas helping other people excel, also called Z-HOPE, is one of our major initiatives,” she said. “We're involved in these kinds of projects to try to make a difference for those around us.”
ECU student Brian Goings, a member of the fraternity studying marketing, said he's got a better sense of the problem, which doesn't discriminate in a bad economy.

“It's like one of those things, it seems taboo until you do something like this,” he said. “You fail to realize it's in your own back yard.”

Contact Jennifer Swartz at jswartz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.
Adapted recreation day draws crowd

By Ronnie Woodward
Sunday, November 21, 2010

Sitting in her wheelchair just minutes before delivering a speech, Rachelle Friedman admitted that it was a little weird being inside East Carolina University's Student Recreation Center again.

Friedman was the keynote speaker at Saturday's 14th annual Adapted Recreation and Wellness Day, where about 40 people with physical disabilities competed with and against the 60 or so ECU student volunteers on hand. They played games such as wheelchair rugby and sitting volleyball, and the event was capped by Friedman sharing her inspirational story.

About six months ago and four weeks before her planned wedding date, Friedman shattered six vertebrae in her neck as a result of what she called a freak accident during her bachelorette party. Friedman was playfully pushed in a pool by one of her best friends, landing awkwardly on her head in the three-feet end of the water, and is now paralyzed from the waist down.

Doctors have told her family that she has a 5 percent chance of gaining use of her legs again.

“The toughest part is you lose a lot of your independence,” said Friedman, a 2008 graduate of ECU who volunteered at the Adapted Recreation and Wellness Day while in school. “I can't do a lot of things on my own and I'm basically trying to learn everything all over again.”

The physical restrictions haven't dampened her spirit.

About a week after completing extensive rehab, Friedman sought out wheelchair rugby, which she said she has steadily improved at and played on Saturday.

“There's no way that I would physically be where I'm at right now without rugby,” said Friedman, who was a varsity tennis player and cheerleader in
high school. “It's helped me in so many ways. ... Mentally, it has given me something that I had before. I was always competitive and athletic, so rugby is a way to stay competitive and play sports again.”

For the volunteers, Saturday was about facing new challenges while blending in at the same time.

“Today is about showing that whether you're disabled or not, we can all play together,” ECU senior Jon Barefoot said. “Just because the activities are adaptive doesn't mean that they are not hard. Wheelchair basketball is probably one of the hardest sports I've ever played.”

Event director David Gaskins said he gets the most enjoyment out of watching the interaction between the ECU students and disabled participants during games. He shared the story of a boy around 12 years old who is shy by nature, but couldn't hide his smile.

“When he comes here, his face just lights up,” Gaskins said.

Friedman will share her story on The Today Show on Monday. She plans to discuss her medical situation, which has postponed her wedding. If Friedman were to wed her fiancee, she would be dropped from her current insurance plan.

“I should not have to choose between getting married and having the help that I need,” she said. “It's unfortunate that as in love as we are and as much as we want to get married, paper work, insurance and Medicaid has to get in the way of it.”

Contact Ronnie Woodward at rwoodward@reflector.com or (252) 329-9592.
Today: Program showcase planned

A social work class at East Carolina University will hold a community program showcase at 3:30 p.m. in the chapel building of the Lucille W. Gorham Intergenerational Center. Students will present program ideas for the center, and audience members will choose which program should be funded. For more information, contact Kerry Littlewood at littlewood@ecu.edu or 328-5804.
Paralyzed bride-to-be determined to be self-reliant, get married

November 20, 2010
By Phil Gast, CNN

Don't expect Rachelle Friedman to have a pity party for Thanksgiving Day just because it will be her first in a wheelchair.

Paralyzed from the chest down after she was playfully pushed by her best friend into the pool at her bachelorette party, Friedman is preparing to host family at her home.

"We all have something to be thankful for," said Friedman, 25, of Knightdale, North Carolina, just east of Raleigh. "I am thankful I didn't suffer a brain injury."

It has been six months since the East Carolina University graduate, her fiance and family learned that she would never again be able to walk.

Friedman has maintained two goals during these months of medical treatment and grueling outpatient therapy: Getting married and becoming independent.

Fiance Chris Chapman, 28, can't wait for the delayed wedding day to arrive, once complicated insurance issues are resolved.

"It will be phenomenal," he said. "She has a whole world of friends she never knew."

Last spring was a joyful time for Friedman and Chapman, a middle school science teacher. The pair, both from Virginia Beach, Virginia, were to wed June 27.

In late May, Friedman, who was a program coordinator for a senior citizens center, traveled to Virginia Beach for her bachelorette party.
Bridesmaids enjoyed a cookout and a limousine ride to the entertainment strip. "We had a really good time," Friedman said.

Afterward, the group went to her best friend's home, where they started playing around near the pool.

"It was just spontaneous horseplay," said Friedman, a former dance and aerobics dancer. "She pushed me and I landed wrong."

The young woman's head stuck the bottom of the pool.

"I was pretty conscious through all of it," Friedman said. "I heard my neck crack and my body went stiff. I couldn't move anything."

She floated to the surface, where she was helped by her best friend who, like Friedman, is a lifeguard. "I knew I broke something," Friedman said. "I knew I was paralyzed."

Friedman recalls asking an EMT whether she had seen someone walk after such an accident. The emergency worker replied knowing of one person in 30 years on the job.

"I told her I was going to be the second," Friedman said.

Friedman suffered a C6 spinal cord injury and paralysis from the chest down. She can use her arms and wrists, but not her hands. She uses her thumbs to type on a keyboard. "I'm still dealing with a lot of nerve pain" in her hands and torso, she says, for which she takes medications.
Portrait of the artist: Scott Avett

SALISBURY, N.C.—"Decide what to be and go be it."

"Head Full of Doubt, Road Full of Promise," from The Avett Brothers album "I and Love and You."

For Scott Avett, deciding "what to be" has led him to success as a musician, no doubt about that.

But he's also a family man, a man of faith, and a painter of rare talent.

Avett, 34, is best known as a member of the Concord-based band The Avett Brothers, who seem poised on the brink of major, life-changing celebrity.

The band, which also includes Scott's brother Seth and non-brother Bob Crawford, is tough to pigeonhole folk rock doesn't quite encompass what this band is about. The music features elements of bluegrass, country, punk, honky-tonk.

What unifies the music, however, is the passion and exuberant energy behind it - and that is what has earned this hard-working band a legion of faithful fans.

When they played on the last day of Wilkesboro's Merlefest in May, they were greeted by thousands of wildly enthusiastic fans who were thrilled to finally be able to see them performing in the state again.

But for Avett, popularity and acclaim has never been the goal. The lyrics of "Salvation Song" explain: "...they may pay us off in fame/ Though that is not why we came."
Fame is also not the reason that Avett pursues his other passion: painting.

Eleven of Avett's paintings are now on display at EastSquare Artworks, and Avett will speak about his art at the Center for Faith & the Arts Fall Colloquy Nov. 22 at the Meroney Theater.

Avett's art display and talk are a coup for Center for Faith & the Arts and its executive director, Sarah Hall.

Hall became aware of Avett's art several years ago and wrote about it for the Post. Her interest was renewed when she saw several of Avett's pieces at an exhibit in honor of one of Avett's East Carolina University art professors at the Lee Hansley Gallery in Raleigh. Hall spotted Avett whom she had spoken to on the phone extensively but had never met and approached him. That chance meeting led to a phone conversation about Avett's art and how it is influenced by his faith.

"There seemed to be a lot of spiritual exploration behind his paintings, and I wanted to give him the opportunity to explore that in a public setting and he seemed open to that," Hall says.

Pinning Avett down to arrange the details of the project was a bit of a challenge, and understandably so: he is busy managing a grueling touring schedule with his band, maintaining a semblance of normality as husband and father and finding time to paint.

Avett admits he didn't always have the focus or discipline that he has now. He looks back at his high school self with something like wonderment.

"I never read a book," he says. "I just never believed that anything (in terms of studying) really worked."
The first few years of college at ECU weren't much better.

"I was lost," he says.

He briefly considered chucking school completely to take a job as foreman of a landscaping crew.
A trip to Italy at 23 gave Avett a clarity and focus that had been missing. The time was right, he says, for him to harness the "go get it" work ethic that had been more or less dormant.

"There was a new discipline that I followed in Italy, for a month straight, studying painting and drawing," he says. He'd get up at 6 a.m. and would sometimes work until midnight. Even his eating changed for the better, he says.

The experience had to do with re-directing energy. "Life is kind of like a big house slam full of stuff, and you have to rechannel how you store things," he says.

Avett went back to college with renewed focus, earning both a bachelor's degree in communications and a bachelor of fine arts degree in painting.

His art instructor Leland Wallin encouraged Avett to go on to graduate school, foreseeing a career for Avett as a professional artist.

But music proved the stronger pull, and Avett gave himself over to it. Still, he was serious enough about his art that he opened a gallery in downtown Concord in 2002. It didn't attract a lot of attention during the five months it was open, but Avett took advantage of the time to paint.

Avett's art draws freely from religious images, including Christ on the cross and a David and Goliath tableau complete with severed head that has a dark, Renaissance feeling to it.

"The Bible is for sure just a well ... that you can pull big stories, little stories, characters" out of, he says.

His grandfather, Clegg Avett, was a Methodist minister. Avett remembers going to Sunday school regularly as a child, though he says his family often left early to have lunch together.

About three years ago, Avett began reading a book of his grandfather's sermons and began making connections to other things he was reading. He began thinking seriously about matters of faith and spirituality and found many of his own thoughts "perfectly articulated" in the non-fiction writings of Leo Tolstoy.
The main idea, he says, is that the kingdom of God lies within us.

The idea of the evanescence of life shows up in the painting "Julianne in Vain," which will be familiar to Avett Brothers fans as the cover for the album "I and Love and You."

The deeply shadowed painting is somber in tone, with a woman's face and a skull emerging from the shadows. The original intent was for the painting to be an allegory of the vanities of human life, depicting various temporal images skull, hourglass, drumsticks, fruit. Avett ultimately pared it down to the stark essentials "life and death, hello and goodbye," he says.

A fascination and reverence for the human body is evident in his paintings, which evoke a Caravaggio-like realism.

Although he appreciates all kinds of art, including landscapes and still lifes, Avett's focus is solidly on the human figure. "For some reason, I can't validate my own work without a figure being in it," he says probably because, he took to heart an art professor's pronouncement that the human figure is the most difficult of all things to paint or draw.

In an e-mail to Sarah Hall, he elaborated: "If there is a truth in whatever emotion that I am attempting to translate, it seems that the human figure is the most direct vehicle for it to translate to the viewer."

His nudes feature realistic anatomic detail, and Avett seems mystified by the notion that anyone might be shocked by it.

"They're almost just like anatomical displays," he says, adding that he has no problem with his 2-year-old daughter, Eleanor, seeing the subject matter some of which is, literally, larger than life on huge canvases.

He sums it up simply: "There's nothing sacrilegious about a human body."

Having a child has prompted Avett to work faster these days and helped him keep priorities in order. But even though he is compelled to do things faster, he realizes he can't rush things.
"Not being in a hurry I had no clue of that when I was 28. I've had no choice but to slow down and accept that (what I do) needs to be quality, not quantity."

It's clear in reading Avett's essay in this month's "Muse & Spirit" (published by Center for Faith & the Arts) that artistic integrity is a sine qua non for Avett something to never be sacrificed. Creation is an expression of the human soul, Avett believes, and should never be polluted by intent to succeed.

You get the sense that he believes having to labor and experience some ups and downs before commercial success rewarded his band's efforts was a good thing.

Maturity, with its mistakes and failures, he says, leads to the realization that "there isn't anything good to do but help people."

Although his grandfather died shortly after he baptized baby Scott, his humility and quiet service to others serve as an example to his grandson.

"I'm also in a position where I can serve in that quiet manner. There's a ton of ways we can help people with what we do, not just (through the) message in the lyrics."

It's hard to consider what seems to be Avett's charmed life his extravagant artistic gifts, a solid family life, adoring fans, his soulful good looks and not think, "some guys have it all" or assume that Avett was simply blessed with superior DNA.

But Avett doesn't see it quite that way. "I don't think I do anything that others aren't capable of doing," he says.

For Avett, it's about finding the gleam of talent or passion, and then faithfully nurturing it to a blaze.

As he wrote in "Muse & Spirit," "Our hands and minds, legs and mouths, eyes and ears, arms and feet were all made with purpose, and though you may never find that exact purpose, it is your obligation to yourself and God to search for it ..."
He laughs when he considers that if he'd known what a long road the past nine years would be with the Avett Brothers, he's not so sure he wouldn't have just said, "No way; I'm just going to work (at a regular job)."

But life doesn't give you a crystal ball; it's one day at a time, he says.

And as you plug along one day at a time, you might just wake up one morning and realize that you're playing music you've written to thousands of fans who love you for doing what you do, for following the gleam where it took you.

Despite his prodigious work ethic, Avett allows himself time to relax and enjoy the fruits of his labor.

"I love, just really, really love human consumer capitalist things," he says, like going to an outdoor mall to shop on a beautiful fall day.

But there's a limit to being a consumer and a connoisseur of nice things, he says. Eventually, the work will call, whether it's a song unwritten or a painting unpainted, and Avett will apply that Protestant work ethic to creating art that will make people happy or make them think.

"I can't put a finger on what drives me to create," he writes. "I've always had something to say or show. Most of it, if not all of it, has been only my flawed attempts to represent truth."
Davis a quick study

BY EDWARD G. ROBINSON III - Staff Writer

GREENVILLE–As the story goes, Dominique Davis missed the start of the spring academic semester and was unable to officially enroll at East Carolina as a scholarship athlete until Aug. 6. But instead of lounging on the couch at home, he paid his own way and showed up early.

Still, unable to participate in spring football, he stood on the sidelines and watched first-year coach Ruffin McNeill and offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley install the Pirates' new spread offense.

"I was taking notes," Davis said.

In four weeks during fall camp, the 6-foot-3, 215-pound junior transfer beat out sophomore Brad Wornick to become the team's starter.

Davis had listened during the spring drills and showed the leadership and poise in preseason practice that gave him the edge in the final decision.

"He immediately, day one, you could tell when he was in there, it was his offense," Riley said. "He took charge. And that's what I was looking for." It's safe to say coaches have not regretted their decision.

As the Pirates (6-4, 5-1 C-USA) travel to Houston to face Rice (2-8, 1-5), they take with them the league's top passing offense, fifth best in the nation, averaging 321.0 yards per game.

The Pirates became bowl eligible with a victory over UAB last week and remain in contention for a berth in the league's championship game.

The back-to-back conference champions, who lost 18 starters from last season, entered what many considered a rebuilding year with loads of uncertainty, particularly at quarterback after Patrick Pinkney graduated.
On cue, Davis helped vanquish those concerns, along the way guiding the team to thrilling comeback victories and posting some of the best passing statistics in school history.

He is currently the nation's top point producer with 230 points in 10 games, responsible for an average of 23.0 points per game.

He has completed 304 of 468 attempts for 3,077 yards, 31 touchdowns and 11 interceptions and ranks No. 1 nationally in completions and touchdowns. Davis owns the school's single-season records for attempts, completions, passing yardage and touchdown passes.

He passed former ECU quarterback Jeff Blake for the single-season record for passing yards and touchdown passes, while surpassing Pinkney in the completions category.

Davis' talent has been easily recognizable.

"He makes good decisions. He manages the game. He gets the ball into the right people's hands," Marshall coach Doc Holliday said. "He gets the ball out of his hands quickly. People say that they like to get after him, but not too many people have been able to get to him. He does a great job of getting the ball to the hot receiver."

Davis has a casual yet intense air about him that players say breeds confidence.

"He's just so poised," ECU senior receiver Dwayne Harris said. "The guy never gets rattled."

The Pirates needed his calming presence in the first game of the season against Tulsa on Sept. 5.

Davis capped a 1-minute and 22-second, 11-play, 66-yard drive with a game-winning 33-yard touchdown pass to freshman Justin Jones to stun the Golden Hurricane on the game's final play.

"[Coach McNeill] tells us this all the time: It's not pressure if you know what you're doing," Davis said.
He has since rallied the Pirates to a 44-43 victory over Southern Miss on Oct. 9. He also started the game against N.C. State on Oct. 16 by completing 14 consecutive passes for 190 yards. He ended that overtime contest with a game-winning 1-yard touchdown run.

It's not a bad film reel for a guy who started as a wide receiver at Kathleen High near his hometown of Lakeland, Fla.

"I never played quarterback in my life," Davis said.

Davis was an athlete who admired NFL star Deion Sanders. His brothers picked his middle name, Dion, after the former pro cornerback. They also selected his first name, Dominique, after the former NBA star Dominique Wilkins.

He became a quarterback after his team's starter was injured and his coach asked him to try. He taught himself to throw.

"I was a natural," Davis said.

Boston College thought so and recruited him to play in Chestnut Hill, Mass. He found playing time as a redshirt freshman, taking over for an injured Chris Cane and starting the Eagles' final three games, which included the ACC championship.

He left Boston College the following season because of academic eligibility and chose to enroll at Scott Community College instead of sitting out a season.

"Sometimes some people need everything taken from them to realize it's not a joke," Davis said. "It really woke me up. I started taking things seriously and started being more mature about things."

Davis said he has a 3.3 GPA. He's certainly impressed his peers and coaches. "I love being around him," said McNeill, who picked up on Davis' attentiveness during a home visit.

"I knew he was ready to go then."

robinson@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4781
Editorial: Tuition hikes harmful
Monday, November 22, 2010

At its meeting last week, the East Carolina University Board of Trustees voted to raise tuition again, a move that comes as little surprise. With the state facing deep spending cuts in the face of a massive budget shortfall, less spending on the university system forces schools to make up the difference by charging more for a higher education.

That decision by East Carolina, which follows similar hikes approved by other University of North Carolina schools, threatens to price higher education beyond the reach of the state's poorest students. However, the problem's root is in the Legislature and among the population, which should recognize the long-term value of maintaining a robust and accessible university system.

On Friday, the East Carolina trustees approved a tuition and fee increase of about $300 for the 2011-12 school year. The annual cost for in-state students will rise from $4,947 to $5,514, and it follows similar actions taken by trustee boards at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and N.C. State University last week. All tuition increases must pass the UNC Board of Governors and the N.C. General Assembly before they are enacted, but it is likely those bodies will heed these recommendations.

With North Carolina facing a budget shortfall projected to exceed $3 billion, the 16-campus UNC system is expecting deep cuts to come. Universities were largely spared when lawmakers made adjustments to the budget earlier this year, but they are unlikely to be as fortunate in 2011. The incoming Republican majority has been strongly critical of what it views as the excesses of the university system.

The proposed tuition increases therefore fill that funding gap with students' money, charging them more while offering less. Attending a UNC institution remains a tremendous value, but it promises to saddle more students with debt and harms the state's poorest students, who may simply be unable to afford the cost of school in addition to the related price of attendance. It
would be a shame should a single student be turned away from a higher education because of means, and it would violate the provision of the state Constitution mandating education be as free from expense as possible.

Investment in education, from public schools to universities, remains the best course for any state, particularly in this economic climate. What a shame that investment will be made increasingly by students rather than by a public that reaps the rewards.
Laurels — To East Carolina University Athletics Director Terry Holland and others responsible for adding University of Southern Mississippi stickers to the helmets the Pirates will wear in their game today against Rice University. Three Southern Miss players suffered critical injuries in a shooting last week and showing East Carolina's support for them is a laudable gesture.
LGBT Affairs honors transgenders with vigil
Posted: Monday, November 22, 2010 12:02 am
Coral Denton, Alligator Contributing Writer

Greg was a son and a brother. He played football for East Carolina University. He was a husband and the father of two children.

After living as a man for 50 years, Greg became Gina Duncan.

Duncan addressed a crowd Friday during the Transgender Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil organized by the UF Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Affairs on the Plaza of the Americas.

Duncan described the emotional times she once endured and the realization that she had gender identity issues. She said she became increasingly depressed and withdrawn from her family.

“The grayness of discontent grew stronger with each passing day,” Duncan said.

For Duncan, the identity issues she experienced were not a choice.

“Who would destroy their near perfect life on purpose?” Duncan said.

In the conclusion of her speech, Duncan called on the audience to strive to be authentic in their lives.

“One day I hope being transgender has no more significance than being left- or right-handed,” she said.

The lighting of candles occurred as the names of those murdered for violating gender norms were read.

Elizabeth Spiwak, a UF senior, said she was impacted by the reading of the names and death descriptions because she is not personally aware of anyone with transgender questions.

“Hearing how they died made me want to cry,” Spiwak said.

Donnie Fields, UF Pride Student Union president, said the purpose of the vigil was to raise awareness of violence against transgender people and to remember those who have lost their lives.

“Regardless of how much we talk about progress in our community and how far we’ve come, there’s still a lot to do for those who are marginalized,” Fields said.
Four Loko ban fuels buying binge

By Jenna Johnson and Kevin Sieff
Washington Post Staff Writers
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While federal officials announced plans this week to outlaw alcoholic energy drinks like Four Loko, five 20-somethings living in a Columbia Heights group house hatched a plan of their own: Anytime someone sees Four Loko for sale, buy as much as possible.

The housemates have only a half-dozen cans so far, but they are hoping to stockpile several dozen. Then, once the caffeinated version of beverage is formally pulled from shelves and no longer sold legally, they will host a massive Four Loko party.

"We will be the last earthlings to enjoy the taste of Four Loko," said Tom Grahsler, 26, whose favorite flavors are watermelon and fruit punch. "I'm pretty sad to see it go."

In a series of high-profile incidents, dozens of college students have been treated for alcohol poisoning after overindulging in Four Loko and similar products, and several states and universities then banned the drinks. Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) has been one of the most vocal opponents of the potent drinks, calling them "dangerous and toxic brews."

Experts say that the high levels of both alcohol and caffeine in the beverages create a "wide-awake drunk" that makes it difficult for people to realize how intoxicated they are and enables them to consume far more alcohol than they otherwise would without passing out. That puts them at increased risk for alcohol poisoning, engaging in such risky behavior as driving drunk and committing or being the victims of sexual assaults.

On Wednesday, several federal agencies responded aggressively, telling four manufacturers to stop distributing the products within the next two weeks. The Food and Drug Administration deemed the alcoholic energy drinks unsafe and illegal.

Four Loko, the most popular of the bunch, has been nicknamed "blackout in a can." The colorful 23.5-ounce cans contain as much alcohol as several beers and as much caffeine as a strong cup of coffee - all for about $2.50. The makers of Four Loko have already agreed to remove caffeine and other substances from the product.

News of the impending ban has raised awareness of the dangers of mixing alcohol with caffeine - and prompted mockery from college students who disagree with the decision. A YouTube video shows people how to make their own Four Loko using an energy drink, caffeine tablets, Jolly Rancher candy and malt alcohol. Some fans changed their Facebook profile photos to tributes proclaiming, "Viva la Vida Loko" and "Save Loko."
"It's amazing how people have come together around this," said Greg Gerlach, an American University sophomore who has stockpiled more than 50 cans of Four Loko. Gerlach, an economics major, understands the forces of supply and demand - and he hopes to make some quick cash off the ban.

"I can buy it for around $2 a can, and as stores sell out, people are willing to pay more," said Gerlach, who said he was 21. "People know I'm selling it. Everyone knows I'm obsessed with this stuff."

Several liquor stores near American and Georgetown University reported a surge in Four Loko sales Wednesday and Thursday. Foggy Bottom Grocery, near the George Washington University campus, also saw a bump in sales, said owner Kris Hart, who planned to pull the product from his shelves Thursday afternoon. He said he's opposed to the drink because it's clearly marketed to young people, who often don't realize that drinking a can of Four Loko is not like having a standard drink.

Hart said he carried the product so he could compete with the numerous other liquor stores near campus. He said he has been meeting with university and city officials since October, begging them to ban the product from all stores.

"There was an absolute demand. Kids would come in for a four-pack of Four Loko, a case of beer and maybe some sandwiches," he said. "I'm thrilled that they are banning it. ... I know my competitors are stocking up on it just in case there's a run on it, just in case it becomes like Prohibition."

And there are still people out there who have not tried Four Loko - like Amanda Foster. "There was so much in the media about it that I wanted to try it," said Foster, 28, who works in government affairs for a corporation in the District. "Now I'm set on trying it because it's going to be banned forever."

A few of Foster's friends are hosting a "Four Loko tasting party" Saturday night, and one of the organizers visited several liquor stores Thursday afternoon to buy up more than 50 cans of the drink in all eight flavors. Chances are it won't be the only Four Loko party raging this weekend.

"It's the end of an era," said Joey Maier, 21, a junior at American. "This was the drink of the semester."