THE DAILY CLIPS

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ROCKY MOUNT — The full-time mother taking night classes at Pitt Community College might not know the traditional college freshman studying at East Carolina University, but administrators at both schools met with other officials Friday morning to acknowledge what the students had in common: a goal of bettering their lives with a college education.

The meeting was the first of many for the Eastern N.C. Consortium for High Education, which unites faculty from schools across the region to share information, services and resources.

“The consortium is situated in an area of the state where both access to higher education and student persistence are often limited by economic issues and student preparation,” said Beth Velde, director of public service and community relations at East Carolina University. “This unique collaboration in eastern North Carolina will create new synergies between the four public and five independent colleges, two universities and the Coastal Plains Learning Council.”

N.C. Wesleyan College President James Gray III said consortium founding members studied other educational consortium after getting the idea from Duke University students hired to study the economic impact Edgecombe Community College, Nash Community College and N.C. Wesleyan have on the region and the state.

Gray said the idea broadened as organizers approached East Carolina University and other public universities to join.

“ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard immediately jumped on the idea that collaboration is king and said he’d do anything to help,” Gray said. “That validated the concept that the community colleges and large public universities have a common goal and want to pitch in toward the same objectives.”

On March 23, consortium members gathered at Louisburg College for a Day of Scholarship, which focused on student retention.
A conference for reference librarians and other library staff will be held at N.C. Wesleyan College on July 18.

Ways to bring online resources to students at all of the member schools will be discussed. Velde said both events exemplify how schools face similar challenges.

“The consortium is a great opportunity to share what we are doing and promote all of the positive initiatives going on,” said Deborah Lamm, president of Edgecombe Community College. “I do believe that collaboration is key to success for people in Eastern North Carolina.”
Losses force closure of Bethel clinic
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, June 6, 2012

The Bethel Family Medicine Center is closing, effective Sept. 1, because of declining patient numbers and financial losses, leaders of the Brody School of Medicine announced.

Dr. Richard Rawl and his three-person staff are moving to the medical school’s new Family Medicine Center in Greenville, Dr. Ken Steinweg, professor and chairman of the Department of Family Medicine, said. Rawl’s Bethel patients will get priority for his appointment schedule.

“No continuity will be lost,” Steinweg said.

School officials have studied the Pitt Area Transit System and believe it should be a reasonable solution for patients who do not drive or have readily available transportation.

Patients will be notified about the closure through signs posted at the clinic, in appointment reminders, through the media and a letter, said Dr. Nicholas Benson, vice dean of the Brody School of Medicine.

“We realize this is a change for the Bethel community,” Benson said. “We will offer the same physician services and staff assistance that our patients are accustomed to in our Bethel clinic, but in a new facility and an enhanced setting.”
The majority of people being treated at the clinic are older and suffer from chronic illnesses such as diabetes, renal and heart disease, Benson said. A few children are seen at the facility for vaccinations.

The medical school opened the Bethel clinic 32 years ago.

The clinic building, located at 7439 Main St., is 62 years old and the renovations it needs aren’t financially feasible. Some patients already have to travel to Greenville for X-rays and certain lab tests.

The clinic has always operated at a financial loss, Steinweg said. Within the last decade that loss approached $200,000, he said. Through a combination of cutting Rawl’s hours and reducing the staff size, the losses were cut to $100,000.

Steinweg said the losses were acceptable at one time because the medical school’s primary mission is to train doctors who’ll work in rural settings, but the facility’s age is hampering that training, he said.

The clinic also has seen a 22 percent decrease in patient visits between fiscal year 2006-07 and 2010-11, according to data from the Brody School of Medicine.

Steinweg said the decrease is likely because of a drop in population around Bethel and patients visiting other medical facilities in Greenville.

Discussions about closing the Bethel facility have been under way for four years, Steinweg said. Bethel’s leaders have argued that the facility should remain open.

It was concern about the closure’s impact on the community that kept the facility open in recent years, Benson said.

However, increasing pressure due to state budget cuts mean changes are needed to deliver high-quality health care with limited resources, Benson said.

The Bethel clinic was the only facility outside of Greenville that the family medicine department operated on a full-time basis. Family Medicine clinicians do hold regular clinics in nearby communities.

Benson and Steinweg didn’t know what would happen to the Main Street office or the clinic’s original building, both which are owned by the medical school.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
ECU Notes: Clinic to serve Davidson County
Sunday, June 10, 2012

The Triad will soon be home to a facility that officials said will bring dental care to low-income underserved residents while providing educational opportunities to East Carolina University dental students.

That was the message on June 1 as leaders of Davidson County Community College and the ECU School of Dental Medicine announced plans to build a “community service learning center” on the DCCC campus.

ECU will build the facility on land donated by DCCC. The Davidson County Health Department also has been a partner on the project. Construction dates will be announced later.

At the center, the sixth ECU has announced since it began its new dental school in 2008, fourth-year dental students and dental residents will hone their patient-care techniques and learn the ins-and-outs of operating a community practice under the eyes of experienced faculty members.

The $3 million, 8,000-square-foot center is one of up to 10 ECU plans to build across the state. The first center is scheduled to open in Ahoskie later this month. Others are planned for Elizabeth City in eastern North Carolina, Lillington in the central part of the state, and Sylva and Spruce Pine in the mountains.

“We are very excited about our partnership with Davidson County Community College, the county health department and the local dental community and look forward to providing quality dental care to residents of Davidson and the surrounding counties,” said Dr. Gregory Chadwick, interim dean of the School of Dental Medicine at ECU.
The center will have 16 dental chairs and will employ local staff members, including 1.5 full-time dental faculty positions, a business manager, five to six dental assistants, two to three dental hygienists and two general dentistry residents. Four to five students will be at the center for nine-week rotations.

Once open, the center will provide a variety of services, including general, preventive and emergency dental care and will include services such as crowns, root canals and bridges.

The setting will provide students and dental residents with an opportunity to learn what practicing in a community setting is like. The school admitted its first class in 2011, and all students are North Carolina residents. Goals of the school are to improve access to dental care, to educate minority dentists and to produce dentists who have a desire to practice in underserved areas.

“Community service learning centers are more than just dental clinics. They are an integral part of our dental school where our seniors will spend much of their fourth year,” Chadwick said.

At the event, Chancellor Steve Ballard said the Davidson County clinic is an excellent example of ECU’s mission of service to the state.

“From the very beginning we said we were going to do the right thing for North Carolina — that is to serve the underserved,” he said. “It’s a unique model dedicated to a much different way of educating students and a much different way of serving the community.”

North Carolina ranks 47th out of the 50 states in the number of dentists per capita, according to the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Many people without good dental care live in rural areas, where North Carolina averages three dentists for every 10,000 people. Four counties, all in the northeast, have no dentists: Gates, Tyrrell, Hyde and Camden.

Nationally, the ratio is six dentists for every 10,000 people.

ECU hopes the centers will help improve the status of dental health in the state while adding an innovative educational aspect to dental school.

“We’ve taken the fourth floor of the dental school — the senior year clinical area — we’ve stretched the wires and we’re moving that part of our dental school to communities across the state where dental services are needed,” Chadwick said. “We are not only providing much needed care, but we are also educating our future dentists in areas similar to where we hope they will practice.”
The center will be built on the main DCCC campus in Thomasville. Construction will be paid for with funds appropriated by the state to ECU. Additionally, the CSLCs will generate revenue through patient care each of the centers will provide.

Three plays set for summer theatre
The ECU School of Theatre and Dance has a busy performance schedule planned for this summer. Students will perform three plays in four different locations beginning in late June as part of the ECU/Loessin Playhouse.

The series begins at ECU with performances at the Burnette Studio Theatre in the Messick Theatre Arts Center of “Collision Course: a 60s Retro,” “Our Town” by Thornton Wilder and “Seven in One Blow” by Randy Sharp and Axis Company.

After performing June 20-23 at ECU, the students will hit the road to take their productions to Roanoke Island Festival Park in Manteo, the Cullman Performance Center at Tryon Palace in New Bern and the Paramount Theatre in Goldsboro, according to Jeff Woodruff, managing director of the ECU/Loessin Playhouse.

Moving the productions to different theaters gives the students valuable experience, Woodruff said.

“Performing the same material in different venues is much like boating in different waters,” he said. “You know your own boat, what equipment is on board, and how she handles. You also know your own waters, where the hazards are, and how deep the water is.

“Boating in unfamiliar waters sharpens the senses, keeps one from becoming complacent, compels you to use familiar equipment in new ways, and makes for an all-around better boater/actor.”

“Collision Course” is described as a stunning collection of short plays written by several 1960s-era playwrights before they became major forces in American theater. Included in the production will be works by Lanford Wilson, Terrance McNally and Sam Shepard along with music from the era. The play will be performed at 8 p.m. on June 20 and 22. The production includes a parental advisory.

The iconic play, “Our Town,” tells the story of young lovers whose life in a small New England town becomes a microcosm of everyday life. The
wisdom of the play and the deceptively simple story makes this an enduring American treasure. It will be performed at 8 p.m. on June 21 and 23.

“Seven in One Blow” is a children’s play based on a Brothers Grimm fairy tale. A child embarks on a journey where he learns you don’t always have to show how strong you are, that teasing hurts, and a parent’s love has no limits. It will be presented at 2 p.m. on June 22 and 23.

Tickets are $15 for the public and $10 for youth. To purchase tickets, call 328-6829 or visit www.ECUARTS.com.

Performance times and ticket information for the other productions are available on the Summer Theatre website: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cfac/theatredance/productions/summertheatre.cfm.
Brescia joins Brody staff
Monday, June 11, 2012

Dr. Donald Brescia, a pulmonary and critical care specialist, has joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Brescia joined the Department of Internal Medicine as an assistant professor in the division of pulmonary and critical care medicine. He comes to Greenville from Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. He also has worked in Tennessee and New Jersey.

Brescia has a medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He completed residency training in internal medicine and pediatrics at ECU. He also completed a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at ECU.

Brescia is board-certified in pulmonary medicine and critical care medicine. His clinical and research interests are lung mechanics and ventilator management.

Brescia sees patients in the medical and cardiac intensive care units at Vidant Medical Center.
UNC-CH board chair: Football class 'troubling in the extreme'

By J. Andrew Curliss

The chairman of the board of trustees at UNC-Chapel Hill said Sunday that the revelation of a summer class packed last year with football players who received grades without instruction is “troubling in the extreme.”

Wade Hargrove, chairman since last summer, said the new information about the class raises questions that still need answering.

Among them are documenting how the class was created and how the football players knew to enroll within days after it opened for registration. Eighteen members of the team and one former player enrolled in the class.

UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp, in a letter delivered to trustees late Thursday, said the university is seeking more information.

The News & Observer detailed information about the class in a report Saturday after receiving university documents through a public records request.

The records show that the class was created for the summer session last year and was taught by professor and former department chairman Julius Nyang’oro, who is under scrutiny for his involvement in dozens of classes in which there was little or no instruction offered to students.

On June 14 last year, Nyang’oro took steps to add the course, AFAM 280: Blacks in North Carolina, to the summer schedule. It was opened for registration on June 16, the first day of the summer session, records show. Within four days, the football players had filled it.

“I am totally taken by surprise!” Nyang’oro wrote to the summer school dean, without mentioning the makeup of the class. An email message he wrote around that time said the class was going to be for five students.

Nyang’oro was supposed to teach the class as a lecture, but instead treated it as an independent study course. The students wrote a 15-page paper to receive a grade.
Records show academic support staff for student-athletes at the university helped the football players register for the class and were aware of how Nyang’oro would handle the course.

Hargrove said Sunday that the class – and other questioned independent study courses in the department – do not amount to a “rigorous academic experience” that every student at UNC-Chapel Hill should receive.

And it only adds to revelations over the past year, one in which the university was sanctioned by the NCAA, that are troubling and distressing, he said.

“You can’t love Carolina and not be heartbroken,” Hargrove said.

Last year, after football player Michael McAdoo was shown to have plagiarized a paper in a class listed under Nyang’oro’s name, Thorp said he did not intend to question the professor about it and said the matter was resolved.

“We’ve done a very thorough investigation on the academic side,” Thorp said last summer.

A month later, The N&O obtained a partial transcript showing that football star Marvin Austin had taken an advanced, 400-level class under Nyang’oro when he first arrived on campus. Austin later enrolled in a basic writing class, records show.

University officials launched another internal review and notified the NCAA of the swirl of questions.

A subsequent university report said no athletes had received favorable treatment in Nyang’oro’s department.

But that report, issued last month, also detailed irregularities in the department and in classes under Nyang’oro.

It was announced then that Nyang’oro would retire, effective July 1. Thorp called the review thorough and diligent.

The N&O then sought records about payments to Nyang’oro for his summer classes, and they showed that the professor received $12,000 for the lecture class that he handled instead as an independent study.

Officials said they would review the matter. A criminal probe began.

On Thursday, Thorp said the university now “will take back” that money from Nyang’oro, who has not commented.

Hargrove said Sunday that Thorp’s handling of the ongoing crisis at UNC-Chapel Hill is not in question.

The university’s trustees support Thorp, he said, without elaborating.
UNC football players flocked to suspect class

By Dan Kane and Andrew Carter The News and Observer

A summer class at UNC-Chapel Hill that lacked any instruction was enrolled exclusively with football players – and it landed on the school calendar just days before the semester started, university records show.

The records show that in the summer of 2011, 19 students enrolled in AFAM 280: Blacks in North Carolina, 18 of them players on the football team, the other a former player. They also show that academic advisers assigned to athletes helped the players enroll in the class, which is the subject of a criminal investigation.

The advisers also knew that there would be no instruction.

Other records show that football and basketball players made up a majority of the enrollments of nine particularly suspect classes in which the professors listed as instructors have denied involvement, and have claimed that signatures were forged on records related to them.

The new information is more evidence that student athletes, particularly football players, were being steered to classes that university officials now say are evidence of academic fraud because there was little or no instruction. An internal review found 54 such classes, and said all but nine of them were taught by Julius Nyang’oro, the longtime chairman of the African and Afro-American Studies Department. In each case, students were given an assignment such as a term paper and told to turn it in at the end of the semester.

UNC officials released the information in response to a records request by The News & Observer. Before making it public, Chancellor Holden Thorp sent a letter to trustees on Thursday.

“While it appears that academic support staff (for student athletes) were aware that Professor Nyang’oro didn’t intend to teach the class as a standard lecture course, they knew that the students would be required to write a 15-page paper,” Thorp said in the letter. “They saw no reason to question the faculty member’s choice of course format.”
The academic support staff reports to the university’s College of Arts & Sciences, but is housed in the Athletic Department’s student support center within Kenan Stadium.

Thorp could not be reached for comment. In a statement, he said the findings on the class are troubling.

“Anytime you have a class consisting solely of student-athletes, it raises questions,” he said.

Bubba Cunningham, the new athletic director hired after the scandal, said he is also concerned.

“I just think this has uncovered some information that quite frankly, the university, we’re not proud of,” he said in an interview. “But we’ll continue to work to ensure that it doesn’t happen going forward.”

‘Taken by surprise’

The criminal investigation of the AFAM 280 class came after The N&O requested records related to summer pay Nyang’oro might have received in relation to the suspect classes. Nyang’oro received summer pay only for the AFAM 280 class last summer, and it was the standard amount: $12,000.

Thorp told trustees that the university is trying to get that money back. Thorp said Nyang’oro signed a contract that made it clear the class was to be taught in a lecture format, but he treated it as an independent study.

“Students in the class wrote papers and were graded,” Thorp said in the letter. “Nevertheless, Nyang’oro did not meet the University’s instructional expectations, and we do not believe that he should have been paid.”

Trustees either declined comment or couldn’t be reached Friday.

Email correspondence released Friday shows that Nyang’oro went to a professor in his department, Tim McMillan, on June 14 to add AFAM 280 to the summer calendar. McMillan normally teaches the class.

“Sure,” McMillan replied. “How many students will I have?”

“No more than 5,” Nyang’oro responded. “I will be Instructor of record and relieve you of responsibility and bother. A big relief for you?????”

Nyang’oro then talked to Jan Yopp, a journalism professor who also serves as dean for the summer school. On June 16, the day the summer semester began, Yopp sent a notice to Nyang’oro that the class was open for registration.

Four days later, Nyang’oro told her 18 students had enrolled in the class. It makes no mention that all were football players.
“I am totally taken by surprise!” Nyang’oro wrote.

**Two years of trouble**

Nyang’oro resigned as chairman of the department in September as the university launched an investigation into independent studies and other classes in his department. The university announced last month as it disclosed the academic improprieties that Nyang’oro would retire as of July 1. He had been the department’s sole chairman and had earned as much as $171,000 a year.

Nyang’oro could not be reached for comment. He has declined to comment on the case in the past.

The new information is another revelation in a case that started two years ago with an NCAA investigation into improper financial and academic benefits for football players. The NCAA investigation resulted in a one-year bowl game ban for the upcoming season, and the loss of five football scholarships per year for the next three academic years. The university is also on probation during that period.

The NCAA investigation cost football coach Butch Davis his job, and hastened the planned retirement of former athletic director Dick Baddour. Davis, through his attorney, has said he had no knowledge of Nyang’oro’s connection to his players, and did not learn of his name until the academic improprieties began to emerge in July.

By then, the NCAA investigation had largely ended. UNC officials launched the subsequent internal review after The N&O obtained a partial transcript for Marvin Austin, one of several football players banned from the team for taking impermissible benefits. The transcript for Austin, a prized recruit, showed he had taken an upper-level class within the department during the summer of 2007. He had yet to take his first full semester at the university, and when he did, it was a slate of introductory level classes that included remedial writing.

Austin received a B-plus on the summer class, and records identified Nyang’oro as the instructor. University officials now say it is among the 54 classes in which there was little instruction.

Records released Friday show that of 41 enrollments in the class, 22 were student athletes. Of those, 13 were football players and one was a men’s basketball player.

**A small minority**

University officials have stressed that the 54 classes were a small minority of the department’s offerings during the four-year period reviewed. They say the evidence shows only two people appeared to have played a part in the no-show classes and unauthorized grade changes: Nyang’oro and his administrative
assistant, Deborah Crowder, who retired in 2009. She declined to talk to university officials investigating the improprieties, and has been unavailable for comment.

Nancy Davis, a spokeswoman for the university, and Jonathan Hartlyn, a senior associate dean who oversees the African studies department and conducted the internal review, continued to stress that non-athletes also took the suspect classes and received the same treatment grade-wise. Records show 42 percent of the enrollments were non-athletes.

But they also noted the university contacted the NCAA when they became aware of what happened with the summer class. The NCAA has yet to say anything about the academic fraud case.

It is unclear how the students – athletes and non-athletes – ended up in the classes. Hartlyn interviewed students for the probe, along with Jack Evans, a professor who had been a liaison to the athletic department, and University Counsel Leslie Strohm. Hartlyn declined to say what students said.

Staff writer Jane Stancill contributed to this report.
UNC Board of Governors election not so routine this time

The election of UNC Board of Governors officers is usually a noncontroversial, consensus-style, nonpartisan event.

Not this time, apparently.

This week the board will choose officers for the first time since Republicans held a majority of seats on the policy-setting board for the UNC system. And it’s looking like the election will be a contested one, with two candidates vying for both the chairman and vice chairman spots.

In the running for chairman are the current vice chairman, Peter Hans of Raleigh, a senior policy adviser with a law firm, and Paul Fulton, a Winston-Salem businessman who is a former UNC-Chapel Hill business dean and trustee. Both are Republicans.

For the vice chairman role, the names being floated are Frank Grainger, a Cary businessman, and James Deal Jr., a Boone attorney. Grainger is a Republican; Deal is a Democrat.

Ann Goodnight, a Cary community volunteer and businesswoman, is in line to be secretary. She is a Republican.

The election has the potential to end with an all-Republican, all-Triangle slate if the winners are Hans, Grainger and Goodnight.

Brad Wilson, former board chairman and current emeritus member, said in recent years the board has worked to have diversity in officers, from political party affiliation to geography, gender, race and alma mater.

The current officers include a woman, an African-American, two Democrats, a Republican and representatives from the Triangle and the coast.

“The board has always recognized that the officer group should be reflective of the diversity of the university,” Wilson said.
Sue Lassiter Wood

Sue Lassiter Wood, age 73, passed away Friday morning after a courageous battle with cancer. Sue was born on March 20, 1939 in Johnston County. She grew up on a farm with her family outside of Four Oaks. Her parents were Blake and Alma Creech Lassiter. She graduated from Four Oaks High School where she was on the Women’s Basketball Team. She went on to graduate from East Carolina University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and Library Science. While at East Carolina she was involved in numerous organizations including Alpha Delta Pi Women’s Sorority. While her own children were in college, Sue went back to ECU to get her Master’s in Administration.

Sue was the librarian at Selma Elementary School for most of her career and enjoyed inspiring children to become life long learners through reading. She went on to become the Media and Technology Coordinator for Johnston County Schools. After retiring from the school system, Sue went on to work for the Town Of Selma as the librarian. She was a member of Selma Baptist where she was a Sunday School Teacher for many years. She also enjoyed her BSF Bible Study group. Sue was involved in many organizations including: Johnston County Democratic Women, Delta Kappa Gamma Educational Sorority where she was past president, Johnston County Heritage Center, Johnston County Community Foundation, and the Selma Women’s Club.

Funeral services will be conducted at 11:00 am June 12 at Selma Baptist Church with the Rev. Steve Kirk officiating. Burial will follow in Selma Memorial Gardens. Sue is survived by her two children Frank Wood and his wife Kellie of Selma, Anna Duck and her husband Dale of Clayton. She has three grandchildren, Jackson Wood, Griffin Duck, and Susanna Duck. She has 5 siblings, Dr. Max Lassiter of Danville, VA, Mrs. Shirley Huffman of Burlington, Mrs. Ruth Stewart and her husband Don of Mechanicsville, VA, Mrs. Sylvia Woody and her husband Larry of Victoria, TX, and Mrs. Linda Waddell and her husband Bob of Clarkesville, GA and 15 nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her grandson, Joseph Franklin Wood. The family would like to thank her enormous circle of friends that have rallied around her and The Selma Baptist Church members for all their care and support. The family request that donations be made to the American Cancer Society, P. O. Box 22718, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73123-1718 or The Selma Public Library, 301 N. Pollock Street, Selma, NC 27576. Online condolences may be sent to the family at parrishfh.com.
Patricia Ann Mucenski "Patti"

Patricia Ann Mucenski, (Patti) departed from this world on June 1, 2012 to start a new adventure in heaven. As an angel she will begin to mend the broken wings of souls in need.

Patti was born in Potsdam, New York on September 13, 1977 daughter of Edward S. Mucenski and Nancy Shene Mucenski. She was a graduate of Potsdam High School, she attended Elmira College where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and gradated Magna Cum Laude in 1998. She then went on to obtain a Master’s Degree in Counselor of Education from East Carolina University in 1999 and was a member of the Chi Sigma Iota, an international academic counseling honor society. She was a licensed clinical professional counselor and a member of the North Carolina Counseling Association.

For most of her professional career Patti was a beloved guidance counselor in high schools in Maine and North Carolina where she saw the potential in students and encouraged them to follow their dreams.

She also was an active member of the Melmac Education Foundation that helped economically challenged students to achieve their dream of going to college.

Patti was a founding member of the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy, which strives to promote the value of school counselors as leaders in school reform, student achievement and college readiness.

Besides her parents Patti is survived by her siblings, Amy, Dennis, Lynn and Caitlin and her Grandmother Hester J. Shene. She was especially fond of children and animals and was a strong supporter of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Contributions can be made to a charity of one’s choice.

A mass of Christian burial will be celebrated on Monday, June 11, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Mary’s Church in Potsdam, New York with Msgr. Robert Aucoin celebrant. There will be no calling hours. Online condolences can be sent at www.garnerfh.com.
Cary kids’ doctor saw his patients and town grow

By Elizabeth Shestak – Correspondent

In the early 1970s, Cary had 10,000 residents, but no pediatricians. Parents had to drive their children to Raleigh for routine visits during years when gas grew scarce and flu ran rampant.

When Dr. Bill Jones opened Cary Pediatrics in 1974, it was like he made a house call to the entire town. In the 31 years he served the Cary community, Jones saw it grow to some 140,000 residents, and during the early stages of his practice, he treated most of Cary’s newborns.

Cary Pediatrics since has expanded to include Fuquay Pediatrics as well as Apex Pediatrics. Before his retirement in 2005, Jones’ office was seeing as many as 80 patients a day.

“We are easily the biggest in Cary, one of the biggest in Wake County – and this all started with a one-man practice,” said Jones’ longtime partner, Dr. Mark Simpson.

Jones died last month at the age of 79. About eight years ago, he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, which forced him into an “early” retirement.

“He would have kept working until the day he died if he could,” Simpson said. He remembers a moment not long ago when Jones looked at Simpson with his piercing blue eyes and said, “Parkinson’s disease is a monster.”

Jones was born and raised in Henderson and attended both Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill before leaving the area for nearly 20 years. At the time, Jones’s practice in Hampton, Va., was disbanding and he learned that Cary had no pediatrician. He decided to come back to the Triangle and set up a practice of his own.

That meant moving his five teenage children to the MacGregor Downs neighborhood of Cary, and starting down a path that would keep him virtually on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the first six years he was in practice.

“We were looking for somewhere to move,” said his wife of 57 years, Frances. “The timing was perfect.”
During those first few years of practice, Jones’ only support staff was a nurse who doubled as a receptionist.

Every time a baby was born via Cesarean section at the Rex Hospital, he was called in immediately. If it was a vaginal delivery, he showed up the next morning. He made house calls and often wasn’t home until 10 p.m.

“As long as I’ve known him, he wanted to be a doctor,” Frances said. And a children’s doctor at that, she said, because he appreciated their openness.

She met him in elementary school.

“We started holding hands in the fifth grade,” she said. She can remember him throwing pebbles at her bedroom window on his way home from his paper route. “He was kind of like my alarm clock,” she smiled.

They began to seriously date in high school, supporting each other as strong athletes in their hometown of Henderson. He was a self-motivated student, she said. They would both graduate from Duke University – he from a pre-med program, she from the school of nursing.

They were wed in 1954 and Jones began medical school at UNC-Chapel Hill.

He spent a number of years doing research at places like the National Institute of Health before joining a practice in Virginia.

His colleague Dr. Simpson said Jones was particularly good with teens. He served as the team physician for Cary High School for decades, where the only fees he charged went to pay his nursing staff.

Jones loved having a large family, his wife said.

“He would have had more (children) if I had cooperated,” she joked. He found time to teach them how to ride bikes and go horseback riding. He ultimately funded 31 years of higher education – he saw to it that none of his children ever took out a loan.

Verbal affection did not come easily, and he preferred the written word when he had a particularly important message to convey.

His daughter, Kathy Melvin of Lillington, has held onto a letter he mailed her while she was an undergrad at East Carolina University. It was 1979, and she said she was partying more than she was studying, and he was quite concerned.

“He said that what he wanted for us, the most, was to be happy, healthy, safe, productive and Godly,” she recalled. “He did everything he could to make that possible for us.”
She never did earn that bachelor’s degree. But since his death, she has enrolled in a community college program to become a nurse’s aid.

“I really want to make him proud still,” Melvin said.

Jones liked to tailgate for N.C. State University football games, and got into woodworking, fashioning a workshop in his basement where he made toys, whirligigs for the front yard and crafted a cradle for his first grandchild.

His children talk of a man who had a strong vision for his family – one where ideally they would become doctors or nurses. Of the five, three went into the medical field, though he did not resent those who did not.

“Part of me becoming a doctor was that I just had so much admiration for what he did,” said his son Tommy Jones, an internist in Greensboro and the only doctor of medicine.

They also speak of a man who was full of patience and forgiveness.

“Whenever we failed and came to him with a mistake or an error, he was just very understanding. He would say, ‘We do that. We have our failures and we recover from them,’” Tommy Jones said.

He was a man of faith, attending Greenwood Forest Baptist Church for 37 years. “We were very fortunate to be with him as he passed,” said his daughter Dino Page of Greensboro. “Even a week before then he was able to share what was most important to him was his faith in the Lord. He charged my mom and three of us children with these words: ‘Help us to love Thee, help us to do Thy will and help us to keep the faith.’ It meant so much to us to hear him say those last words.”
What students are buying

By George F. Will

Many parents and the children they send to college are paying rapidly rising prices for something of declining quality. This is because “quality” is not synonymous with “value.”

Glenn Harlan Reynolds, University of Tennessee law professor, believes college has become, for many, merely a “status marker” signaling membership in the educated caste, and a place to meet spouses of similar status – “associative mating.” Since 1961, the time students spend reading, writing and otherwise studying has fallen from 24 hours a week to about 15 – enough for a degree often desired only as an expensive signifier of rudimentary qualities (e.g., the ability to follow instructions). Employers value this signifier as an alternative to aptitude tests when evaluating potential employees because such tests can provoke lawsuits by having a “disparate impact” on this or that racial or ethnic group.

In “The Higher Education Bubble,” Reynolds says this bubble exists for the same reasons the housing bubble did. The government decided that too few people owned homes/went to college, so government money was poured into subsidized and sometimes subprime mortgages/student loans, with the predictable result that housing prices/college tuitions soared and many borrowers went bust. Tuitions and fees have risen more than 440 percent in 30 years as schools happily raised prices – and lowered standards – to siphon up federal money. A recent Wall Street Journal headline: “Student Debt Rises by 8% as College Tuitions Climb.”

Richard Vedder, an Ohio University economist, writes in the Chronicle of Higher Education that as many people – perhaps more – have student loan debts as have college degrees. Have you seen those T-shirts that proclaim “College: The Best Seven Years of My Life”? Twenty-nine percent of borrowers never graduate, and many who do graduate take decades to repay their loans.

In 2010, The New York Times reported on Cortney Munna, then 26, a New York University graduate with almost $100,000 in debt. If her repayments were not then being deferred because she was enrolled in night school, she would have been paying $700 monthly from her $2,300 monthly after-tax income as a photographer’s assistant. She says she is toiling “to pay for an education I got for
four years and would happily give back.” Her degree is in religious and women’s studies.

The budgets of California’s universities are being cut, so recently Cal State Northridge students conducted an almost-hunger strike (sustained by a blend of kale, apple and celery juices) to protest, as usual, tuition increases and, unusually and properly, administrators’ salaries. For example, in 2009 the base salary of UC Berkeley’s Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion was $194,000, almost four times that of starting assistant professors. And by 2006, academic administrators outnumbered faculty.

The Manhattan Institute’s Heather Mac Donald notes that sinecures in academia’s diversity industry are expanding as academic offerings contract. UC San Diego, while eliminating master’s programs in electrical and computer engineering and comparative literature, and eliminating courses in French, German, Spanish and English literature, added a diversity requirement for graduation to cultivate “a student’s understanding of her or his identity.” So, rather than study computer science and Cervantes, students can study their identities – themselves. Says Mac Donald, “‘Diversity,’ it turns out, is simply a code word for narcissism.”

She reports that UCSD lost three cancer researchers to Rice University, which offered them 40 percent pay increases. But UCSD found money to create a Vice Chancellorship for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. UC Davis has a Diversity Trainers Institute under an Administrator of Diversity Education, who presumably coordinates with the Cross-Cultural Center. It also has: a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center; a Sexual Harassment Education Program; a Diversity Program Coordinator; an Early Resolution Discrimination Coordinator; a Diversity Education Series that awards Understanding Diversity Certificates in “Unpacking Oppression”; and Cross-Cultural Competency Certificate in “Understanding Diversity and Social Justice.”

California’s budget crisis has not prevented UC San Francisco from creating a new Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Outreach to supplement UCSF’s Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity, and the Diversity Learning Center (which teaches how to become “a Diversity Change Agent”), and the Center for LGBT Health and Equity, and the Office of Sexual Harassment Prevention & Resolution, and the Chancellor’s Advisory Committees on Diversity, and on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues, and on the Status of Women.

So taxpayers should pay more and parents and students should borrow more to fund administrative sprawl in the service of stale political agendas? Perhaps they will, until “pop!” goes the bubble.
College Board calls off special SAT date for affluent, gifted students

By Daniel de Vise, Published: June 6

The College Board has canceled a controversial plan to offer a special session of the SAT college entrance exam to students in a $4,500 summer program at Amherst College.

Students in the three-week college prep program were to have taken the SAT on Aug. 3. Sponsors touted it as a unique opportunity for students to sit for the SAT outside the busy academic year.

Reaction was overwhelmingly negative. Standardized test critics FairTest called for the New York nonprofit to halt the test, while bloggers and editorial writers assailed the prospect of affluent, gifted students gaining yet another advantage over other college applicants.

In an official statement Tuesday, the College Board concluded it would be “inappropriate” to hold the special test date for participants in the University Prep program, sponsored by the National Society for the Gifted & Talented. Aspects of the summer program, they said, “run counter to our mission of promoting equity and access, as well as to our beliefs about SAT performance.”

One partner in the summer program is the Princeton Review, a for-profit test-preparation company. (The Washington Post Co., too, offers for-profit test preparation through its Kaplan Test Prep.) The College Board has long discouraged test-prep classes, citing research that suggests they have little impact on scores.

The summer program “conflicted with their principles and public statements,” said Bob Schaeffer, public education director at the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, or FairTest. “Once that inconsistency was exposed, they had no other choice.”
Teacher tenure: a Fairfax schools firing case

By Emma Brown, Published: June 2 | Updated: Sunday, June 3, 5:51 PM

Twenty-one witnesses testified in the case to decide whether Violet Nichols should be allowed to continue teaching in the Fairfax County Public Schools. The last sworn in was Nichols herself.

For days, she had listened poker-faced as Fairfax school officials picked apart her classroom performance, arguing that she was incompetent, intransigent and undeserving of her teaching position.

Now it was her turn to tell a different story: that she was unfairly attacked by a principal determined to see her go.

Such hearings are central to the job protections known as tenure. Once politically untouchable, tenure has become a target for politicians from both parties who call it an obstacle to improving public education.

Since 2009, the District and more than a dozen states have either eliminated tenure or made it harder to get or easier to lose. This year, Virginia nearly joined them. But Republican lawmakers in Richmond fell just short of passing a bill that would have allowed principals to get rid of teachers without providing a reason. The bill is apt to be considered next year.

Critics say tenure makes dismissal so arduous and expensive that bad teachers are guaranteed a job for life.

Supporters say tenure merely promises safeguards to ensure good teachers aren’t arbitrarily pushed out.
But what makes a good teacher? What makes a bad one? And how do you tell the difference? These are questions with no certain answers. So the national debate over tenure rages among politicians and policymakers who speak in terms of black and white. And the business of judging a teacher happens — like so much in education — in maddening shades of gray.

Personnel proceedings are usually confidential. But any Fairfax teacher fighting termination may choose to make the hearing public. Nichols elected to open hers because she wanted to shine a light on what she felt was a witch hunt.

Her testimony was perhaps her last, best chance to influence her future.

She was a mentor teacher, she said, with a doctorate and more than three decades of experience. Her principals gave her positive reviews until the past two years. She knew she had changed kids’ lives, she said.

And yet she found herself in a tiny group targeted for dismissal: Of 14,000 teachers in the region’s largest school system, just two with tenure were fired last year.

Perhaps, Nichols said, she was singled out because of the color of her skin. Perhaps because she stood up for herself, or because she took a leadership role with the local teachers association.

She measured her speech, letting her incredulity hang in the air.

“I have a passion for what I do. I have given more than what is required,” she said. “I am surprised that Fairfax County Public Schools would do this to me.”

She had made her case. Now the attorneys would give closing arguments.

A panel of three fact-finders would have 30 days to sift the evidence and determine the truth. And Nichols would wait.

**Principal's report**

Nichols built a reputation as a no-nonsense sixth-grade teacher in 21 years at Rose Hill Elementary in the Alexandria section of Fairfax. She had a knack for building relationships with students, many of whom came from low-income families or spoke English as a second language.

But in a rapidly changing educational world, administrators argued, Nichols was stuck in the pedagogical past.

Terri Czarniak, the now-retired principal who moved to fire Nichols in spring 2011, was first to testify. She detailed problems she had seen: too many work sheets, too little technology. The teacher wasted class time, Czarniak said, allowing students who finished work quickly to languish for long periods without structured assignments.

Nichols didn’t cooperate with other teachers, Czarniak said, and relied on outmoded methods of reading instruction. She had been told what to work on, Czarniak said, but hadn’t improved.

“I had to sleep at night, and I had to make sure that any student who has one of our teachers was getting the quality education that they deserved,” Czarniak said. “I just did not see it happening in this case.”

The fact-finding panel convened for five days over two months, usually in a converted classroom at the Virginia Hills Administrative Center. A Washington Post reporter observed parts of three of the sessions. Other testimony in this story comes from transcripts. Seven school system employees followed Czarniak in testifying against the teacher.
Sarietta Kaye, an assistant principal, said it used to be acceptable to teach the whole class at once, but “that’s not what school is like anymore.” Research has shown that effective teachers break kids into groups and tailor lessons to their needs. Nichols hadn’t adapted, she said.

A teacher trainer said Nichols had once been rude and unprofessional, chatting during a presentation and turning her back when asked to be quiet. A Rose Hill teacher said Nichols repeatedly allowed her e-mail inbox to fill until it couldn’t get new messages.

Together, these accounts portrayed a teacher who had undergone a noticeable transformation.

In Virginia, veteran teachers in good standing are evaluated every three years. In 2006, Nichols exceeded expectations on half the 22 measures by which Fairfax teachers are evaluated. She met expectations on the other half.

The narrative portion of that evaluation was filled with praise for her lesson-planning, use of technology, positive classroom environment and mentoring of colleagues. It was signed by Czarniak and Kaye.

In 2009, Nichols’s midyear evaluation was fine. But that spring, a case of vertigo kept her out of school for more than a month. Administrators said her evaluation would be completed the following year. She never received another positive review.

**One of 62**

New York’s school system became infamous for its “rubber rooms,” where teachers accused of misconduct used to spend months or years, whiling away the hours, collecting paychecks as they awaited resolution of their cases. The rooms were shut in 2010 after a spate of negative media reports.

There is no such place in Fairfax. Until her case is decided, Nichols is not allowed to set foot on the Rose Hill campus or participate in any school activities. She has received her salary — about $92,000 a year, records show — at home since last summer.

Nichols, who declined to give her age, spends time volunteering with the NAACP, shuttling friends to and from appointments and tutoring at church.

“Every day, I wake up, I know why I’m not at work,” she said. “But I can’t just drown in it. I have to do things to keep myself busy.”

She was one of 62 veteran Fairfax teachers put on probation at the end of the 2009-10 school year, according to school system data. Most eventually resigned, but 15 were allowed to keep working. Three, including Nichols, were recommended for dismissal.

Firing a teacher can be costly. Fairfax has spent more than $70,000 on outside attorneys in the Nichols case, plus additional expenses for internal staff time, the fact-finding panel and Nichols’s salary and benefits.

The Virginia state code allows teacher dismissal for “incompetency, immorality, noncompliance with school laws” and other transgressions.

Nichols was recommended for dismissal on grounds of incompetency. But then the school system offered her a secret deal, according to her attorney, Steven Stone.

He was not permitted to ask witnesses about it during the hearing. But in a statement he made for the record, Stone said the terms were these: If Nichols could find a Fairfax principal willing to hire her, the central office was willing to approve the transfer and allow her to work.
Or, he said, if Nichols applied to a school outside the county, officials said she could use a positive recommendation letter that Kaye had written in 2008 when Nichols had sought an administrative position. The central office, Stone said, was willing to provide “necessary supportive information.”

Stone, paid by the Virginia Education Association — an affiliate of the National Education Association, the nation’s largest teachers union — declined to be interviewed about the agreement.

School system officials declined to be interviewed about the Nichols case, citing the need for privacy in a personnel matter. Asked why the system would consider giving a positive reference for an allegedly incompetent teacher, spokesman John Torre responded, “While we cannot comment specifically on any type of discussions between the parties, it is very common in all kinds of employment cases that an attempt is made to reach some kind of agreement on how things would be treated if, for example, the employee sought employment elsewhere.”

Parents speak out

Seven parents testified in support of Nichols. Four had children in her class in her last year at the school, when her evaluations were consistently negative.

Some had volunteered in her classroom. They said they saw Nichols do the very things she was accused of not doing: using the interactive whiteboard, working with children individually and in small groups, assigning hands-on projects.

Samantha Benson said her daughter had “blossomed” in the class. “She came home excited about learning,” Benson said. Nichols, she added, “was a hands-on teacher. She took the time to answer the questions of each child. She made them feel comfortable.”

Former students wrote letters in praise of Nichols.

Fatemeh Corlett, now 34, told the panel that, in elementary school, Nichols had helped her find confidence and get into classes for gifted and talented students. Later, Nichols urged Corlett to steer clear of temptations in high school, edited her college essays and helped her apply for financial aid.

Two weeks before Corlett was to move into her freshman dormitory — and become the first in her family to go to college — Nichols showed up at her home. She brought the kinds of things a kid needs for her first adult home: a fridge, a microwave, a comforter.

“Things I had no idea I needed,” Corlett said. “How can someone have such a big heart to think to do that?”

Classroom performance

Nichols’s students scored no differently on state tests than other sixth-graders at Rose Hill, school officials said, but that didn’t affect how she was judged.

There is a growing national movement to base teacher evaluations on student performance, but it hasn’t reached Fairfax. So instead of asking how much a teacher’s students have progressed, administrators ask how faithfully a teacher uses methods the county deems effective.

In other words, the focus is on how teachers teach instead of whether students learn.
Starting next year, Virginia will require schools to take a different tack. Student achievement is to be a “significant” portion of teacher evaluations. School systems have latitude to decide what that means; Fairfax will unveil its proposal June 11.

But for now, in Fairfax and across much of the country, teachers are judged largely by what administrators see of their lessons — snapshots of activity in the complicated ecosystem of a classroom.

Nichols said in her case, the snapshots were skewed and misinterpreted. The critical observations began in fall 2009, and she disputed each one that year in written rebuttals to her principal.

Poor use of technology? She had three laptops for kids in the room, and she taught with the interactive whiteboard as often as possible. Too many work sheets? She used them only for review and practice, and she didn’t use any more than other teachers did.

And so on. The rebuttals were placed in her personnel file but received no response.

Nichols also argued that the timing of the observations, all unannounced, seemed unfair. For example, when her sister was taken, unconscious, to the hospital in May 2010, Nichols asked to leave school, but she was told there was no one to cover her classroom. A few hours later, an assistant principal dropped in for an observation of Nichols’s class.

Her sister died that day.

Nichols took three days off for the funeral. She left work sheets for her students to do in her absence. Upon returning to school, she received a memo from Czarniak criticizing her failure to “provide meaningful, productive activities for every lesson, including when you need a substitute.”

The following day, another assistant principal visited the class. It sounded as if Nichols had laryngitis, the assistant principal observed. “It was very difficult for the students to hear the questions you were asking,” she wrote. “This slowed down the momentum of the activity.”

Czarniak used evidence from those observations to write a year-end evaluation recommending that Nichols be placed on probation. She would be required to turn in lesson plans every two weeks and work with instructional coaches.

Nichols, who is African American, filed a racial discrimination complaint against Czarniak, who is white. Ten months later, the school system concluded there had been no such discrimination.

No Child Left Behind

Rose Hill struggled to meet achievement targets under the federal No Child Left Behind law, falling short in four out of Czarniak’s six years at the helm. In 2009, the principal introduced initiatives to boost progress.

Sixth-grade teachers worked together to meet the directives. Nichols was “an integral part of the team,” said Mary Van Kula, one of two former Rose Hill teachers to testify in support of Nichols.

That year, Nichols became the building representative for the Fairfax Education Association, a local chapter of the NEA. Nichols said she thinks that helped make her a target. Rose Hill’s four previous FEA representatives all left the school or resigned, she testified. “I was bullied,” she said in an interview. “It was a clear case of abuse of power.”

Czarniak declined to be interviewed by telephone. Asked to respond to the bullying accusation and other questions, she said via e-mail that it would be inappropriate to comment on a pending personnel case.
But “generally speaking,” she wrote, “dealing with a teacher dismissal is serious and time-consuming. The decision was not taken lightly and was based on my responsibility to provide every child with a quality education that is driven by current best instructional practices.”

Phyllis Pajardo, Fairfax’s assistant superintendent for human resources, also wouldn’t speak about the Nichols case. But she said the school system should be able to enforce standards for good teaching.

“We have the right to say, ‘When you come work for us, these are the expectations that we have,’” she said.

Fact-finding panel

State regulations call for fact-finding panels in dismissal cases to have three members: one chosen by the teacher, one by the superintendent and one neutral party to whom both sides agree.

The Nichols panel was Michael Hairston, FEA president; Dwayne Young, principal of Centreville Elementary; and Johanna Fitzpatrick, a retired judge.

The hearing ended in late April. The panel released its findings nearly four weeks later.

School administrators had demonstrated valid concerns about Nichols’s methods, Fitzpatrick wrote, but they had not convincingly explained how a teacher with such a long record of success had become incompetent in such a short time.

Plus, the judge wrote, evidence had shown a “teacher who went far beyond the requirements of the classroom to foster a love of learning.”

The panel was unanimous: Nichols should not be fired, but she should instead resume work at another school. There should be a probation period for Nichols to address issues raised about her teaching.

That is not the last word. The panel’s recommendation went to the School Board, which has ultimate authority.

Nichols has asked the board for a public hearing of her case. It could happen as early as July. But before it gets to that point, she and her attorney hope to reach an agreement with the school system so she can return to the classroom.

“I’ve proven myself,” Nichols said. “I just want to go back to work.”