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The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
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Time
A group of college students walk down East Carolina University's College Hill in high heels during the Voice for Victims "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" event to raise awareness about sexual assault on Monday. (Aileen Devlin/The Daily Reflector)

**Students ‘Take Back the Night’**

By Katherine Ayers

For one night, Wes Sapp didn’t mind putting on a pair of high heels. He thought it was necessary to take a stand.

The East Carolina University freshman and Chi Phi fraternity pledge member was among the young men donning heels on Monday for a mile walk from College Hill Drive down 10th Street to Joyner Library as part of the Take Back the Night and Walk a Mile in Her Shoes events Monday. The events, sponsored by the campus group Voice for Victims, were designed to raise awareness about sexual assault and rape through peer education.

“We’re in a college community, and women are more susceptible to sexual assault (than men),” Sapp said. “I think it’s appropriate to have this event.”

With shouts of “2-4-6-8; no more date rape” and “Men and women unite to take back the night” reverberating down 10th Street and through campus, a crowd of about 75 students followed the high-heeled group.

“Walk a mile in her shoes is having the guys make a public confirmation that they are on our side and that they understand the significance of sexual assault and their part in it,” Kayla Boyer, Voice for Victims secretary, said.
Men are responsible for first not committing any type of sexual assault themselves but second for speaking up when their friends may be in danger of crossing a line, Boyer said. Take Back the Night is designed specifically for women.

“It’s saying, ‘I’m not going to take this anymore for me or my sisters or my mom or friends,’” Boyer said. “It’s not allowing yourself to be a victim, but also standing up for those around you and not letting them be a victim.”

Some universities hold the two events separately, but Boyer said her group wants people to understand it will take men and women working together to eliminate the crimes of rape and sexual assault.

“If those parts aren’t working hand in hand together, then we’re not going to find success,” she said. “We both have to take a stand.”

Allen Hildebrandt, a leasing agent for the Wilson Acres apartment complex, participated with his friend, sophomore Kaitlyn Hall.

“I wanted to come and show her some support,” he said.

Hall said she got involved with the organization after becoming a sexual assault survivor while she was in high school.

In 2011, the most recent statistics available from campus police, there were 16 forcible sexual offenses, up from seven in 2010. In Pitt County, there were 40 rapes, up from 33 in 2010.

Sixty-five percent of rapes go unreported, and every two minutes a person is sexually assaulted in America, according to literature passed out at the event. Sue Molhan, Voice for Victims group adviser and ECU Campus Police victims advocate, said rape and sexual assault are silent epidemics.

“Students don’t report it because it’s usually an acquaintance (who’s the perpetrator),” she said. People also are not sure sometimes if what happened to them would count as a crime.

That is what happened to Mollie Daniel, an ECU senior and Voice for Victims president. She shared her story to the group during a 10-minute program at the end of the march. During the second weekend of her freshman year, she attended a party with her roommate and some acquaintances. She said she had two drinks made by her roommate’s boyfriend, and the next thing she knew she woke up, naked and groggy, in a stranger’s bed the next morning.

After leaving with her roommate, she said she spent the next week in her dorm room crying and watching television, leaving only for class. After
finally talking with her parents and a victim’s advocate on campus, she said she found the courage to report the incident but by then there was no physical evidence of what had happened.

Ebony West and Brittney Melton, both ECU freshmen, said the event raised their awareness about the issue of sexual assault.

“People look at us like we’re fresh meat, and we’re targeted,” West said. “I never walk by myself, I’m always in a pair or a group.”

Melton said she and her friends tend to include male friends in their groups because it makes them feel protected.

“But I’m still guarded,” she said. “They have the same thoughts as any other man, and they could still take advantage of us.”

In the end, Boyer said the group’s main goal with events like these is to be peer educators to others on campus.

“Administration can only say so much,” she said. “Sexual assault is not a gender-specific crime, and it’s going to take everybody to take a stand.”
SAT scores decline in North Carolina, nation

By Jane Stancill - jstancill@newsobserver.com

SAT scores for North Carolina high school seniors slid again this year, following a national decline as greater numbers of students take the college entrance exam.

The combined critical reading and math score for North Carolina students averaged 997 this year, a four point drop from the average score in 2011. Including the writing portion of the test, the combined score for North Carolina students this year was 1,469, down six points from 1,475 last year. Nationally, the scores declined two points to 1,498 for the combined reading, math and writing components.

In the Triangle’s public schools, the average combined score on reading and math was 1,194 in Chapel Hill-Carrboro; 1,063 in Wake County; 1,044 in Orange County; 999 in Johnston County; 978 in Chatham County; 959 in Franklin County, and 951 in Durham County.

North Carolina’s SAT performance has been on the decline for several years even as the state’s high school graduation rate has inched upward, to just over 80 percent this year. The state has a higher percentage of students who take the SAT than some other states.

Reasons for the drop

The higher participation rate in North Carolina, which this year hit 68 percent, may explain the dip in scores, said State Superintendent June Atkinson.

“Our participation rate of students taking SAT is the largest that we’ve had in our history, so that would be one factor,” she said.

That SAT participation may shift in the future, though. North Carolina began administering the ACT college admissions test to all high school juniors this year. The ACT will be used to judge student progress, college readiness and school performance in North Carolina from now on. However, many students will also take the SAT, which has long been the standard used by admissions offices at the state’s colleges and universities.

Officials at the College Board, which owns and administers the SAT, said a recent decline in scores, especially reading, can be partly attributed to greater socio-economic diversity among the test-taking pool.
“Clearly one component of that is the changing demographics,” said Wayne Camara, vice president of research and development at the College Board. “It’s much more expansive. We have many, many more students in groups for whom English may not be their primary or their first language, who are now having access to the SAT and through the SAT are going to college and succeeding.”

There are other factors at play, College Board officials said. They point mainly to a rigorous curriculum in high school. Students who complete four English courses, three math classes, three natural science courses and three social studies courses – what they call a “core curriculum” – typically do much better on the test, scoring on average 144 points higher on the SAT than students who don’t take as many core classes.

“The value of providing kids with access to rigorous courses and a core curriculum cuts across every group in America,” said Peter Kauffmann, vice president of communications at the College Board. “If kids have access to a rigorous core curriculum, they’re more prepared for college, they score better on the SAT, they have more of a chance to stay in college and graduate from college.”

**Ready for college?**

The College Board, using its own benchmark, said that only 43 percent of college-bound seniors in the United States are actually college ready, according to results of the testing.

But states are ratcheting up the demands on their students. Forty-five states have adopted what’s known as the Common Core State Standards, a whole new take on the curriculum. In North Carolina the new standards went into effect with the start of school this year.

Atkinson said the Common Core will provide students with more focus and more skills to apply what they have learned.

The State Board of Education also increased requirements for high school graduation to include a fourth math course beyond Algebra II. That tougher path could boost SAT scores.

College Board data show North Carolina saw a 7.8 percent increase in the number of Advanced Placement exam test takers, with a 7.2 percent increase in the number of scores high enough to receive college credit.

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Duke researchers stumble upon a new way to make nylon

By Jay Price - jprice@newsobserver.com

DURHAM–Duke University researchers delving into the genetic mysteries of brain cancer stumbled on an intriguing discovery in a much different field: how to make a key ingredient of nylon in a way that could be both cheaper and friendlier to the environment.

The finding, described in the journal Nature Chemical Biology on Sunday, came after the scientists wondered whether some of the genetic and chemical changes in tumors might have beneficial uses, perhaps some even unrelated to medicine.

Nylon is one of the oldest synthetic polymers – a family of materials that includes PVC and neoprene – and one of the most common. For decades it has been used in products such as carpeting, upholstery, auto parts, clothing and for a host of industrial purposes.

A crucial component in its production is a chemical called adipic acid, which is now made from fossil fuels. Adipic acid also is used in making other polymers and drugs, and as a food additive. Chemical companies make several billion pounds of it annually in a process that is a major source of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide.

The Duke discovery built on earlier research at the university that found that genetic mutations in some brain tumors changed the function of certain enzymes. Enzymes are molecules that convert one chemical to another. They play a major role in both healthy tissues and in tumors, and can be used to convert organic matter into synthetic materials – such as adipic acid.

Zachary J. Reitman, an associate in research at Duke and lead author of the new study, said he was pondering the changes that tumors can trigger in enzymes and began wondering what tasks the modified enzymes could perform.

“A lot of it was serendipity,” Reitman said. “These different enzymes can go awry and change their function, and we had observed that a couple of times and thought it would be interesting if it could be harnessed for something beneficial.”
A review of scientific literature pointed to a method that had been considered for a new way to make adipic acid from cheap sugars via a chain of different enzymes. One key enzyme, though, was missing.

Not anymore. The scientists were able to engineer it by modifying an enzyme found in yeast and bacteria, changing its function in the way that tumors can modify enzymes.

The discovery is essentially a by-product of the major advances in recent cancer research made possible in the past couple of years by rapid gains in the technology of mapping genetic material.

It’s possible, Reitman said, that there will be more discoveries in seemingly unrelated fields because of the flood of genetic research.

“We showed one way that you can take some implication from cancer and use it outside the box,” Reitman said. “I think it could be done more than once.”

It’s unclear how difficult it might be to make the process commercially viable, but the scientists are seeking a patent on their findings. Hai Yan, a professor in the Department of Pathology, was senior author of the study, and four other Duke researchers also contributed to the paper and are listed in the patent application.

For now, though, it’s back to their main research, Reitman said. The day after the nylon study was published, he was back at work sequencing the genomes of a particular type of brain tumor.

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DeCock: Football graduation gap remains a chasm

By Luke DeCock - staff columnist - ldecock@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL—Another study comparing college football players’ graduation rates to those of their student peers, another giant gap between the two.

Three years after the University of North Carolina’s College Sport Research Institute started tracking graduation rates based not on raw numbers but on how athletes performed when compared to other students, nothing has changed. Football players are still graduating about 20 percent less than regular students.

The latest edition of the study, planned for release Tuesday, found that FBS football players were 17 percent less likely to graduate than their male peers, down from 20 percent last year, with a three-year rolling average of 19 percent. At the FCS level, this year’s average was 8 percent, the three-year average 9 percent.

“We think this is really going to force schools to look at, philosophically, what they want to be the real purpose of college sports, and football specifically,” North Carolina professor Richard Southall, one of the study’s authors, said in a telephone interview Monday.

“We know that football is the revenue engine for everything. There may be players who come back and graduate, or leave in good academic standing, all of that stuff. But they are not receiving diplomas at the same rate as the full-time male population.

“Are these guys employees? And if they’re employees, then let’s pay them. If the purpose of them being there is to create revenue for all these other sports, do they need to be full-time students? Maybe they don’t.”

The ACC’s gap of 22 percent was among the highest in all of college football, behind only the Pac-12, but it’s important to note that because this measures the difference between football players and male students, that may have as much to do with how many regular ACC students successfully graduate as it does with football players not graduating.

With seven schools in the top 50 of the U.S. News & World Report rankings, the academic rigor of most ACC schools may skew the numbers,
just as the influence of California and Stanford may affect those of the Pac-12.

Football actually shows a smaller gap than the most recent major-conference figures for baseball (31 percent) and men’s basketball (32 percent). But the studies do continue to raise the question of why more football players aren’t graduating in the ACC and elsewhere, and what needs to be done to fix that and make sure they get their degrees.

For the first time, the study broke graduation rates down by race this year, comparing black and white football players.

Across the board, black players graduated at lower rates than their white teammates, at the FCS and FBS levels – with the exception of the two Historically Black Colleges and Universities conferences, the MEAC and SWAC, where black football players graduated at higher rates than their white teammates.

Within the ACC, black football players had a graduation gap of 28 percent and white players 9 percent, gaps consistent in scope and proportion with other FBS conferences.

Southall said the latest data may spur further inquiry into tracking football players who are special admissions to universities, or examining the quality of the high schools football players attend.

At the least, it should encourage discussions about academic support for athletes, and football players in particular – especially on campuses tinged with scandal, including his own, where 64 percent of students in the suspect classes in North Carolina’s Department of African and Afro-American Studies were athletes.

“We need to have some open, frank discussions and see where this leads us,” Southall said. “You can do that, or you can deal with academic scandals every two years. Does it do anybody any good to say this was just some rogue individuals? ‘Two people at North Carolina, three people at Michigan, four people at Auburn, it’s not the system.’ We should be beyond that.”

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What do SAT, ACT scores really mean?

By Valerie Strauss

The big news in the world of college entrance exams — that would be the SAT and the ACT — is that the scores from the high school class of 2012 were disappointing.

Newly released reading scores on the SAT hit a four-decade low, and writing scores edged down too, while math scores were essentially unchanged from last year. SAT average scores have declined by 20 points since 2006, when the test was revised to include a writing section.

ACT scores for the 2012 high school class were released in August and the national results were essentially the same as in 2011, meaning no real progress.

So what does it all mean? On one level, a lot. On another, pretty much nothing.

We all know that many college admissions offices imbue SAT and ACT scores with importance. At schools that are deluged with tens of thousands of applications, numbers matter, so these scores can play an outsized role in admission decisions. That means these scores can affect where individual students get to go to school.

Yet significant research shows that SAT and ACT scores don’t really tell us anything meaningful about a student’s future, either academically or in the work world.

For one thing, lots of things can affect how well a student does on a high-stakes test, but the strongest correlation to any single factor is family income. As my colleagues Lyndsey Layton and Emma Brown reported here, average SAT scores increase with every $20,000 in additional family income.
Furthermore, these tests are highly coachable, even if the organizations that own and administer them say they aren’t, giving a boost to kids who have the money and/or wherewithal to get tutored.

The content of the ACT is closer to the material a student has covered in high school (in fact, it is based on a national curriculum survey) than is the content of the SAT — but it is still no more accurate than the SAT in predicting college grades, research has shown. Why? Because no standardized test in which students sit there and fill in bubbles and write an essay can capture all of the work habits, coping skills, motivation and other traits needed to be successful in college.

Thus at the individual level, ACT/SAT scores are not particularly meaningful, says Bob Schaeffer, public education director of FairTest, or the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to ending what it says are misuses and flaws in standardized testing.

“High school grades — even with all the variety between schools and courses — are better predictors of a teenager's performance in higher education, particularly the likelihood of graduation,” he said.

That's why 875 accredited, bachelor-degree granting colleges and universities do not require all or many applicants to submit test scores before making admissions decisions. The list of test-optional and test-flexible schools includes nearly 150 ranked in the top tier of their respective categories; the full database is available online here.

But Schaeffer said long-term, aggregate SAT and ACT scores trends are one tool for evaluating overall education quality — and they point to the conclusion that U.S. K-12 education is headed in the wrong direction.

For Schaeffer, that’s an indictment of the high-stakes fixation of the last decade of No Child Left Behind. “At a minimum, we are failing to make the progress promised by high-stakes testing advocates either in terms of improving overall readiness for college/careers or in closing long-standing test score gaps between racial groups,” he said.

Proponents of NCLB and similar state-level standardized testing programs have been saying that test-based accountability systems would lead to increased achievement. It hasn’t happened, and in fact, the opposite has.

The SAT and the ACT are said by the organizations that own and administer them that the exams are not really “coachable” and that kids who take lessons on how to improve their score don’t really see much gain.
The 2009 book, "Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities," co-authored by former Princeton President William Bowen, found that:

* High school grades are a far better incremental predictor of graduation rates than are standard SAT/ACT test scores.
* Overly heavy reliance on SAT/ACT scores in admitting students can have adverse effects on the diversity of the student bodies enrolled by universities.
* The strong predictive power of high school GPA holds even when we know little or nothing about the quality of the high school attended.
Shirley M. Tilghman took office in 2001. She will leave in June.

Princeton President Announces She Will Step Down

By ARIEL KAMINER

The president of Princeton University, Shirley M. Tilghman, announced on Saturday that she would step down in June. Dr. Tilghman, a molecular biologist and a professor, became the second woman to lead an Ivy League institution when she emerged as the surprise choice to head the university in 2001.

She made the announcement in an e-mail to Princeton students, faculty members, staff members and alumni.

During Dr. Tilghman’s administration, the university, which already had the highest per-student endowment of any college in the country, raised vast amounts of money. The latest capital campaign, begun and completed in difficult economic times, brought in $1.88 billion. But in the letter she noted, “There is a natural rhythm to university presidencies.”

In an interview later, she explained that in June, at the conclusion of that fund-raising campaign, “I began to think about what I had set out to do as president and what remained to be done. I concluded somewhat immodestly that every important initiative I set in motion was either concluded — done
— or was now on an irreversible path to success where it really wouldn’t require a lot of my time or attention to ensure that it would be fully realized.”

During her administration, Princeton also greatly increased its financial aid offerings, raising to more than 60 from 38 the percentage of students who receive it and more than doubling the amount that they receive. In addition, the Princeton campus underwent considerable transformation with several major construction projects, including a new residential college, a new library, the Lewis Center for the Arts and a neuroscience institute.

In a statement, Kathryn A. Hall, the chairwoman of the board of trustees, praised Dr. Tilghman’s “exceptional leadership for Princeton over these past 11 years, building on its distinctive strengths and pioneering important new initiatives in areas ranging from neuroscience, energy research and the arts to internationalization and campus life.” She said that Dr. Tilghman, who has continued to teach during her time in office, would remain on Princeton’s faculty, which she joined in 1986.

Dr. Tilghman’s departure comes at a time of transition on many Ivy League campuses. Dartmouth’s president, Jim Yong Kim, recently stepped down; Yale’s president, Richard C. Levin, is retiring at the end of this academic year. Brown University installed a new president, Christina Hull Paxson, this past summer.

Dr. Tilghman, a distinguished researcher who was among the architects of the national effort to map the human genome and was an early advocate for women in a field still dominated by men, had originally been part of the search committee to choose a successor to Harold T. Shapiro, Princeton’s 18th president, in 2001.

She took office in June 2001, almost seven years after Judith Rodin of the University of Pennsylvania became the first female president in the Ivy League.

Sam Wang, an associate professor of molecular biology and neuroscience, said Dr. Tilghman had “been able to lead in a way that — we’ve been through these good and these hard economic times, and things have been pretty collegial the whole time.” Bruce Easop, the president of Princeton’s undergraduate student government, noted her “sharp sense of humor.”

“What’s really been remarkable is the candor with which she speaks about the university and her views, and the way her passion comes through,” he said.
After saying in an interview that “the board wishes she would stay forever,” Ms. Hall added the next step would be to convene a search committee. She declined to discuss possible candidates.

Dr. Tilghman plans to take a year off before returning to teaching. “I’m going to use next year to think about the ways I could be of service to the university, to the nation, as a volunteer,” she said. “I don’t want to take on a full-time job anywhere but Princeton.”

Richard Pérez-Peña contributed reporting.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: September 22, 2012

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article incorrectly referred to the time Judith Rodin became the first female president in the Ivy Leagues. It was 1994, not 2001.