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Green Mill Run floods Charles Boulevard near 14th Street in Greenville on Thursday morning.

Road closed, crops damaged
By Michael Abramowitz
Thursday, May 24, 2012

Storms that wreaked havoc for motorists Wednesday and Thursday also caused several power outages, heavy crop damage, left one family homeless and closed Mills road for a week.

Weather observers say as much as 7 inches of rain fell in areas of Pitt County starting about 6 p.m. Wednesday as a low pressure system moved into the area from the southwest.

National Weather Service meteorologist Jim Merrell said warm air under the system clashed with cold air aloft. Clouds grew and accumulated large amounts of moisture high into the atmosphere, including hail, he said.

A sea breeze developed and moved west from the coast during the day, creating intersecting boundaries in Pitt, Martin and Greene counties.

“It looks like Pitt County got the worst of it,” the meteorologist said.

Rainfall amounts varied from 7.3 inches southeast Greenville to 1.2 inches in Farmville, according to volunteer observers who work with the weather service.

Greenville Utilities headquarters on Mumford Road measured about 3.5 inches from the storm. The rain gauge at the water plant on Old River Road west of the city registered 2 inches at midnight Wednesday, and rain continued to accumulate into Thursday.

“It was spitting rain,” water plant operator Keith Sullivan said. “It didn’t stop raining until 4:30 a.m.”
A dozen roads and intersections in low-lying areas were closed Thursday morning as rainwater drained into area streams.

In Greenville, affected areas included sections of Charles Boulevard and 14th Street near Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, Evans Street between Howell Street and Arlington Boulevard, and Arlington Boulevard near Red Banks Road.

Roads affected outside the city included Grimesland Bridge Road, Black Jack-Simpson Road, Worthington Road, Mobleys Bridge Road, Grover Hardee Road, Ervin Buck Road and Hudson’s Crossroads Road.

Several roads remained closed Thursday afternoon. Officials advised motorists to use caution and heed roadblocks.

“Turn around, don’t drown,” was Merrell’s cautionary theme for drivers.

Pitt County Schools rerouted several buses during morning and afternoon routes. Officials were prepared to deal with more problems this morning, particularly in the Grimesland area.

A pipe failure and roadway collapse near Black Jack led N.C. Department of Transportation crews Thursday afternoon to close Mills Road between Lester Mills Road and Black Jack-Simpson Road. The road is expected to remain closed until June 1, the report said.

Geoff Cartano, a scientist from the U.S. Geological Survey in Raleigh was standing up to his hips with a crew mate at Chicod Creek in Simpson at 10 a.m. Thursday, taking measurements and evaluating the situation beneath flooded Mobley’s Bridge.

“The water is about a foot over the bridge now and continuing to rise slowly, at about two-tenths of an inch per hour, but the rate of rise is beginning to slow now,” Cartano said.

The Chicod Creek flood level is 14 feet, and the level was at 13.9 feet at the time, according to Merrell at the weather service.

In Greenville, a tree fell on home on Tyson Street bout 2:30 a.m., said Tonya Furtado of Pitt County Red Cross. Shikim Alston was inside with his mother when the tree fell and broke through a bedroom ceiling.

“I was scared,” Alston, said.

The Red Cross made arrangements to put Alston and his mother into a hotel through the Memorial Day weekend, Furtado said. Anyone interested in donating support to the Alstons can call Robin Gray of ReStart Health Services at 355-4725.
Lightning and downed power lines caused outages for a total of 1,200 GUC electric customers through the night, communications manager Sue Hatch said.

The heaviest damage began around 8:30 p.m. in the Brook Green subdivision behind First Presbyterian Church, she said. Fifty customers there lost power for 30 minutes when a downed line caused a transformer fire.

At 10:30 p.m., a tree fell on 14th Street causing outages for the same 50 customers and 1,000 more. Half of those were restored by 12:30 a.m., and the remaining outages were restored by 1:30 a.m., Hatch said.

Additional scattered outages throughout the county affected approximately 200 customers, caused by lightning and tree problems.

Four GUC crews totaling 12 workers were on the job throughout the night.

Pitt County farms sustained damage from the rains and accompanying hail, according to County Cooperative Extension agent Adam Lassiter.

“The first leaves on many of the cotton plants were torn away by the hail and many of the first cotton sprouts were bent and snapped off at the growing points. When that happens, the plant cannot regenerate itself and is a total loss,” Lassiter said.

Soybean plants, sowed later than cotton also are in harm’s way from the rain, the agent said.

“The seeds can become impacted into the soil by the driving and become unable to sprout, or they can just be washed away with the soil by the rain,” Lassiter said.

He estimated that between 5-7 percent of the county cotton crop could have been lost to the storm, and possibly an equal amount of the soybean crop.

Corn plants should not suffer adverse consequences from the storm, Lassiter said, because their leaves are thicker, stronger and more closely grouped around the plant stalk.

The Weather Service forecast called for isolated thunderstorms Thursday night. Skies should be partly cloudy through the weekend and again on Monday, with temperatures in the high 80s for Monday’s Memorial Day observances.

Bobby Burns contributed to this report. Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9571.
Coastal N.C. counties fighting sea-level rise prediction

By Bruce Henderson

State lawmakers are considering a measure that would limit how North Carolina prepares for sea-level rise, which many scientists consider one of the surest results of climate change.

Federal authorities say the North Carolina coast is vulnerable because of its low, flat land and thin fringe of barrier islands. A state-appointed science panel has reported that a 1-meter rise is likely by 2100.

The calculation, prepared for the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, was intended to help the state plan for rising water that could threaten 2,000 square miles. Critics say it could thwart economic development on just as large a scale.

A coastal economic development group called NC-20 attacked the report, insisting the scientific research it cited is flawed. The science panel last month confirmed its findings, recommending that they be reassessed every five years.

But NC-20, named for the 20 coastal counties, appears to be winning its campaign to undermine them.

The Coastal Resources Commission agreed to delete references to planning benchmarks – such as the 1-meter prediction – and new development standards for areas likely to be inundated.

The N.C. Division of Emergency Management, which is using a $5 million federal grant to analyze the impact of rising water, lowered its worst-case scenario from 1 meter to 15 inches by 2100.

Several local governments on the coast have passed resolutions against sea-level rise policies.

When the General Assembly convened this month, Republican legislators went further.

They circulated a bill that authorizes only the coastal commission to calculate how fast the sea is rising. It said the calculations must be based only on historic trends, leaving out the accelerated rise that climate scientists widely expect this century if warming increases and glaciers melt.
The bill, a substitute for an unrelated measure the N.C. House passed last year, has not been introduced. State legislative officials say they can’t predict how it might be changed or when or if it will emerge.

Longtime East Carolina University geologist Stan Riggs, a science panel member who studies the evolution of the coast, said the 1-meter estimate is squarely within the mainstream of research.

“We’re throwing this science out completely, and what’s proposed is just crazy for a state that used to be a leader in marine science,” he said of the proposed legislation. “You can’t legislate the ocean, and you can’t legislate storms.”

NC-20 Chairman Tom Thompson, economic development director in Beaufort County, said his members – many of them county managers and other economic development officials – are convinced that climate changes and sea-level rises are part of natural cycles. Climate scientists who say otherwise, he believes, are wrong.

The group’s critiques quote scientists who believe the rate of sea-level rise is actually slowing. NC-20 says the state should rely on historical trends until acceleration is detected. The computer models that predict a quickening rate could be inaccurate, it says.

“If you’re wrong and you start planning today at 39 inches, you could lose millions of dollars in development and 2,000 square miles would be condemned as a flood zone,” Thompson said. “Is it really a risk to wait five years and see?”

**Planners concerned**

State officials say the land below the 1-meter elevation would not be zoned as a flood zone and off-limits to development. Planners say it’s crucial to allow for rising water when designing bridges, roads, and sewer lines that will be in use for decades.

“We’re concerned about it,” said Philip Prete, an environmental planner in Wilmington, which will soon analyze the potential effects of rising water on infrastructure. “For the state to tie our hands and not let us use the information that the state science panel has come up with makes it overly restrictive.”

Other states, he said, are “certainly embracing planning.”

Maine is preparing for a rise of up to 2 meters by 2100, Delaware 1.5 meters, Louisiana 1 meter and California 1.4 meters. Southeastern Florida projects up to a 2-foot rise by 2060.

NC-20 says the state should plan for 8 inches of rise by 2100, based on the historical trend in Wilmington.
The science panel based its projections on records at the northern coast town of Duck, where the rate is twice as fast, and factored in the accelerated rise expected to come later. Duck was chosen, the panel said, because of the quality of its record and site on the open ocean.

The panel cites seven studies that project global sea level will rise as much as 1 meter, or more, by 2100. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimated in 2007 a rise of no more than 23 inches, but did not factor in the melting land ice that many scientists now expect.

NC-20’s science adviser, Morehead City physicist John Droz, says he consulted with 30 sea-level experts, most of them not named in his latest critique of the panel’s work. He says the 13-member panel failed to do a balanced review of scientific literature, didn’t use the best available science and made unsupported assumptions.

“I’m not saying these people are liars,” Thompson said. “I’m saying they have a passion for sea-level rise and they can’t give it up.”

John Dorman of the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, which is preparing a study of sea-level impact, said an “intense push” by the group and state legislators led to key alterations.

Instead of assuming a 1-meter, worst-case rise, he said, the study will report the impact of seas that rise only 3.9, 7.8, 11.7 and 15.6 inches by 2100. The 1-meter analysis will be available to local governments that request it.

“It’s not the product we had put the grant out for,” Dorman said, referring to the $5 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that’s paying for the study. Coastal communities will still find the work useful, he predicts.

**Finding common ground**

The backlash on the coast centers on the question of whether sea-level rise will accelerate, said Bob Emory, chairman of the Coastal Resources Commission.

Emory, who lives in New Bern, said the commission deleted wording from its proposed sea-level rise policy that hinted at new regulations in order to find common ground. “Any remaining unnecessarily inflammatory language that’s still in there, we want to get out,” he said.

New information will be incorporated as it comes out, he said.

“There are people who disagree on the science. There are people who worry about what impact even talking about sea-level rise will have on development,” Emory said. “It’s my objective to have a policy that makes so much sense that people would have trouble picking at it.”
In written comments, the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the legislation that circulated earlier this month appeared consistent with the coastal commission’s policy changes.

But the department warned of the “unintended impacts” of not allowing agencies other than the coastal commission to develop sea-level rise policies. The restriction could undermine the Division of Emergency Management’s study, it said, and the ability of transportation and emergency-management planners to address rising waters.

The N.C. Coastal Federation, the region’s largest environmental group, said the bill could hurt local governments in winning federal planning grants. Insurance rates could go up, it says.

Relying solely on historical trends, the group said, is like “being told to make investment decisions strictly on past performance, and not being able to consider market trends and research.”

• Disagreement over study

A state-appointed science advisory panel reported in 2010 that sea level along the North Carolina coast is likely to rise 1 meter by 2100. An economic development group, however, argues that the science is flawed. An 8-inch rise is more likely, it says.

• Sea-level rise past and future

According to tide gauges, sea level rose an average of 1.7mm a year during the 20th century, NASA says. Satellites, which are considered more accurate, show a rate of 3.17mm a year since 1993. The International Panel on Climate Change in 2007 projected a rise of 18 to 59 centimeters by 2099, depending on how temperatures change.
Every year, *The St. Augustine Record* applauds all the graduates of area high schools, both public and private, for their achievements.

For the next several days, The Record will highlight one graduating senior from each school with a brief profile. These students are not necessarily the top grade earners in their class, but have been chosen by the guidance counselors at their respective schools to represent the spirit of what education is all about.

Some have overcome difficult challenges along the way to graduation; others may have some unique involvement, drive or focus. They’ve all had a different path.

**Joseph Paul**

**Ponte Vedra High School**

Joseph Paul of Ponte Vedra Beach says he’s so goal-oriented, it’s to the point of being “kind of crazy.”

“When I get set on trying to achieve something, I focus pretty hard on it,” the 18-year-old Ponte Vedra High School graduate said. “I don’t let anything get in my way.”
Paul is among 20 incoming freshmen recently selected for the prestigious EC Scholars program at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C.

The four-year merit scholarship recognizes outstanding academic performance, commitment to community engagement and strong leadership skills. Recipients receive a scholarship for four years along with a stipend for study abroad, for a total value of approximately $45,000.

Candidates for the EC Scholars program are required to have an SAT score that exceeds 1300 and a class ranking in the top 5 percent of their high school class. While at ECU, EC Scholars must maintain a 3.5 GPA in rigorous coursework, participate in the university’s Honors College and perform 24 hours of community service each semester. All EC Scholars complete a study abroad experience and a senior honors project.

Paul will enter ECU following two years of summer research at the Mayo Clinic, where he researched neurodegeneration and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis — better known as ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s disease.

He is a member of the National Honor Society, National Hispanic Honor Society and National Science Honor Society, and competed with his school’s swim team, where he earned an MVP award.

Questions and Answers

1. **What will you remember most about your high school years?**

   That would have to be working with my mentor, Dr. Kathryn Kehoe, at The Biotechnology Academy. It’s been an enriching experience that has provided me with a lot of inspiration and knowledge, things I want to continue into my professional career. I also have great memories of my experiences swimming, both for the Ponte Vedra High School team as well as with the Bowles Swim Club. I’d love to continue to swim competitively in college, but there won’t be time with my focus on academics.

2. **What were your favorite subjects in high school?**

   Definitely biology and chemistry.

3. **What’s the first thing you’re going to do, now that you’re done with high school?**

   Well, I’m working two jobs over the summer to save up money for when I go away to college. But I’ll probably take some time to enjoy myself, too. I’m looking forward to life without high school, and I’m going to embrace my time with family and friends before I leave in the fall.
4. So, what’s next?
I’m going to East Carolina University, where I’m going to major in biochemistry. My father is a doctor (at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville), and I might go that route, but I’m also extremely interested in medical research. I’m particularly drawn to what’s called translational research, where you see the results of laboratory research immediately by applying it to patients to provide meaningful and beneficial results.

5. How do you feel about the opportunities for today’s graduates?
I feel pretty good about them, for the most part. The outlook is good in the field I’ve chosen, medical research. I’d like to see more money and focus going to the sciences in general, though.

6. When you’re not working or doing schoolwork, what’s your favorite pastime?
Well, I live on the beach, so that’s an easy answer for me. I definitely spend a lot of time there. I’d like to take up golf, and I want to sail, too.

7. What’s your favorite app?
I’m probably torn between Twitter and Angry Birds. Angry Birds is a lot of fun, and it’s extremely popular right now.

8. If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?
That’s a good question. I guess I’d like to change the way people are raised. I’d like to see future generations being taught to be more open, more accepting of others who are different, whether that’s culturally, racially or philosophically. I think that’s happening in that my generation is probably more tolerant than my parents’ generation was, and so on.
UNC-CH trustees question how academic fraud happened

By Jane Stancill The News and Observer

CHAPEL HILL—UNC-Chapel Hill trustees, briefed Thursday on academic fraud uncovered in the African and Afro-American Studies department, asked pointed questions about accountability in the university’s academic operations. And they heard about new procedures and steps aimed at preventing future irregularities.

Board of Trustees Chairman Wade Hargrove described the findings in UNC-CH’s recent internal investigation as “major indiscretions that raise serious questions of unprofessional and unethical conduct.”

Hargrove said he read the report with a mixture of “disappointment and dismay and outrage.”

“Academic freedom is not to be confused with academic irresponsibility or academic fraud,” Hargrove said. “We all know the difference.”

New rules will now govern independent study courses, and a review of teaching assignments will be conducted annually.

Chancellor Holden Thorp called the fraud a painful chapter.

“I know that you’re all as deeply troubled as I am, as disturbed as I am and as angry as I am that these things could have happened,” he told trustees. “They are completely at odds with what we stand for as an institution.”

The internal review, released this month, revealed 54 classes within the department in which there was little or no indication of instruction. The review also found cases of unauthorized grade changes and forged faculty signatures.

Problems were mostly linked to two employees, the report said. Julius Nyang’oro, a professor and former department chairman, is retiring effective July 1. Another staff member retired in 2009 and declined to cooperate with the UNC-CH probe.

The university’s review covered 2007-2011 and showed that Nyang’oro was the instructor of record for 45 of the 54 suspect classes.

The State Bureau of Investigation is probing the situation to determine what, if any, criminal violations occurred.

Undetected for years
On Thursday, trustee Peter Grauer asked how courses with little or no supervision from professors could have gone unnoticed for years.

“That’s a good question, and I understand the concern,” said Karen Gil, dean of the College of Art and Sciences. “There are checks and balances all over the system, but in this case they did not detect the problems. There were no student complaints about these courses.”

Gil said the dean’s office relies on department chairs to set up course schedules and assign faculty. The College of Arts and Sciences has 45 academic departments with 10,000 course sections.

“It doesn’t make it acceptable that this happened, but it just shows what a complex undertaking it is – and in an environment where we’re always being pressed to spend less on administration,” said Thorp, who himself was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for a year, from July 1, 2007, until he became chancellor in 2008.

A review of teaching assignments in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 turned up no problems in other departments, Gil said. Such a review will now take place each year, she added.

The academic fraud investigation started last summer after The News & Observer obtained a partial academic transcript of former football player Marvin Austin that showed he had taken an upper level African studies class in summer 2007 and received a B-plus. He took the class, taught by Nyang’oro, before he took four introductory classes that included remedial writing in his first full semester.

**Hard to piece together**

The African and Afro-American Studies review took nine months and was difficult to piece together, said William Andrews, a senior associate dean who was one of the investigators. Lax oversight in the department was part of the problem in reconstructing what happened, according to the report.

“It’s sort of like putting together a 16,000-piece puzzle, but you don’t know what the picture is,” Andrews said.

When asked by one trustee why the review covered only four years, Andrews said it was clear that many of the problems ended with the 2009 retirement of the department’s longtime administrator, Debbie Crowder. Four years of data revealed issues linked only to Nyang’oro and Crowder, Andrews said, and there was no evidence to indicate others would have been involved even if the probe had covered a longer period.
Bobbi Owen, senior associate dean for undergraduate education, said it is hard to know why students ended up in any particular course. The review showed that athletes and non-athletes were enrolled in the aberrant courses, though 39 percent of those in the 54 suspect classes were football and basketball players.

“Word of mouth is potent,” she said. “Students drift to places where they understand they will be accommodated.”

Under the new independent study rules, faculty members will be limited to overseeing only two independent study students at a time, and each course must involve an individual contract to spell out assignments, expectations and contact time with faculty. In addition, lectures and seminars should not be converted into independent study courses, as had occurred in the African and Afro-American Studies department.

A department chair or dean has to sign off on an independent study course. In addition, all grade change forms are being reviewed in the associate dean’s office.

“We want all of our students to succeed,” Gil said. “We want them all to have access to the best educational opportunities that will help them meet their academic goals. I believe that the new policies and practices that have been put in place will make us stronger moving forward.”

Thorp said he hopes the investigation will send a strong message that the university takes its academic reputation seriously.

“I’m chancellor at this university, but I’ve been a student and a faculty member, and I’m still a faculty member,” he said. “These findings are a kick in the gut to those of us who take great pride in what we do here.”

Staff writer Dan Kane contributed to this report.

**New guidelines**

Changes to independent study courses at UNC-Chapel Hill’s College of Arts and Sciences:

- They now require learning contracts that spell out assignments, grading information and meetings with professor. Any independent study course has to be approved by a department chair or dean.
- Faculty members are limited to two independent study students per semester or summer session.
- Courses meant to be seminars or in lecture format should not be converted to independent study.
- Courses should be numbered according to a standard system.
UNC-Chapel Hill to launch planning process, fundraising drive

By Jane Stancill The News and Observer

CHAPEL HILL— UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp Thursday announced a yearlong planning process to create a “21st century vision” of the university and a fund drive that does not yet have a dollar-figure attached to it.

Thorp said it’s important to refocus the university at a time when higher education, especially public higher education, faces growing revenue stresses.

“This is a pressing moment for higher education,” he said. “People are asking questions about how it’s paid for, whether we’re doing the right things for students, whether our research is effective and efficient as it can be and is focused on the pressing needs of the country.”

Several groups on campus will take a year to study how to balance cost and quality while maintaining the university’s commitment to teaching, research and service.

Among the areas of focus:

• Undergraduate education.
• College access and completion.
• Using research to solve the world’s problems.

Matt Kupec, vice chancellor for university advancement, said it was time to consider the next multiyear fundraising campaign. The last large drive ended in 2007 and brought in $2.38 billion.

He said as the economy improves, the university can position itself well.

“I think the psyche of donors is getting better,” he said. “They’re feeling comfortable.”

Thorp said the next campaign is likely to zero in on a new set of priorities.

“Are we going to have to think differently about how we raise money for scholarships because of the pressure on tuition and the pressure on student debt?” he asked. “Are we going to have to think differently about how we raise money for research so that we can bring teams of researchers together in more effective ways? Are we going to have to raise money differently because we’re going to be teaching differently?”

These are the issues to be hammered out in the months ahead, he said. The plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees next May.
WASHINGTON The Senate rejected dueling Democratic and Republican plans on Thursday for averting a July 1 doubling of interest rates on federal college loans for 7.4 million students, pushing back efforts to resolve the election-season showdown until next month.

In mostly party-line roll calls, senators voted 62-34 against the GOP package and 51-43 for the Democratic version, with each falling short of the 60 votes needed for approval. Though both defeats were preordained, the twin votes gave lawmakers from each party a chance to show they favor easing students' financial burdens - and potential grist for campaign ads accusing the other side of opposing the effort.

The Senate planned to leave town later Thursday for a Memorial Day recess running through next week. Neither party wants to be accused of letting the interest rates grow at a time when voters are focused on coping in today's rough-edged economy, giving each side an incentive to eventually strike a compromise.

A 2007 law gradually reduced interest rates on subsidized Stafford loans for low- and middle-income undergraduates to 3.4 percent. To save money, it mandated that rates return to 6.8 percent for new loans as of July 1.

President Barack Obama has made preventing a rate increase a priority and has appeared at colleges and on television talk shows to promote it. Though some Republicans expressed early concerns that retaining the lower rate would fuel college tuition increases, likely GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney endorsed freezing the rate and most GOP lawmakers have done the same.

Ten conservative GOP senators opposed their own party's proposal, with some expressing concerns about budget costs and saying the loan market should set its own prices.

Both measures rejected Thursday would delay the interest rate increase for a year at a cost of $6 billion, but each side's bill was paid for in a way the other couldn't tolerate. Democrats proposed raising Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes on high-earning owners of some privately held companies and professional practices, while Republicans would abolish an Obama preventive health program.
That idea drew a White House veto threat when Republicans used it to pay for their House-passed bill in April.

"The Republican proposal is paid for by stripping Americans of lifesaving preventive health care," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, adding, "It would be a shame" to do that.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky argued that the Democratic plan showed they wanted "a scapegoat more than a solution" because they knew Republicans would oppose its tax provision.

He also tried goading Obama, saying, "If the president's got time to run around to late-night comedy shows and college campuses talking about this issue, then he can pick up the phone and work out a solution."

After the votes, the two sides each tried taking the offensive.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said in a written statement that GOP senators "still have not proven that they're serious about resolving this problem" and accused them of protecting a tax loophole for the rich at the expense of higher costs for students.

"It's time to get this done so hardworking students get a fair shot at an affordable education," Carney said.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said his chamber already had approved a reasonable bill extending low interest rates for students and said the dispute could be settled quickly if Democrats would bargain.

"If the president and Senate Democratic leaders prefer a different approach, then the onus is on them to offer a solution that can pass both chambers," he said in a written statement.

The Education Department expects 7.4 million undergraduates to borrow subsidized Stafford loans next year averaging $4,226. Doubled interest rates would add around $1,000 in costs, which for the typical loan taking 12 years to repay would mean less than $10 monthly in added expense.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York estimates that at least 37 million Americans owe $870 billion for outstanding student loans, a figure that is growing and that exceeds the money owed for credit cards or auto loans. Four in 10 people under age 40 owe money for a college loan, the bank says.
Reasons to worry

Thanks for the May 7 Point of View piece by Jeffrey M. Hirsch and Sherryl Kleinman (“UNC employees are right to worry”). There are several additional reasons to be worried about a separate UNC personnel system.

It would be an unnecessary growth of government. At a time when we are consolidating departments, the university system should not be allowed to grow its own. A separate system would also be an erosion of democracy. The State Personnel Commission is subject to the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), which permits public comment on rules. The UNC Board of Governors does not hold public hearings. The public will be shut out.

President Tom Ross wants the flexibility to pay staff from tuition or receipt-funded operations like housing. This would drive up costs for students and foster an unhealthy competition between faculty and staff. Ross sells flexibility as if it is an unmitigated good, whereas the current arrangement preserves a public good by forcing the legislature to fund services.

Finally, UNC-Chapel Hill is often ranked as a best buy, and the university system is perceived as one of the best in the country, if not the world. Shouldn’t we abide by the adage: If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it?

Steve Hutton
Pittsboro
Friday released from UNC Hospitals

CHAPEL HILL– William Friday, retired UNC president, was released from the hospital Thursday.

Friday, 91, was hospitalized for more than a week and had been in critical condition for several days last week. He improved after receiving a pacemaker.

A statement from Friday’s family on Thursday said calls and visits will be restricted “as he enters an extended period of rehabilitation toward a full recovery.”

Friday and his family expressed “profound thanks to all who have been so kind, patient and thoughtful during this time,” the statement said.

Friday was president of the UNC system from 1956 to 1986.
Womble named Superintendent

Brock Womble was recently named the Superintendent of Alexander County Schools. He begins July 1.

Womble has served as superintendent of Mitchell County Schools since 2006. During his tenure in Mitchell County, the system has seen growth in the graduation rate as well as many of the testing benchmarks. Mitchell County was the only school system in North Carolina to make Adequate Yearly Progress as a district for the 2010-2011 school year.

A Winston-Salem native, Womble received his undergraduate degree from Appalachian State University and his master’s degree and doctorate of education from East Carolina University.

He and his wife, Dawn, have two children, Bryce and Melinda.
Make Up Your Own Mind is a new student group at UNCG that recently made headlines by filing a lawsuit against the university over its refusal to grant our group recognition. As its president, I am glad to report that shortly after we filed our lawsuit, UNCG changed course and decided to grant our group recognition.

We received official word from UNCG that it granted us recognition on April 4. Over the following weeks, our attorneys with the Alliance Defense Fund worked out a settlement with the university, and we voluntarily dismissed our lawsuit on May 21.

MUYOM is a Christian student group that educates on healthy sexuality and offers compassionate support and assistance to any women or men experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. Some of our free programs and services are women’s health workshops, “Relationship Reality,” abortion recovery and information about community resources.

MUYOM’s lawsuit was based on our First Amendment freedom to ensure that our voting members and leaders agree with our Christian-based beliefs regarding the value of life and sexual purity. This is a freedom shared by all student organizations: the Democrat club isn’t forced to include Republicans; the Association of Nursing Students can reject students not majoring in nursing; and the animal rights group can say “no thanks” to NRA enthusiasts.

Groups would quickly lose control over their identities and messages if they could not select voting members and leaders who shared their beliefs. However, we are excited to have students of all different beliefs and backgrounds attend our campus activities.

UNCG policies actually affirm this freedom. One of them says, “Student groups that select their members on the basis of commitment to a set of beliefs (e.g., religious or political beliefs) may limit membership and participation in the group to students who, upon individual inquiry, affirm that they support the group’s goals and agree with its beliefs.”

Based on our clear desire to maintain our identity and message by selecting voting members and leaders based on their commitment to our beliefs, we sought
recognition under this policy, only to be denied. All we ever wanted was equal treatment, and now we are pleased that we have received it.

In fighting our battle for official university recognition, we have learned of a major misperception about MUYOM through news articles and word-of-mouth: that we bar non-Christians from our meetings, programs and events. Nothing could be further from the truth. As I explained above, all of our activities are open to all students on campus. After all, anything else would be counterproductive to our goals of reaching and helping as many as possible.

But like other groups, we should have the freedom to choose those who control and convey our identity and message — our voting members and officers. So come to our meetings. Attend our events. Listen to our message. Educate yourself on the facts. Empower yourself with knowledge. And then make up your own mind about the truth of who we are and what we stand for.

Charlotte native Bryn Carmichael graduated May 4 from UNCG with a degree in human development and family studies and is president of Make Up Your Own Mind.
Medical Marijuana 101: You Can't Smoke That On Campus

By Susan Sharon

Medical marijuana is legal in 16 states, and that number is expected to grow. But these state laws put colleges in a bind. That's because under federal law, marijuana is still illegal. So colleges that let students make use of their pot prescription on campus risk losing their federal funding.

For 25-year-old University of Maine junior Robyn Smith, this situation has led to a new kind of "reefer madness": Even though he has his doctor's authorization to use medical marijuana, when he self-medicates, Smith either goes home or retreats to his SUV, which he parks across the street from the university so that he doesn't violate school policies on smoking and drug use on campus.

Smith is an Army veteran who spent 15 months in Afghanistan; he has been diagnosed with anxiety and a joint disorder. He also suffers from severe and frequent migraines. He has been prescribed a half-dozen painkillers and other drugs to ease his symptoms — and he's free to bring those on campus. But Smith says he doesn't like the way they make him feel. He also worries about becoming dependent on them. Instead, he prefers medical marijuana.

"I was told to use a very small dose," he says. "So I took two or three hits, and I have to say that it made me feel quite a bit better than the painkillers or the migraine medication or the muscle relaxers."

University administrators say they sympathize, but they can't afford to violate the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act and the Drug Free Workplace Act by allowing Smith or other student patients to use pot.

"It's not a question of right or wrong, ethical or not ethical, any of that," says Stephen Nelson, who oversees student misconduct at the University of Southern Maine. "Right now, we just can't run the risk of losing federal dollars."

He says the university receives more than $60 million worth of Title 4 financial aid. Couple that with research funding, and Nelson says hundreds of millions of dollars could be withheld. Allen St. Pierre, executive director of the group NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, calls that scenario "far-fetched."
"There's no historical precedent," he says, adding, "If a student patient can have really dangerous and addictive drugs like Percocet, Vicodin and morphine, then there's no moral or pharmacological reason why they can't have a mildly psychotropic vegetable matter."

Jill Creighton of the University of Colorado, Denver, says colleges don't have much choice. Creighton has been presenting on the topic of medical marijuana to college administrators around the country for the past several years.

"Some student codes of conduct are much more lax about marijuana use in general, but the assumption is if we were to allow medical marijuana on our campuses, we would then be jeopardizing our Title 4 funding," she says.

Requests for comment from the U.S. Department of Education were not returned. In a written statement, Alison Price, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Justice, said, "The Department of Justice is focusing its limited resources on significant drug traffickers, not seriously ill individuals who are in compliance with applicable state medical marijuana statues."

Robyn Smith says he won't wait for his university to relax its policy. He plans to stop taking classes on campus and stick with online courses next year.