THE DAILY CLIPS

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Akinyemi Blackshear, 16-year-old junior at Durham School of the Arts, dances during the Durham Public Schools' "Destination Dance 2012." One hundred elementary, middle and high school students selected by their teachers took free classes in the event in April, hosted by the N.C. Central University Department of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

**N.C. needs to lead in arts education**

By Christopher Gergen and Stephen Martin

When it comes to arts education, North Carolina has a proud history of leading the pack.

A half-century ago, the administration of Gov. Terry Sanford was preparing to launch the N.C. School of the Arts, which opened in Winston-Salem in 1963 as the nation’s first public arts conservatory. In the decades since, it has consistently attracted and developed first-class artistic talent.

Today, there’s growing enthusiasm and an urgent need to build on that heritage – and more fully unleash the creative potential of a new generation of students.

In April, a statewide Arts Education Commission, appointed last year by the General Assembly, issued a report that highlights the impact of the arts on creativity and innovation, both key drivers for economic growth and thriving communities.
Across the state, the commission found, some encouraging models for arts education do exist. In Chatham County schools, for example, all elementary school students take arts classes. In Cumberland County, about two-thirds of high school students select arts courses. Pitt County schools partner closely with East Carolina University to deliver arts training to students.

But, overall, arts education is simply not a priority in this state. On average, schools employ just one arts educator for every 275 students, according to the commission’s report. And just five of the state’s 100 county school systems require students to take art classes. In a world in which innovation is often driven directly by creativity – Apple being a prominent example – we’re selling ourselves short.

The biggest obstacles to increasing involvement in arts education: funding, facilities – such as studios and performance areas – and “perceptions that arts education should not be a priority,” the commission report said. In Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools, for instance, many high school students avoid arts classes to focus on core requirements and other classes that provide a greater boost to their grade point average.

State legislators have reacted to the report with a flurry of bills that would enhance arts education. But several bills introduced during this summer’s short session of the General Assembly, including proposals to require an arts credit for high school graduation, stalled. Another bill, which requires elementary school teachers to have the necessary training to integrate the arts into the teaching of writing, reading and math, awaits Gov. Perdue’s signature.

Several major studies over the past two decades have shown that studying the arts helps kids learn – and nurtures the critical thinking skills they’ll need later on to help tackle our state’s biggest challenges.

According to Americans for the Arts, young people who devote significant time to the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement. They are three times more likely to win an award for school attendance.

Young artists perform community service more than four times as often as peers. Steady exposure to the arts has also been shown to have measurable impact on at-risk youth, deterring behavior problems and raising academic performance.
And then there’s the power of the arts to unlock creativity in the business and social sectors. Out in the mountains of Western North Carolina, entrepreneur Rob Pulleyen doesn’t need any statistics to convince him of that.

“The arts teach kids to create their own problems and then solve them,” says Pulleyen, a board member of the N.C. Arts Council. “Presented with a blank piece of paper, what will you do?”

Presented with a murky future after college, Pulleyen first tried his hand at documentary filmmaking. It didn’t work out, so he started making tapestries instead. A small newsletter he launched about creating contemporary work in fiber grew into FiberArts magazine. He ran it for 30 years, also founding and leading Asheville-based Lark Books, which specializes in craft and art books. About 10 years ago, he sold his stake in both ventures to Barnes & Noble. His latest project: rehabbing an abandoned high school in Marshall into a suite of artist studios.

Pulleyen credits the mindset of experimentation and persistence he developed as an artist for much of his business success. “The arts inform a sense of entrepreneurial skill,” Pulleyen says. “They show I can make something out of nothing if I’m passionate enough. I don’t have to fit into someone else’s structure.”

According to the national Arts Education Partnership, 26 states require at least one arts credit for high school graduation. Almost none of them are in the Southeast. So North Carolina has a chance to lead in our region by passing a bill that mandates a minimum of arts instruction. It’s not exactly the grand vision that inspired the N.C. School of the Arts, but it’s an important first step toward giving the arts their due – and better preparing our state for the future.

Christopher Gergen is CEO of Forward Ventures, a fellow with Fuqua’s Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at Duke University, and author of “Life Entrepreneurs: Ordinary People Creating Extraordinary Lives.” Stephen Martin, a director at the nonprofit Center for Creative Leadership, is author of “The Messy Quest for Meaning” and blogs at messyquest.com. They can be reached at authors@bullcityforward.org and followed on Twitter through @cgergen.
Sunday, July 8, 2012

Dr. Robert Quinn, assistant professor of art at ECU, touches up a bubble on the mural. Painting on a brick wall can be tricky. "You have to poke and prod at it," he said. (Cliff Hollis/ECU News Services)

**ECU Notes: Hope through art**

Paintbrushes in hand, almost every child at Building Hope Community Life Center in Greenville created his or her own bubble for a mural on an outside brick wall. The bubbles float down from a soda can, a “thank you” to Pepsi for a $10,000 Refresh grant awarded to the center last fall. The center is a faith-based, nonprofit organization on Ninth Street designed to help at-risk students from local schools stay on track academically, while giving them social and spiritual support and infrastructure for success.

The mural’s lead designer, Jarmarcus Patterson, 18, graduated in June from J.H. Rose High School and hopes to incorporate his artistic talents in a career one day. Patterson and other children from the center worked alongside East Carolina University art student Cory St. Clair and art professor Robert Quinn on the mural.

ECU became involved through the university’s Student Engagement and Outreach Scholars Academy. In collaboration with Rob Lee, Building Hope’s executive director, Quinn developed 10 weeks of after-school art lessons with the ultimate goal of involving K-12 students in a large-scale mural painting project on the wall of an adjacent building.
ECU’s engagement and outreach program is believed to be the first of its kind and a national model. Graduate students, undergraduate East Carolina Scholars and faculty mentors across disciplines at ECU team up to work with community partners on a semester-long research project, said Beth Velde, academy coordinator and director of public service and community relations at ECU.

Lee wanted to find out if having students involved in the weekly art activities influenced traits that help overcome change or hardships, and overall well-being. ECU undergraduate student Hannah Potter of Marshville and graduate student Samantha Fuerderer of Greenville developed surveys and interviewed students. Results still are being analyzed, Quinn said.

Through the spring semester, the center’s after-school students learned how to sketch, sculpt and design in the weekly art lessons.

For the mural, each child was asked to create a bubble or circle on the wall.

“The bubbles could be whatever they wanted,” Quinn said. “Some people put their name on it. Some put a football number on it. Some put Bible verses or encouraging sayings. Each applied their own style to it.”

Lead elementary school teacher Jayme Wall said the art project supplemented the traditional reading and math work that students do at the center after school.

“I think them getting their own bubble, their own space, that’s lasting,” said Wall, an ECU alumna. “I think they understand that they’re going to have a lasting impact on Building Hope.”

Atlas Kelly, an ECU alumnus and social worker at Building Hope, said the middle and high-school aged boys he mentors really enjoyed the project. “Their idea of what art is has changed in doing this,” he said. “The mural gives them a sense of ownership and pride.”

Patterson also incorporated the logos of two groups at the center, 300 Men of Standard, and Women of Worth. The groups focus on developing and encouraging positive character traits among young men and women. The center offers several programs including life skills for parents, a summer Student Success Academy for rising sixth-graders, and ReCycle, an innovative on-site repair shop for used bikes and computers.

In another collaborative project between Building Hope and ECU, Patterson had the opportunity to turn parts of bicycles into a public art project on
display in downtown Spartanburg, S.C. Six different bicycle frames were used in the sculpture, which has cranks that turn and horns that honk.

“I like working with my hands,” Patterson said. “It keeps me busy. The more busy I am, the less trouble I get in to.”

Lee, the center’s director, said the mural kept the children engaged.

“The impact on our kids, they came up with the whole idea, but we couldn’t have done it without Dr. Quinn and Cory, their expertise and energy. They took it to heart and took ownership of it,” Lee said. “From our little kids to our high schoolers, a thing like this has a tremendous sense of accomplishment.”

Perched on a ladder, St. Clair said the mural is the first public art project he has done. He has gotten advice from his mom, an art teacher who has painted murals. “It’s an awesome experience for me,” he said.

**Trees are planned for sustainable parking lot**

New trees will be planted in the 14th Street parking lot renovation area across from Belk Residence Hall as part of a sustainable parking lot design. The new canopy trees will replace several existing trees that died this winter.

The parking lot renovation is the first construction project initiated since ECU adopted its new master plan designating sustainability as a core value for the institution.

The existing trees were a key element incorporated into the original sustainable parking lot design. However, experts identified the trees as dead when they failed to produce new leaves this spring. Since the old trees cannot be saved, new trees will be planted to replace them.

The existing green areas will not be used for additional parking.

The campus personnel involved in the design of this parking lot also chose to maintain and protect the trees at the former Stratford Arms Apartment site.

For additional information, visit http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/parkingandtransportation/bnjuly2012.cfm.
Asheville-area schools, students, teachers earn awards, honors

Evans, Traister earn ECU scholarships

GREENVILLE – Two Western North Carolina students have been accepted into the Honors College at East Carolina University, an experience coupled with a renewable scholarship covering the cost of in-state tuition for up to four years.

The recipients are Zachary Evans, of Arden and Roberson High, and Erin Traister, of Fletcher and North Henderson High School.

Founded in 2010, the Honors College admits fewer than three percent of incoming ECU students. For more information, visit www.ecu.edu/honors/.
At UNC, no-show classes were mostly for athletes

By Dan Kane - dkane@newsobserver.com

Students looking to enroll in a summer class at UNC-Chapel Hill taught by Julius Nyang’oro were likely to hit a roadblock as soon as they went online.

Of the 38 courses the university says he was responsible for over five summers, 26 of them listed a maximum capacity for just one student. For many students, that would be a sign to go look for another course.

But university records show more than one student enrolled in most of these courses. And often, a substantial share of those students were athletes.

Many of these courses and others are now under investigation by the university and the State Bureau of Investigation, as university officials say there’s little evidence Nyang’oro or anyone else actually taught them. Registration records show many of the courses had no classroom or class time.

University officials say the students were given an assignment, which they were to turn in at the end of the course.

There’s another wrinkle to all this. Nyang’oro, the former chairman of the African and Afro-American Studies department where all these courses were listed, did not get paid for 29 of these suspect summer classes. Typically, professors are paid per class because the work is considered beyond their normal nine-month work year.

Willis Brooks and Jay Smith, two UNC-CH history professors who are concerned about the case’s impact on the university’s academic integrity, said the enrollment and pay data suggest Nyang’oro had set up a system for athletes to get into classes they could pass.

“The only logic I can conjure is (Nyang’oro) was protecting seats,” said Brooks, a professor emeritus who served on the faculty athletic committee in the early 1990s. “And since the preponderance of people who took the seats are athletes, there is circumstantial evidence,” he said.

University officials, however, say the one-student maximum was not uncommon at the time and is not direct evidence of a scheme to protect seats in the no-show classes for athletes. That’s because a few of the classes – all
with less than 10 students – did not have an athlete in them, while others with much larger class sizes also had sizeable numbers of athletes.

All told, 54 courses are considered suspect; all but nine had Nyang’oro as instructor or signer of the grade rolls.

“It’s important to note that we’ve already acknowledged that there were problems in how these classes were conducted,” said Nancy Davis, a university spokeswoman. “At the same time, maximum capacity is not an indicator of anything unusual in and of itself, and it would be hard to make a case that the max seats made any difference in the enrollment patterns with these 54 classes.”

As far back as 1999, some of the same class offerings were listed with a maximum of one student, a News & Observer review of archived Internet pages shows. The university said it would be difficult at this point to determine how many of the students in those classes were athletes.

Nyang’oro could not be reached. He stepped down as department chairman at the beginning of the 2011-12 academic year, just as university officials acknowledged “irregularities” in the department’s courses. The university allowed him to retire effective July 1.

Athletes in the majority

Current and former UNC-CH officials say they can’t recall a worse case of academic fraud at the university, considered one of the nation’s top public schools. The investigation started with a suspicious transcript belonging to a former UNC football player. Top leaders at UNC-CH and the UNC system, however, say athletics weren’t at the heart of the academic fraud, because nonathletes were in the suspect classes, too.

But athletes and former athletes made up a majority of those enrolled in the suspect classes. The university says that athletes and former athletes made up 64 percent of the enrollments.

The records show that among students who took suspect classes, athletes took more classes than nonathletes. Athletes averaged nearly two classes per student, while nonathletes averaged slightly more than one. UNC-CH officials have released little information beyond the enrollment numbers to back up their assertions that athletes didn’t receive special treatment. The university has released no information about its interviews with students regarding how they got into the classes; it also has revealed little from its interview with Nyang’oro.
At the recent UNC Board of Governors meeting, the N&O attempted to ask Chancellor Holden Thorp and others about what Nyangʼoro said in his interview.

Davis interjected.

“You need to talk to (Nyangʼoro) about that,” she said. “That’s not for us to answer.”

**Another suspect class**

The university’s internal review provides one detail: Nyangʼoro denied teaching a summer Swahili class. That was the first clue something was amiss.

He said a former department manager may have helped set up that class and others. Other professors linked to the Swahili class and eight others have disowned them, and the investigation has found their signatures were forged on course paperwork.

University officials say the former manager, Deborah Crowder, and Nyangʼoro are the only two people in the department suspected of improper behavior. The university says that Crowder had responsibility for scheduling classes.

Records released last month showed that one class – AFAM 280 – was launched two days before the start of a summer 2011 semester and immediately filled with 18 football players and a former player. Academic advisers to the football players knew the class did not meet and only involved a term paper, but still placed the athletes in the classes.

The advisers told university officials they were not aware something was wrong with the class. It did not have a one-seat maximum; by then, the university had changed to a more refined enrollment system that provided professors other options to allow control over who gets into classes.

The AFAM 280 class took place a year into an NCAA investigation into impermissible financial gifts and tutoring help to football players that so far appears unrelated to the academic fraud case.

At least one other suspect class had a similar profile, according to archived registration records. It had eight football players and a basketball player among 13 students.

The data show that 44 of the suspect classes listed the maximum seating at one student. Other university records show that 31 of these one-seat-
maximum classes had majorities of athletes. Some of the information was first spotted by an N.C. State fan who posted it on a Wolfpack chat board.

Davis and others said there are several legitimate reasons why department chairmen and other faculty would list a class as having only one seat available. They might, for example, be trying to protect seats for students who need the classes to complete their majors.

“That maximum seat of one was used across departments as a way of controlling enrollment,” Davis said.

But the enrollment data for other African, Afro-American and Swahili classes show few examples of one-seat classes beyond the ones listed by the university as suspect.

**Going further back**

Some of the registration data comes from Archive.org, a website that copies web pages to preserve information before it disappears or is altered. The site had captured no web pages for registration data pertaining to 18 of the suspect classes, but university officials later provided it.

Older information the site captured suggests the suspect classes go back years beyond what university officials have documented. Registration data from 1999 through 2001 show 12 classes that have a one-seat maximum and no classroom or class time listed.

For example, Nyang’oro was listed as the professor for AFRI 066, Contemporary Africa, in the first summer semester of 2001. The class was not on the calendar as of April 4, but was on it seven weeks later as the semester got underway. It shows maximum seating for one student, though five enrolled, and lists no class time or classroom.

Many of the suspect classes were held during summer semesters. UNC-CH has held two five-week summer semesters each year. They are popular with athletes who are often on campus in the summer for workouts or to try to make up for class time lost when they are competing during the season.

Summer School Dean Jan Yopp, who has held the role since 2008, said in an interview the only contact she recalls with Nyang’oro was about the AFAM 280 class. She said individual departments have the authority to offer courses through the registrar and can set seating limits without contacting summer school officials.

“We don’t approve classes,” she said. “We don’t sit down with the department and say, ‘You need to teach this. You need to teach that.’ They
don’t come to us and say, ‘We’re going to teach this – will you sign off on it?’ ”

Yopp said she only knew about the AFAM 280 class because it was added late, and she authorized the typical $12,000 payment that professors receive for teaching a summer course. Email correspondence between Yopp and Nyang’oro suggest that Yopp offered the payment because 19 students had signed up.

That payment is now part of a criminal investigation because university officials say Nyang’oro did not teach the class as expected. University officials say they have gotten the money back by docking Nyang’oro’s pay in June, his final month of employment before being forced into retirement.

Yopp said Nyang’oro likely wasn’t paid for the other 29 classes because faculty are only allowed to be paid for two courses each summer. University records show Nyang’oro received payment for teaching one class in the summer of 2007 and two classes in each of the summers of 2008 through 2011. University officials say the AFAM 280 class is the only one of those in which no instruction took place.

UNC records show that in addition to the courses he taught, Nyang’oro supervised independent studies without pay for another 60 students during those summer semesters; at least 22 were football players. The independent studies are also academically suspect, according to an internal review UNC-CH officials released last month.

The summer courses are among 75 linked to Nyang’oro over a four-year period. University officials said that is an extraordinary number for a professor, let alone a department chairman, to have responsibility for, but no one noticed until the fraud investigation began.

“It didn’t occur to us, really, to think about that we should be focusing on whether a faculty member is teaching more students than expected,” said Jonathan Hartlyn, the senior associate dean who supervised Nyang’oro.

That, too, is now being monitored, one of the many reforms launched in the wake of the scandal.

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Classes for athletes

Here are some of the more suspicious classes in the UNC-Chapel Hill academic fraud investigation. All listed a maximum class size of one student:

• AFAM 102: Black Experience, second summer semester 2007. Of 12 enrolled students, nine were athletes, including six football players and three men's basketball players. The instructor listed denies teaching the class.

• SWAH 403: Intermediate Swahili, second summer semester 2009. Of seven enrolled students, six were athletes, including four football players and a men’s basketball player. Julius Nyang’oro was listed on a paper written by a former football player in the class, but the professor claims he did not teach the class. Another professor listed as the instructor also denies teaching it.

• AFAM 398: AFAM Seminar, first summer semester 2008. All five enrolled students were athletes, four football players and a basketball player.

• AFRI 266: Contemporary Africa, fall semester 2008. All but two of 23 students were athletes, including 11 football players. One was a former athlete.

By the numbers

54: Classes with little or no instruction
215: Athletes in those classes
26: Former athletes in those classes
193: Nonathletes in those classes
391: Athlete enrollments (some took multiple classes)
48: Former athlete enrollments
247: Nonathlete enrollments
The Wilmington Star News

Behind the Yellow Tape

Monday, July 9, 2012 at 8:43 by F. T. Norton

**UNCW alert lifted after scooter thief nabbed**

A stolen scooter and reports of shots fired prompted the UNCW to send out an alert just after midnight Sunday.

According to Joy Davis, University of North Carolina Wilmington spokeswoman, Wilmington police received a report of shots fired and a robbery at the Campus Edge Apartments near Racine Drive and Randall Parkway about 12:06 a.m.

Davis said because of the close proximity of the off-campus complex to the university grounds, officials issued an alert warning students to stay indoors and avoid Hurst Drive near the incident.

Cpl. Kevin Smith said Wilmington police apprehended a suspect on campus who stole a scooter. No weapon was found.

“It ended up as just a larceny of a moped,” Smith said.

“The stolen property, a scooter, was recovered adjacent to campus at the Seahawk Square Apartment Complex,” Davis said in an email. “The suspect was not carrying a weapon and further investigation by the Wilmington Police Department revealed that no shots were fired and no weapons displayed during the event.”

The university plans to proceed with Monday’s scheduled UNCW Alert test at noon.
The Wilmington Star News
Published: Friday, July 6, 2012 at 5:33 p.m.

Actor James Kyson (left) talks with writer, director and producer Terry Linehan in between scenes of 'Don't Know Yet,' which was filming at Jackson's Big Oak Barbecue.
Photo by Jeff Janowski

UNCW students learning movie business while on the job

By Cassie Foss
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Temperatures hovered near 100 degrees, drenching 21-year-old Natalie Smith in sweat as she dashed to and from a make-shift catering tent at a home on Chestnut Street to retrieve another glass of iced tea for a local actor Thursday afternoon.

The scene is a familiar one at movie sets in Wilmington and across the country. Young film crew workers hoping for a chance to gain industry experience are often hired by productions.

Smith may be a student, but she's certainly not an amateur.

She and several other University of North Carolina Wilmington film students and alumni are producing "Don't Know Yet," the first feature-length film produced with equipment and support from the university.

The three-week production will film from June 24 through July 12 at local businesses such as Goody Goody Omelet House and Jackson's Big Oak Barbecue, at several locations in Brunswick County and near Asheville, including the Blue Ridge Highway.
"I've learned so much already – more than I ever would just in class," said Smith, who will graduate in December with degrees in film and theater studies. "I feel like I'm getting an inside look at my future. It makes me know I'm in the right place."

Smith, a production designer for "Don't Know Yet," and the movie's other student filmmakers will earn college credits for their work in addition to gaining hands-on experience, said Terry Linehan, a UNCW Department of Film Studies faculty lecturer and the film's writer, producer and director.

"I essentially turned over the production to them," Linehan said. "The filmmaking model – the idea of students and recent alumni being able to learn in the professional world of film is something that I've always wanted to do."

The process also has forced the young filmmakers to learn to adapt to quickly changing situations.

"They've overcome long hours and little sleep and understand that things change quickly," he said. "They understand the level of commitment it takes."

The teacher, whose short films have screened and won awards at film festivals nationwide, was inspired by a line of dialogue about hitchhikers as he watched "The Addiction" (1995, Lili Taylor, Christopher Walken) during the university's Thanksgiving break.

The result was a script about a heartbroken man, Taylor, who is seeking the answers to a meaningful life by giving rides to hitchhikers.

But the project needed funding to get off the ground, Linehan said.

"I've always wanted to make a feature film, and the reason we haven't been able to has been because of money," he said.

That problem was solved with help from the university and local film industry professionals. Local acting and dialect coach Tammy Arnold gave students tips on casting, for example.

Several local businesses, including Queensboro Shirt Company and the Wilmington Box Company, also donated their time and products, Linehan said.

"As soon as I said I wanted to do it, UNCW was gung ho. It came together really quickly," he said. "They provided all the equipment and we had some private investment. That's the only reason we were able to do it – the film couldn't have made it without all the support."
The film still has an ultra-low budget – under $200,000 – but the support helped Linehan and the students snag actors James Kyson for lead role of Taylor and Lisa Goldstein as his girlfriend, Autumn.

Kyson is best known as Ando on the popular NBC TV series, "Heroes," while Goldstein starred on "One Tree Hill" for five seasons.

Other cast members include Bill Ladd ("Hope Springs"), Jane McNeill Balter ("The Walking Dead"), and David Andrews ("World War Z").

"Five thousand people applied for the top five or six roles. We're thrilled with the cast we were able to get," Linehan said. "All of the actors have said that they feel like they're working with professional instead of students."

Local actor Nate Panning agreed.

"I always end up doing a lot of independent films. I like to jump on the student work and I'm honored they wanted me to participate so badly," said Panning, who plays an ex-boyfriend of Autumn's. "If you're an actor and you're always waiting for the big parts, you could be waiting for a long time. I love that I can help out and pitch in on small films."

Despite its size, "Don't Know Yet" has the potential to reach a wide audience, Linehan said.

After post-production is completed at UNCW in early fall, Linehan will enter the production in various film festivals and present it at the American Film market trade show in California in November.

The prospect of getting wide distribution excites the young filmmakers, but most are happy to have participated even if the movie doesn't make a lot of money.

Director of Photography Joe Ensley, 25, a 2010 UNCW graduate, said he prefers to work on small films while shooting other projects, such as commercials, to help pay the bills.

"I'd rather have a big influence and get experience on a small film than be a tech on a really large movie," he said. "If I keep hammering away at it, the pay will come."

Cassie Foss: 343-2365
On Twitter: @WilmOnFilm
The University of Washington professors Henry M. Levy, left, Ed Lazowska, center, and Oren Etzioni on an atrium balcony in the school’s Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering.

A Northwest Pipeline to Silicon Valley

By NICK WINGFIELD

Seattle – SOME budding entrepreneurs and computer whizzes based here in the Pacific Northwest are starting to turn heads down in Silicon Valley.

They are professors and students at the University of Washington, home to what may be the best computer science department you’ve never heard of.

Although Stanford is considered the Hogwarts of techdom, U.W. has quietly established itself as the other West Coast nexus of the information economy. And while Seattle-area tech icons like Microsoft and Amazon have long relied on U.W. — pronounced “U-dub” by locals — as an incubator of talent and ideas, the Valley’s hottest companies have been getting the message, too.

Their executives have begun streaming up the coast to Seattle, fueled by a talent arms race for programmers. Facebook, Zynga and Google have opened offices in the area, trying to woo U.W. engineers who’d rather live here, where taxes and home prices are lower, even if mist and dark skies envelop the scenery for much of the year.
“It’s the most underrated computer science department I’ve seen,” said Ari Steinberg, a Facebook engineer who runs the company’s Seattle office, which opened in early 2010.

The university’s computer science and engineering department, ensconced on a patch of land near Husky Stadium and Lake Washington, has come a long way since the early 1970s. During that time, two Seattle teenagers, Bill Gates and Paul G. Allen, honed programming skills by sneaking into the department to tinker on its computers. The department’s stature began to pick up in the 90s, as the university began to significantly expand its computer science faculty with new stars like Oren Etzioni.

At the same time, Microsoft, the company that Mr. Gates and Mr. Allen founded, jump-started the Seattle technology scene and many fortunes along with it. Mr. Gates, Mr. Allen and others became big contributors, helping the university build a new home for its computer science program.

In recent years, the department has deepened its ties with tech companies like Google, helping to gain an edge in teaching programming for the cloud, a big trend in computing.

In the most recent rankings by U.S. News & World Report, the graduate program placed seventh in the nation, right behind Cornell and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. (Tied for first were Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California, Berkeley.)

The U.W. department’s growing recognition has been a blessing for its students, who are getting juicier job offers with top companies. But some Seattle technology executives say the competition is crimping the city’s homegrown technology scene, making it into something like a colony of Silicon Valley.

According to the university, some 35 percent of its computer science graduates end up working at Amazon, Google or Microsoft in a typical year; 15 percent go to other big companies and 30 percent to small companies or start-ups. More than 80 percent of the program’s students come from Washington State, and the same percentage end up staying in the state after graduating, even if they work for companies based in Silicon Valley.

The biggest problem with the university’s program is that it can’t turn out graduates fast enough. Engineers are in short supply in the computer field generally, but this is a particular concern in the Seattle tech market.
“We need that program to be a lot bigger,” says Spencer Rascoff, chief executive of Zillow, a real estate Web site based in Seattle.

In a conference room at the university, overlooking the sparkling waters of Lake Washington, Christophe Bisciglia told a crowd of dozens of students what his secret weapon was: them.

Mr. Bisciglia, 31, an entrepreneur and former star Google engineer, was visiting during the spring to speak on a panel about start-ups to computer science students. He said he has gained an “unfair advantage” for WibiData, his new San Francisco-based company, by recruiting from the university’s computer science department, where two-thirds of his employees once studied.

“Down in the Valley, it’s all Stanford this and that,” said Mr. Bisciglia, himself a U.W. graduate. “While they turn out students that are good, U.W. turns out students that are every bit as good.”

The deep connections between U.W.’s computer science program and the Seattle tech scene are written on the wall, literally. The department is housed in the Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering, a brick-and-glass building with a soaring, six-story atrium in the center of campus.

The building, which opened in 2003, provided a big boost to the program, adding lab space for robotics experiments and replacing a structure that “was falling down around us,” said Ed Lazowska, who joined the computer science department in 1977, and was chairman for eight years.

Mr. Allen was the leading donor for the construction of the building, along with Mr. Gates. Mr. Lazowska holds the Bill & Melinda Gates Chair in Computer Science and Engineering. Many other notables from Seattle tech companies have also contributed money.

Like their peers at Stanford, U.W.’s computer science faculty members say that one of their program’s strengths is the engagement between professors and the tech industry that will one day employ most of the graduates. Henry M. Levy, the current department chairman, is a co-founder of two tech start-ups. Mr. Etzioni is a co-founder of several Internet companies that were later acquired, including Farecast, an airfare price prediction service that Microsoft bought for $115 million in 2008.

Along with four Washington graduates, Mr. Etzioni recently formed another company, Decide.com, which helps consumers time their purchases of iPads and other electronics to avoid missing price drops. He is a venture partner at Madrona, a Seattle venture capital firm that invested in Decide.
While Stanford is a famously entrepreneurial environment, where business plans are hatched in dorm rooms, the rap on U.W. computer science students is that they tend to be more risk-averse, reflexively gravitating toward bigger companies for employment.

Mr. Etzioni, though, pushes students to jump into the start-up world. In May, he moderated a panel at the university on the subject with Mr. Bisciglia; Glenn Kelman, C.E.O. of the Web real estate company Redfin; and others. About 60 students peppered the executives with questions about start-up life.

“He’s done a great job of creating successful start-ups and of bringing along others,” said Brad Silverberg, a former Microsoft executive who is now a venture capitalist at Ignition Partners in Bellevue, Wash.

In an interview in his office on campus, Mr. Etzioni conceded that the U.W. brand “is definitely weaker” than that of Stanford in computer science, but he says the department has become increasingly competitive. “The students are so much stronger than they were five or 10 years ago,” he said.

In May, Seth Cooper, a Washington professor who earned his Ph.D. from the department last year, won the Association for Computing Machinery doctoral dissertation award, one of the field’s most prestigious prizes. His dissertation described how video games could be used to solve complex scientific problems. He was a co-creator of one game, Foldit, that harnessed the efforts of tens of thousands of players to solve the structure of a protein useful in the fight against H.I.V.

Sidhant Gupta, a Ph.D. student in computer science, is working on low-cost sensing technologies that can help people monitor their energy use. Mr. Gupta, who received his master’s degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology, said U.W. is a collegial environment where experts in different computer science disciplines are encouraged to collaborate.

“It feels like one big family,” said Mr. Gupta, who passed up offers at M.I.T. and other schools to study at Washington. “No one is trying to back-stab you to get ahead of you. That’s really different than other programs.”

Still, when Mr. Gupta went back to his native India and told his friends he was going to U.W., they told him they had never heard of it.

WASHINGTON was one of the earliest schools to teach undergraduates how to program for the cloud, where software sometimes needs to run on thousands of machines at the same time, rather than on a single one. In 2006, Mr. Bisciglia, then a Google engineer, persuaded his boss to let him teach a
course at his alma mater about writing software for huge clusters of computers.

Mr. Bisciglial said he taught the course for three semesters. By the end, Google had hired half the students in the classes, an unusual move. “Google doesn’t hire half of any group of people,” he said.

Mr. Lazowska said the university turned away about three-quarters of all U.W. students who apply to major in computer science because it doesn’t have the faculty to educate them, even though there is huge demand for engineers. Belt-tightening has reduced state money for U.W. as a whole by nearly 50 percent since 2009, according to the university.

“This is having a serious impact,” he said, “on the ability of small companies to grow and succeed and big companies to hire locally.”

Recognizing this, the university recently agreed to increase the budget of the computer science department, which will allow it to grant a third more degrees over the next few years, according to Mr. Lazowska.

He is also looking elsewhere for help. This year, he sent an e-mail to Jeff Bezos, the Amazon C.E.O., asking if he would endow two professorships for experts in the field of machine learning whom the university wanted to hire: Carlos Guestrin of Carnegie Mellon and Emily B. Fox of the University of Pennsylvania. Within 48 hours, Mr. Bezos responded that he would not personally finance the positions, but that Amazon would, Mr. Lazowska said.

Ty Rogers, an Amazon spokesman, declined to comment on Amazon’s funding of the professorships and Mr. Bezos’s involvement in recruiting the professors. In an earlier interview, Susan Harker, director of global talent acquisition at Amazon, described the U.W. as one of the Internet retailer’s “very top pipelines” for talent.

In March, as they were considering the offer, Mr. Guestrin and Ms. Fox, who are engaged, visited the university and were impressed that Amazon’s C.E.O. personally showed up to help persuade them to join the school. “I’ve never heard of this,” Mr. Guestrin said. “It made a tremendous difference for us.”

The two, part of a wave of new hires in the past few months, begin teaching at the university in the fall.