THE DAILY CLIPS

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News, commentary, and opinion
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Committee to begin plotting UNC’s future

By Gregory Childress
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CHAPEL HILL – UNC system officials on Thursday announced the creation of the UNC Advisory Committee on Strategic Directions to help develop the next five-year strategic plan for the 17-campus university.

The committee, which includes business, education and government leaders from across the state and several board members, will help assess the state’s current and future workforce needs and recommend degree attainment goals and strategies to respond to those needs and the state’s changing demographics.

UNC system President Tom Ross outlined five broad goals, which he said reflect the system’s statutory mission and help it respond to the challenges the board has identified.

They include setting goals for degree attainment, strengthening academic quality, better serving the people of the state, maximizing efficiencies and ensuring an accessible and financially stable university system.

“North Carolina’s long-term economic competitiveness will depend on its ability to develop and retain the talent that we need to drive innovation,” Ross said. “As we have discussed many times, success will depend on UNC’s ability to protect and strengthen our academic quality, adapt to serve students of varying ages, backgrounds and educational pathways and continuing to meet the states needs.”

The board last worked on a strategic plan in 2007.

“I think it would be fair to say that a lot has happened since 2007,” Ross told the board.

The announcement of the committee members comes on the heels of last
month’s Board of Governors meeting where James H. Johnson, a professor of UNC’s Kenan-Flagler Business School, told the board that an aging workforce and changing demographics are among the issues that will have a significant impact on the way the university does business.

Among the leaders serving on the 27-member committee is Phil Berger, president Pro Tempore of the state Senate; Thom Tillis, speaker of the state House of Representatives; Bill Friday, president emeritus of the UNC system and UNC Chancellor Holden.

Board member Fred Eshelman will chair a second working committee that will serve as the “workhorse” committee, gathering and assessing the data on which the advisory committee will base its recommendations to Ross in January.

“We are going to be brutally critical of the data,” Eshelman said. “We will not just accept it because someone wrote it down.”

Eshelman said the committee would use data from many different sources to help guide the larger committee “partly because it’s the right thing and partly because we can use it to cross check.”

“And as someone previously said, ‘trust, but verify’ and we’re going to do that,” Eshelman said, referring to the famous line by President Ronald Reagan.

He said his committee will not begin work with any preconceived notions about what it would find.

“We’re here to find out, and hopefully drive ourselves to the right conclusions based on the data,” Eshelman said. “We will do everything we can to be precise, more importantly we will do everything we can to be accurate and precise and produce something in a form that is immediately and sustainably actionable. This is not a concept document.”
Key legislators, business leaders on UNC strategic planning group

UNC system leaders have formed a broad advisory group that will help shape the future of the state's public universities.

Serving on the planning group are UNC chancellors, UNC board members, education leaders, business leaders and GOP leaders in the legislature -- House Speaker Thom Tillis and Senate Pro Tem Phil Berger.

The appointments were announced this morning by UNC President Tom Ross and Peter Hans, chairman of the UNC Board of Governors.

Among the business leaders are Art Pope, CEO of Variety Wholesalers, a key Republican donor and sometime critic of the university system. Other business people on the panel are Bob Ingram, retired executive with GlaxoSmithKline, AT&T President Cynthia Marshall and Lew Ebert, president of the North Carolina Chamber.

Education leaders include retired UNC President Bill Friday and N.C. Community College System President Scott Ralls.

Others are State Treasurer Janet Cowell and Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco. Four chancellors will serve on the committee, including UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp.

A separate fact-finding group is led by Fred Eshelman, a Wilmington pharmaceutical executive and member of the UNC board. A report by his group will be presented to the UNC board in January. "We are going to be brutally critical of the data," Eshelman said.

Ross said his goals are: set degree attainment goals for the universities; improve academic quality; serve the people of North Carolina; maximize efficiencies at the campuses; and ensure an accessible and financially stable university system.
A 22-year-old Greenville man who admitted to arming himself with an assault rifle and shooting another man after a night of drinking and drug use was sentenced on Thursday to between three and five years in prison.

**Lewis sentenced in shooting**

By Kristin Zachary

A 22-year-old Greenville man who admitted to arming himself with an assault rifle and shooting another man after a night of drinking and drug use was sentenced on Thursday to between three and five years in prison.

Phillip Bertolet Blythe Lewis took the witness stand in Pitt County Superior Court and claimed responsibility for the death of 22-year-old Tommy Christopher Falcone on Aug. 9, 2010. However, he said firing his weapon was a reaction, not a decision, since Falcone ran at him wielding a golf club.

As part of an agreement with the Pitt County District Attorney’s office, Lewis pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter, a lesser charge than the first-degree murder he was indicted on in August 2010.

A statement from Falcone’s mother, Cherylann Falcone, was read by Assistant District Attorney Kimberly Robb before Judge Wayland J. Sermons Jr. announced the sentence.

“Your Honor, there is nothing that you can do to Mr. Lewis that will bring Tommy back to me,” the statement read. “I know that if (Lewis) had to do over again, he would make different decisions than those he made on that
terrible night. Whatever decisions you make today about sentencing, I am at peace with it.”

Lewis was sentenced to 38 to 55 months imprisonment, the minimum he could receive. The maximum sentence for a defendant without a prior record was 64 to 86 months.

A number of factors led to the minimum sentence, including provocation, the defendant’s character, his acceptance of responsibility, family and community support and positive employment history, Sermons said.

Because Lewis chose to arm himself, the judge denied a plea for extraordinary mitigation made by defense attorney Wade Smith of Raleigh that could have resulted in a suspended sentence and probation.

Sermons said the killing was the result of a group of “testosterone-filled men acting stupid,” participating in binge drinking, drug use and a fight about damage to a truck.

Falcone was shot in the back near his right side shortly before 4 a.m. after he and several friends were given a ride in Lewis’ truck from downtown to Copper Beech Townhomes on 10th Street.

Lewis broke down on the stand as talked about the events leading to Falcone’s death. He described an altercation between himself and Falcone’s friend, David Swiderski.

Witnesses testified Swiderski, riding in the truck bed, began beating on a window after hearing men inside were snorting a substance resembling cocaine. Statements indicated Lewis and a friend snorted Adderall.

After arriving at Copper Beech, Lewis said Swiderski struck him in the head. Lewis’ friend, Will Allen, swung at Swiderski, who then ran to his friends. Five or six men approached the truck.

“The window explodes, and glass goes everywhere,” Lewis said. “It just startled everybody. I wasn’t super angry. I was just confused as to why someone would do that.”

Lewis and his friends fled, returning home to the Lynndale neighborhood. Lewis the retrieved an AR-15, hunting rifle and shotgun from his closet.

“I just grabbed them and threw them in the truck,” he said. “I knew I couldn’t defend myself against those guys. I knew if I went back over there, I wouldn’t have control over them wanting to fight.”

The guns provided him with control, he said.
Lewis told District Attorney Clark Everett he returned because his cousin and Falcone’s friend, Max Joyner III, said the men would pay $1,000 for the damages.

“He said they would agree to give me the money if I didn’t call the police,” Lewis said. A friend, Corey Parham, drove him back to Copper Beech in the truck.

“He sounded like he was scared, and he just wanted them to pay for his truck,” Parham said.

Lewis called 911 to report the damage, and a dispatcher advised him to wait at Copper Beech for police. After driving by the complex several times, they stopped in a church parking lot nearby.

Some men from the earlier confrontation approached, Lewis said. He said he stepped out of the truck with his AR-15, stopping a man running toward them.

He returned to the truck and saw another man — Falcone — standing about 10 feet away with a golf club. Lewis said the men were “obviously not worried about a gun.” He said one shouted expletives and told him to shoot. He watched Falcone go around the side of the church building.

Lewis said he saw police arrive at the Pirate’s Cove Apartments entrance and, thinking he was walking toward the officers, took the same path as Falcone. A fence and bushes kept him from reaching law enforcement, he said.

“I just hear the bushes kind of explode open,” Lewis said. “A man runs out of the bushes swinging a golf club at me.”

Lewis said his AR-15 was hanging at his side. His right hand was on the grip. Attorney Wade Smith asked how many seconds he had before raising the gun and firing.

“One,” Lewis said. “I just kind of threw it up real fast and fired it. It was just automatic. I never really made a decision to shoot the gun. It was a reaction.”

He said he felt “horrible” when he was later told his gunfire struck Falcone.

“I don’t really know how to explain it,” Lewis said. He buried his face in his hands.

Smith asked if he would turn back the clock if he could.

“I’d do anything I could do to turn it back,” Lewis said. He said he is responsible, and he is prepared to spend time in prison.
Cherylann Falcone in her statement said, “I am grateful that Mr. Lewis stood here and acknowledged he was wrong and that I was spared the pain of a full trial.”

The judge said voluntary manslaughter was “absolutely the right result” in the case as witness statements indicated “Tommy was not backing down.”

Lewis’ second attorney, Mark Owens III, said Falcone had a “high, high level of intoxication,” and Lewis “just reacted to what was coming at him.” “That gun may have saved his life,” Smith said.

Lewis has remained free since he posted a $500,000 secured bond less than 24 hours after the shooting.

He was recommended by the judge for work release when he becomes eligible. That decision will come from the N.C. Department of Corrections.

Lewis will report on Monday to the Pitt County Sheriff’s Office to begin serving his sentence.

Contact Kristin Zachary at kzachary@reflector.com and 252-329-9566 and follow her on Twitter @kzacharygdr.
Friday, September 14, 2012

Pitt County hires new deputy manager

By Ginger Livingston

The former finance director for Pitt County mental health has been named the county’s new deputy county manager and finance director.

Duane Thomas Holder, 40, will begin his new duties on Oct. 8, replacing Melonie Bryan, who retired in July.

“I look forward to contributing to the growth and development of Pitt County. We have a growing county and while the demand for services always outpaces the resources, I am optimistic about the economic recovery that I see on the horizon,” Holder said.

Holder serves as the chief financial officer for PORT Human Services in Greenville, a regional nonprofit behavioral health provider agency with 24 site locations.

More than 30 people applied for the position. County Manager Scott Elliott made the final selection.

“Mr. Holder will serve not only as a deputy county manager/finance director, but also as an integral part of the county’s management team,” Elliott stated in a news release.

“I look forward to Mr. Holder returning to work for Pitt County government. His prior work experience with the county, as well as currently with Port Human Services, will be great assets for the county to capitalize upon,” Elliott said.
Holder started with Pitt County mental health in 1998 as a reimbursement officer. He was promoted to accounting specialist and then served as the department’s business officer/finance director until mental health services were privatized 2004.

Holder holds an undergraduate degree in business from Mount Olive College, and a masters in public administration from East Carolina University.

“When I went back to school for my graduate degree I was torn between pursuing an MBA and MPA,” Holder said. “My heart has always been in public service so I pursued an MPA with the goal of climbing the ranks of county government.”

Holder said when he was young he benefited from public assistance.

“I really do understand the value of effective government. Sometimes (government service) catches a black eye, but I always felt I could make a difference in the lives of ordinary people and I could give back,” he said.

Holder was born in Buffalo, N.Y., but has lived in Greenville since 1982.

“I consider myself a Pitt County native and my wife’s family is still here and because of that I have a vested interest in the community,” Holder said. He then referenced the county’s motto.

“We are committed to making it the best in the east and a leader in the east,” he said.

Holder’s annual salary will be $111,851.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
Martha Benton Moye

Obituary

Friday, September 14, 2012

Mrs. Martha Benton Moye, 79, died Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2012. Private burial will be held at Pinewood Memorial Park. A service to celebrate her life will be conducted Saturday at 11 a.m. at St. James United Methodist Church, followed by a reception in the fellowship hall.

Mrs. Moye, a native of Evergreen, came to Greenville to attend East Carolina University where she received a B.S. Degree in physical education. While attending college she met Charlie Bill Moye, whom she later married. Mr. Moye preceded her in death in 1990.

Mrs. Moye, a member of St. James United Methodist Church, taught kindergarten and served as the preschool director at St. James for 25 years.

She is survived by her five sons, Charles William Moye Jr. and wife, Tami, of Davidson, Macon Benton Moye and wife, Kim, of Charlotte, Christopher Allen Moye and wife, Julie, of Kitty Hawk, Michael Boyd Moye and wife, Kristin, of Charlotte, and Simon Patrick Moye and wife, Ashley, of Charlotte; sister, Sue Ellen Paschall, of Wilmington; and 14 grandchildren, Trey, Martha Anna, Sara, Kimberley, Macon Jr., Sara Kaitlyn, Samantha, Danielle, Christina, Michael Jr., William, Jack, Barbara Helen, and Peter.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. James UMC Memorial Fund, 2000 E. 6th St., Greenville, NC 27858.


Arrangements by Wilkerson Funeral Home & Crematory, Greenville.
Joan Yvette Johnson

Obituary

Friday, September 14, 2012

Joan Yvette Johnson, 85, of Morehead City died peacefully at Carteret General Hospital on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2012.

Born Dec. 16, 1926 in Greenville, she was the daughter of the late Dr. Bertis McKay Johnson and Sara Ellen Pickette Johnson. Joan Yvette attended Greenville High School, East Carolina College and James Sprunt Institute. After growing up in Greenville, she moved to Wallace where she was a longtime resident and worked as a dental assistant. She moved to Morehead City in 2001. An avid fan of music, Joan Yvette enjoyed singing in church choirs and performing in The Liberty Cart outdoor drama for many years. She treasured her family and friends and was at her happiest when spending time with them.

In addition to her parents, Joan Yvette was preceded in death by her brother, Sidney Pickette Johnson of Greenville. She is survived by three nieces, Alice (Sherri) Johnson Alexander of Alexandria, Va., Carol Ellen Johnson of Bethlehem, Conn. and Donna Johnson Montaldo of Baton Rouge, La.

A memorial service will be held by the family at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2012 at First Baptist Church in Morehead City.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to Ekklesia, 405 Barbour Road, Morehead City, NC 28557.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.mundenfuneralhome.net.

Arrangements by Munden Funeral Home and Crematory Inc. of Morehead City.
Crime: University area burglar arrested

Greenville police on Thursday arrested a man for burglary after he allegedly broke into a house on East Fourth Street and stole liquor and an X-Box, according to a department news release.

Police responded and shortly after midnight found the man at the Stop Shop Convenience Store on East Fifth Street. Officers located the stolen X-Box and alcohol in his vehicle, along with drug paraphernalia, the release said.

The residents of 503 E. Fourth St., where the burglary occurred, identified the man as an acquaintance they have known for about one year, the release said.

Gregory Scott Jackson, 20, was arrested and charged with one count each first-degree burglary, misdemeanor larceny, possession of burglary tools and possession of drug paraphernalia.

He was jailed at the Pitt County Detention Center under a $200,000 secured bond. Jackson has prior arrests for larceny and for possession of stolen property, police said.
NCCU suspends drum line for hazing

From staff reports

DURHAM—N.C. Central University has suspended its marching band’s
drum line for alleged hazing.

The suspension, which took effect Monday, means the Marching Sound
Machine Band’s drum line will not be able to participate in all band-related
activities until further notice.

“NCCU has a zero-tolerance policy on hazing,” according to a statement
released by the university. “Hazing is a criminal behavior, as well as a direct
violation of the university’s Student Code of Conduct and North Carolina
General Statutes.”

The statement did not describe the alleged hazing or say where it occurred.
Questions for the campus police department, including a copy of any reports,
were referred to the Office of Public Relations.

In an email, Ayana D. Hernandez, director of public relations, said the
alleged hazing was not reported through the NCCU Police Department, so
there is no incident report. The NCCU Police Department is investigating
the allegation, she said.

The Marching Sound Machine will perform in Saturday’s football game
against Duke University without the drum line, she said.

In late 2011, NCCU formed a Task Force to review the university’s
guidelines on hazing. Later, NCCU created a Committee on Hazing,
Bullying and Student Harassment that is charged with developing new
guidelines and strategies to ensure that the campus is free from hazing and
student abuse.

NCCU has a connection to another band hazing incident that has put a
spotlight on the issue.

In July, former NCCU Chancellor James Ammons resigned as president of
Florida A&M University the same day parents of a drum major who died
after being hazed at that university added the school to a wrongful death
lawsuit, according to The Associated Press.
Robert Champion died in November after being beaten by fellow band members during a hazing ritual aboard a bus parked outside an Orlando hotel after a football game.

Eleven FAMU band members face felony hazing charges, while two others face misdemeanor counts for alleged roles in the hazing, The Associated Press reported. They have pleaded not guilty.

The lawsuit brought by Champion’s parents claims FAMU officials didn’t take enough action to stop hazing.
UNC-CH dental foundation declines to release spending report that mentioned Tami Hansbrough travel

The Dental Foundation of North Carolina declined Thursday to make public the report that details some of the travel spending that Tami Hansbrough did while working there.

The foundation's executive director, Paul Gardner, provided a synopsis of her time there that included details from the report. But he said the foundation did not have to produce the report because it is a nonprofit and not a governmental entity, and therefore not covered by the state's public records law.

The foundation raises money for UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Dentistry. Hansbrough worked for two years as a fundraiser for the foundation before being hired to raise money for UNC-CH's student affairs office.

She resigned Wednesday after we reported that Chancellor Holden Thorp had found questionable travel she and the vice chancellor for university advancement, Matt Kupec, took at university expense. She and Kupec were in a relationship. Kupec resigned Sunday.

The synopsis said Hansbrough, the divorced mother of former UNC-CH basketball star Tyler Hansbrough, was hired Dec. 8, 2008, just as her son was beginning his senior year and final season on the team, one that would bring the university a national championship. She won the job after a search that included 40 other applicants.

Hansbrough took fundraising trips to the ACC Tournament in Atlanta and the NCAA Tournament in Memphis in 2009. The synopsis only listed expenses related to the Memphis trip of roughly $1,100. There were no expenses listed for the ACC trip.

The synopsis said Hansbrough met with donors and prospective donors on both trips, and did not charge the foundation for game tickets. The information was shared with UNC-CH's athletic department.

The synopsis said Hansbrough raised nearly $5 million while with the dental foundation.
RALEIGH—A lawyer for former UNC-Chapel Hill football player Michael McAdoo sought to convince three N.C. Court of Appeals judges Thursday that McAdoo deserves the chance to make his case in a trial court that he was financially harmed by an improper process that forced him off the team two years ago.

McAdoo lost his remaining two years of eligibility after the NCAA found he had received improper help from a tutor in three classes. McAdoo’s attorney, Noah Huffstetler, told the court that the NCAA improperly overruled the university’s honor court, which found McAdoo had gotten the improper help in only one class and could return to the team for his senior season.

But the NCAA ruling prevailed, forcing McAdoo to turn pro a year early with the Baltimore Ravens, at the league minimum salary, Huffstetler said. Published reports indicate that minimum for a second-year player is $465,000.

“These student athletes work hard,” Huffstetler said. “They create a lot of wealth for the NCAA and the university, and they should have rights.”

But attorneys for the NCAA and the university told the judges McAdoo had no contractual or constitutional right to play football. They said he blew that opportunity when he admitted to receiving improper help from the tutor for one of the classes, accepting the honor court’s penalty in that case while the allegations regarding the other two were dismissed.

“It’s undisputed that Mr. McAdoo knew what he was doing,” said Paul Sun, an attorney for the NCAA. “He was turning in a tutor’s work as his own.”

They also said McAdoo no longer had any legal standing once he turned pro.

Appellate judges Sam Ervin, Robert N. Hunter and Douglas McCullough listened to the arguments in a legal battle that began more than a year ago in a Durham County courtroom. There, state Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson ruled in favor of the NCAA and UNC-CH, dismissing the case before it could go to trial.

No-show classes
McAdoo was among seven athletes dismissed from the football team in 2010 after an NCAA investigation that started out looking into improper agent benefits also found that tutor Jennifer Wiley was providing improper academic help. She helped him on a paper that later was found to include significant plagiarism.

But the NCAA investigation, along with an internal probe by the university, missed a bigger scandal tied to McAdoo’s classes: Records show at least two of them – and possibly a third – never met.

The two classes and possibly the third are among 54 no-show classes over a four-year period that offered little or no instruction. Athletes took up nearly two-thirds of the enrollments.

All of the classes were offered by the Department of African and Afro-American Studies. A second UNC-CH internal investigation laid the blame for them on Julius Nyang’oro, the longtime chairman forced to retire in July, and Deborah Crowder, the department manager who retired in 2009.

**Deciding damages**

The university was prompted to find the no-show classes after The News & Observer obtained a transcript of Marvin Austin, another football player who had been kicked off the team.

The transcript showed Austin had taken an upper-level class in the department during summer 2007, and received a B-plus before he had taken remedial writing his first full semester as a freshman. That class also never met.

None of that was known when McAdoo filed his lawsuit, but since then, Huffstetler has cited the academic fraud as evidence that his client was manipulated by the academic support program for athletes, and did not know that what he was doing was wrong. The support program has come under fire in the scandal as some evidence has emerged to indicate counselors were steering athletes to the no-show classes.

The judges challenged the arguments that lawyers representing all three parties made. They questioned whether playing football was a right, as Huffstetler argued. They also questioned whether the process that led to McAdoo’s removal from the team was fair when the university and the NCAA made no effort to provide him legal counsel.
If McAdoo gets a trial, awarding damages could be difficult. It’s hard to know how marketable McAdoo would have been to NFL teams had he played another season.

“If your client was entitled to nominal damages, shouldn’t we just kill this thing now?” Hunter asked Huffstetler toward the end of the hearing.

Huffstetler said no.

“Our client is interested in not only his rights, but the rights for all future students,” he said.

Kane: 919-829-4861
Sorensen: UNC takes a beating on integrity scoreboard

By Tom Sorensen - staff columnist - tsorensen@charlotteobserver.com

After reading that student-athlete Lance Thomas bought $97,800 worth of jewelry my first thought was: Did Thomas play wide receiver for North Carolina, or was he a defensive back?

Turns out Thomas played for Duke’s 2010 national championship basketball team. Thomas gave a New York jeweler $30,000 and said he’d pay the remaining $67,800. He hasn’t. He also hasn’t explained where he got the $30,000 and the jeweler hasn’t explained why he offered the credit.

I vaguely remember Thomas. So forgive me for getting him mixed up with North Carolina. When something goes bad on a college campus I assume a Tar Heel is involved.

There have been so many transgressions it’s as if the school collects them.

The scandal was supposed to end in July 2011, when North Carolina Chancellor Holden Thorp fired football coach Butch Davis.

Thorp explained the firing in a statement: “I could no longer overlook the fact that what started as a purely athletic issue has begun to chip away at the University’s reputation.”

Chip away?

The integrity North Carolina worked decades to establish has been slammed by a Brokk 800, a 24,890-pound wrecking ball of a machine I found on the Internet while searching for a suitable analogy.

Go to the scorecard.

Butch Davis hired a corrupt college assistant.

Davis’ players mingled with agents.

They received enormous and unauthorized breaks from tutors.

One player turned in a paper he had plagiarized.

Many football and basketball players were guided to courses that all but guaranteed good grades.

The transcript of Julius Peppers, a former Tar Heels football star and basketball player and Carolina Panther, was leaked. If it weren’t for the
courses to which so many athletes had been steered, Peppers would not have maintained his eligibility.

Now Matt Kupec, a former North Carolina quarterback who commanded so much respect on campus he was a serious candidate to replace John Swofford as athletic director, has resigned as the school’s chief fundraiser.

Fellow fundraiser Tami Hansbrough also resigned. She is the mother of former Tar Heels star, and current NBA player, Tyler Hansbrough, and former Notre Dame basketball star Ben Hansbrough. She and Kupec were in a relationship.

Kupec and Hansbrough traveled together and perhaps raised funds together in Kentucky and Florida, New York and West Virginia, Connecticut and Charlotte and wherever Ben’s Fighting Irish and, on occasion, Tyler’s Indiana Pacers happened to play.

Maybe it was the adventure of it, the clandestine escape on company money and company time. Maybe the culture under Chancellor Thorp is such that they assumed they were doing nothing wrong. Maybe it was the Marriott points.

Why do these episodes continue to happen to the Tar Heels? Is it because they get more attention, good and bad, than everybody else? Is it because the media hate them?

Or is it because somebody saw a string, something that didn’t fit, and gave it a yank, and pieces have yet to stop falling?

Is there a point at which North Carolina can “no longer overlook the fact that what started as a purely athletic issue has begun to chip away at this university’s reputation?”

Where is it?

And who will be left to make the call?
U-Va. board elects its first African-American leader, Richmond lawyer George Keith Martin

By Jenna Johnson and Donna St. George

CHARLOTTESVILLE ---- The University of Virginia governing board voted unanimously Thursday evening to elect George Keith Martin, a well-known Richmond attorney and alum, as their second-in-command. Helen Dragas will continue as the Board of Visitors’s rector, as the top job is called, until her time in the position ends next summer, at which point Martin will become rector.

Martin is the university’s first African-American vice rector, according to U-Va. officials. The historic university, founded by Thomas Jefferson, did not admit black students until the 1950s. When Martin attended U-Va. in the 1970s, there were only 250 African American students enrolled.

The previous vice rector, Mark Kington of Alexandria, resigned in June after helping to orchestrate a secretive ouster of U-Va. President Teresa Sullivan. The president was reinstated in late June following protests by faculty, alumni and others. Although there have been calls for Dragas to resign, she has remained, and Virginia’s governor reappointed her to another four-year term on the board.

At the board meeting Thursday, Martin was praised for his deep understanding of higher education, his previous stint on the James Madison University governing board and his signature style of tailored suits and bowties.

Martin graduated from U-Va. in 1975 and then earned his law degree from Howard University School of Law in 1978. He is a managing partner at the Richmond office of McGuireWoods LLP, where he focuses on construction, commercial real estate and local government law. Virginia Business magazine has repeatedly named Martin one of the state’s “Legal Elite.”
Martin was appointed to the U-Va. board by Gov. Robert McDonnell (R) in July 2011, and he is the co-chair of the board’s governance committee, which was formed this summer following the leadership crisis. In accepting the position, Martin said that U-Va. is “a great university” and that it will only improve in the coming years.

“The challenges facing our beloved university are not the same as before, making collaborative and strategic work even more vital to sustaining our high academic quality,” Martin said in a statement released by U-Va.

Dragas praised Martin’s “irrefutable integrity, character, and considerate manner” in a written statement. During the meeting, she told him: “I’m very much looking forward to working with you.”

After the meeting, Sullivan added: “I think he’ll do a good job. He’s a very thoughtful guy.”

Posted at 02:52 PM ET, 09/13/2012

**U-Va. board starts live broadcasting meetings online**

By Jenna Johnson

Starting Thursday, the University of Virginia Board of Visitors will live broadcast its meetings online so that far-flung alumni, desk-bound reporters, curious students and anyone else can watch. In the last few months, there have been repeated calls for the board to be more open and transparent as it makes decisions. Until now, meetings have been recorded for note-taking purposes, but not broadcast.

The board, which has gained new members since it last met, is meeting in Charlottesville this week. Its agenda includes hearing reports from board committees and electing a vice rector (board-talk for second-in-command) to replace the former vice rector, Mark Kington, who resigned in June amid the crisis.

In early June, the board’s top leaders asked President Teresa Sullivan to step down without discussing the issue publicly or holding a vote. On June 26, after a wave of protests led mostly by angry faculty and alumni, Sullivan was reinstated as president in a meeting that was streamed online and viewed by thousands.

During the board’s retreat in August, two local activists set up cameras and live-streamed the event themselves, in addition to hiring a court reporter to take notes. Following that retreat, the university announced that it would
begin its own live broadcasting, starting with meetings scheduled for Thursday and Friday.

Watch live streaming video from universityofvirginia at livestream.com

Rector Helen Dragas opened the meeting Thursday afternoon by reflecting on the excitement of a new school year, as the U-Va. grounds are once again filled with students searching for their classes. Dragas had a long summer. After leading a failed ouster of the president, she was called upon to resign or be removed from the board. Soon after, the governor reappointed her to another four-year term.

“I would say that students, also, in their learning endeavors remind us that we need to learn and that we need to experiment and that sometimes we need a map to do that,” Dragas said.

(Donna St. George reported from Charlottesville; Jenna Johnson reported in Washington.)