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Budget, honors college on ECU trustees’ agenda

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

The East Carolina University Board of Trustees will hold budget talks and discuss the creation of an honors college among other topics in committee meetings this morning.

The board will meet at the East Carolina Heart Institute today in preparation for the regular board meeting Friday.

Kevin Seitz, vice chancellor for administration and finance, will update the entire board on the university's budget. He will discuss how the university will make up for a $19 million reduction in state funds this year. About $9 million is expected to be cut from administrative and executive positions.

The university has also implemented a number of cost-reduction measures including hiring freezes, energy savings plans and administrative changes.

The university affairs committee will discuss the possibility of moving the university's honors program to an honors college.

Provost Marilyn Sheerer created the honors college planning task force in February and will submit the task force's findings to the board.

According to agenda items, an honors college would significantly enhance the university's capacity to recruit and retain high-caliber students.

"The strongest faculty are attracted to and likely to remain at universities that enroll the most academically talented students," the agenda states.

"Such faculty are also likely to join and remain with universities that provide opportunities to engage in creative curriculum design and innovative teaching."

An honors college would also produce a new multidisciplinary curriculum and concentrate on community engagement.

The full board meets Friday at 8:30 a.m. in the East Carolina Heart Institute's conference room.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

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COX
NEWSPAPERS
DEATH NOTICE

Christine W. Helms

Dr. Christine Wilton Helms, 102, died Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2009. She retired from East Carolina University as a professor Emeritus in Biology in 1971.

Flu shot beats spray in study

LOS ANGELES -- A new comparison of flu vaccines gives adults a good reason to get a jab in the arm instead of a squirt in the nose.

In a study of nearly 2,000 healthy adults during a recent flu season, standard shots were twice as effective against regular winter flu as the newer nasal spray, researchers found.

Flu shots are made of killed flu viruses that are usually injected into the arm. FluMist, the only government-approved flu nasal spray, delivers a live but weakened strain to the nostrils.

FluMist is mainly targeted for use in children, and studies have suggested that it works better than shots in children. But adults are increasingly opting for the spray version as well.

The latest study echoes previous research that found shots to be superior in adults.

It's not clear why the spray is less effective against seasonal flu in adults, but the same may not hold true for swine flu vaccines, said Dr. Jay Butler, swine flu vaccine chief with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The swine flu virus is so novel that the immune system should still mount a strong response, he said.

The study compared regular flu vaccines during the 2007-2008 flu season. Healthy volunteers, ages 18 to 49, were given either a flu shot made by Sanofi Pasteur of France, a dummy injection, FluMist made by Maryland-based MedImmune LLC, or a fake nasal spray.

The flu shot was 68 percent successful at preventing the flu, and the nasal spray was 36 percent effective, the researchers reported.

Results were published in today’s New England Journal of Medicine. The study was funded by Sanofi.

Dr. Chris Ambrose, senior director of medical affairs at MedImmune, said the jury is still out. He cited studies that have shown FluMist to work as well as the flu shot in adults.
UNC students face cocaine charge

CHAPEL HILL -- Two UNC-Chapel Hill sorority members were charged with "constructive possession" of cocaine Monday even though police did not find any drugs on them.

Sarah Thomas Coxe, 19, of 313 E. Franklin St. and Elizabeth Roberts Cogdell, 19, of Fayetteville were arrested in connection with last week's drug bust, which led to the arrest of five current and former UNC-Chapel Hill students.

Both were present in the 211 Church St. apartment where police found $15,000 to $20,000 worth of cocaine Sept. 15, Lt. Kevin Gunter said.

The women were not charged at the time of those arrests because police were investigating other details at the scene, Gunter said. But they were told at the time that they could be charged within a matter of days for being around the drugs.

The women, who are members of the Chi Omega sorority, were charged with constructive possession Monday after police asked the District Attorney's Office to issue warrants for their arrest.

A person can be charged with constructive possession if she is not holding the property but has immediate access to it, according to Gunter.

In the case of Coxe and Cogdell, police said, the women were near the cocaine.

"We had probable cause to believe that this narcotic was basically theirs," Gunter said. "The cocaine location was close enough to them."

Both women were released after they each posted a $5,000 unsecured bond.

More arrests are expected as the investigation continues, police said.
Are Med-Student Tweets Breaching Patient Privacy?

By Alice Park

Personal profiles on Facebook and other social-networking sites are a trove of inappropriate and embarrassing photographs and discomfiting breaches of confidentiality. You might expect that from your friends and even some colleagues — but what about your doctor? (See the most common hospital mishaps.)

A new survey of medical-school deans finds that unprofessional conduct on blogs and social-networking sites is common among medical students. Although med students fully understand patient-confidentiality laws and are indoctrinated in the high ethical standards to which their white-coated profession is held, many of them still use Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr and other sites to depict and discuss lewd behavior and sexual misconduct, make discriminatory statements and discuss patient cases in violation of confidentiality laws, according to the survey, which was published this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Of the 80 medical-school deans questioned, 60% reported incidents involving unprofessional postings and 13% admitted to incidents that violated patient privacy. Some offenses led to expulsion from school. (See the top 10 celebrity Twitter feeds.)

"I didn't expect to find so many incidents of unprofessional conduct," says Dr. Katherine Chretien, medicine-clerkship director at the Washington, D.C., Veterans Administration hospital and the lead author of the study. As a physician responsible for counseling medical students and residents, Chretien says she assumed that students were "educated about professional conduct online and used better judgment."

But medical students, it seems, are no different from the rest of us when it comes to posting drunken party pictures online or tweeting about their daily comings, goings and musings — however inappropriate they may be. Many students feel they are entitled to post what they wish on their personal profiles, maintaining that the information is in fact personal and not subject to the same policies and guidelines that govern their professional behavior on campus. Though medical students would agree that physicians — and other professionals, like teachers — should be held to a higher standard of integrity by society, the new study suggests that they're confused by how rules apply, especially in cyberspace, once the white coat comes off. "They view their Facebook pages as their Internet persona," says Dr. Neil Parker, senior associate dean for student affairs for graduate medical education at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine. "They think it's
something only for their friends, even though it's not private." (See 10 ways Twitter will change American business.)

That attitude is largely dictated by age, says Parker. In focus groups involving students, faculty, administrators and staff, the school has found a clear generational divide between those who tend to blur the line between their personal and professional lives and those who don't. Younger students were more likely than older staff members to believe that their thoughts and opinions were valid to post online, regardless of their potentially damaging or discriminatory impact on others.

The issue is especially relevant when it comes to discussing patient cases. Laws prohibit doctors from talking about patients using individually identifiable information. However, as Chretien notes, sharing patient-care experiences can be a useful and powerful learning tool for medical students that encourages "reflection, empathy and understanding," she writes in the paper. Although discussing their experiences online may be allowed, students must be made aware that identifying information is not limited to patients' names and that divulging other characteristics and details often violates patient-privacy laws. (See five Facebook no-nos for divorcing couples.)

It's that type of education that medical schools need to include more in their curricula, says Chretien. Ensuring that students are aware of privacy settings on social-networking sites is another. At UCLA, Parker has assigned a task force, which includes students, to devise guidelines that students can follow when making decisions about what to post and what to keep to themselves. "It's going to be difficult," he says. "Most students want us to provide them with education and guidelines, but not policies. It is a different culture; we always say we have to be culture-sensitive to our patients, but we have to be culture-sensitive to our students as well."

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September 24, 2009

University of Illinois President to Step Down After Scandal

By EMMA GRAVES FITZSIMMONS

CHICAGO — The president of the University of Illinois announced Wednesday that he would resign, after a scandal over admissions practices that has for months enveloped the state’s premier public university.

The president, B. Joseph White, had been under growing pressure to take responsibility for his role in the scandal, in which, according to an independent state commission, the university gave admissions preference to unqualified applicants who were the children of the wealthy and well-connected.

A majority of the members of the university’s board resigned after the commission released a scathing report in August. And this month, the university’s Faculty Senate approved a resolution supporting the removal of Mr. White and of Richard Herman, the chancellor of the best-known of the university’s three campuses, in Urbana-Champaign.

In the past, Mr. White, 62, has denied that he pressured anyone to admit particular students, although the commission cited at least one situation in which he conveyed to another university official the wishes of Rod R. Blagojevich, who was then the governor, that two applicants be admitted. In his letter of resignation, Mr. White said he was stepping down “to enable you as a newly constituted board to select university leadership going forward.”

Christopher G. Kennedy, a prominent businessman here who has been made chairman of the board, said Mr. White’s resignation would prevent a “complicated discussion about termination.”

“The president left on his own accord,” Mr. Kennedy said in an interview. “There wasn’t a fight.”

On Wednesday, Gov. Patrick J. Quinn praised Mr. White for his decision, saying it was a “courageous act” that would help the university move forward.

Mr. White will serve as president until the end of the year, then stay on to teach and raise money, officials said. The board will appoint an interim president while conducting a search for a new one.

Mr. White, who became president of the university in 2005, was the dean of the business school at the University of Michigan for a decade. A native of Detroit, he has a doctorate in business administration from the University of Michigan.
Get your own beer! Swine flu is on campus
Colleges try to stem virus spread amid germ-swapping student behaviors
The Associated Press
updated 9:23 a.m. ET Sept. 23, 2009

ATLANTA - It's lurking in that awesome party just off the quad, hiding in the shot glasses passed from person to person and in the make-out sessions in the hallway.

Swine flu is swirling through the nation's campuses, but despite all the warnings, flu kits and prominently displayed jugs of hand sanitizer, many students, like Georgia Tech freshman Elise Woodall, just aren't that worried.

"I drink my orange juice," she said. "I figure I'll be OK."

College administrators around the country are faced with a nearly insurmountable challenge: trying to stem the spread of the highly contagious swine flu virus amid the almost round-the-clock microbe-swapping behaviors of college students — many of whom are not all that concerned about the impending bug.

Since the first day of classes, colleges have asked students to isolate themselves once they begin coughing and sneezing, but the mild nature of this strain of flu has some students ignoring that advice, health center officials said. And just a few people with flu at a Saturday football game — which can mean 100,000 people in a stadium at some colleges — can turn into dozens more cases sitting in the waiting room of the student health center on Monday.

"When you're in the stadium with 90,000 of your closest friends, it's not exactly great infection control, especially when I look around and see people sharing a Coke," said Alan Blinder, a sophomore at the University of Alabama. "I know people are aware of the advice, but I don't know if they are applying it."

From random hookups at fraternity parties to the passing of beer cans in dorm rooms, germs have always made the rounds on campuses with the speed of a viral video.

"There's not a better way of transmitting germs than packing hundreds of young people into poorly ventilated party rooms and sharing glasses, smoking materials, playing beer pong and kissing," said Dr. James Turner, president of the American College Health Association and executive director of student health at the University of Virginia.

Combine higher education's already germ-soaked environment with the largely unpredictable flu bug, and epidemiologists fear the pandemic could explode this fall and winter as the seasonal flu and swine flu both hit. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention even went as far as to recommend sick students wear surgical masks when they kiss.

Turner's association estimates more than 13,000 college students have had flulike symptoms in the last month at 250 colleges spread across the country, though there is no way to tell how many of those are swine flu because health officials are no longer testing every sick student. That data is the most comprehensive look at how the swine flu is playing out at colleges, though the numbers don't account for all the country's 4,300 degree-granting institutions.

So far, two students have died from the flu — one at Troy University in Alabama on Sept. 4 and one at Cornell University on Sept. 11. Health experts say those numbers will grow as more students with other health problems contract the virus.

Even so, on most college campuses, student life in the era of swine flu bears pretty close resemblance to student life before the bug arose. Students still shuffle between classes, stopping to chat in hallways and the library, with the only really noticeable difference being the vats of sanitizing gel sitting in most common
spaces.

Georgia Tech sophomore Christopher Bryan said he tries not to touch door knobs and hand rails where he knows germs are easily shared, but the Panama native said he's not really changed his behavior otherwise.

"There is always a concern about getting sick, but swine flu is everywhere, not just here," he said waiting for a shuttle on the Atlanta campus.

Colleges are offering isolation dorms for sick students, providing ample hand sanitizing gel and sending multiple e-mails about proper hand-washing techniques.

For Emory student Anand Saha, the chills, sore throat and fever started after he attended an Indian dance workshop on campus that packed 50 students into a tiny room. Saha has his own bedroom in his dorm, so he isolated himself there instead of going to the residence hall for sick students.

Now, the Memphis, Tenn., native, who is a resident assistant in his dorm, said he uses hand sanitizer as much as possible and has hung up posters on how to avoid getting swine flu in his dorm.

"College life fosters close living, whether it's in residence halls or with sports teams that spend a lot of time with each other," said Saha, a neuroscience major. "It's a lot of interaction with a lot of different people on a daily basis. Classes are pretty big, and a lot of times you have people breathing down your neck or you're elbow to elbow with other people."

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