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Submitted photo Tremayne Smith will lead more than 21,000 students as the student body president at East Carolina University this fall.

W. Rowan grad is ECU student body president
[Tagline]
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By Sarah Campbell
scampbell@salisburypost.com

Tremayne Smith will lead more than 21,000 students at East Carolina University this fall. The Rowan County native, who was elected the Student Government Association’s student body president last spring, is looking forward to making his mark this fall.

Smith plans to focus on student outreach, diversity and involvement during his reign. “Any student will tell you that their most memorable moments in college weren’t spent in a classroom. They were off-campus or doing an extracurricular activity,” he said. “I want to get students involved.”

A 2006 graduate of West Rowan High School, Smith said the education and encouragement he received while growing up in the Rowan-Salisbury School System have propelled him to excel.
“I remember every single teacher I’ve had since preschool,” he said. “It was the teachers who gave me the level of knowledge and the confidence I needed to succeed.”

Smith cites his high school band teacher Tammy Reyes as one of most influential people in his life. He said Reyes’ nurtured his abilities, allowing him to grow.

“Tremayne Smith is one of the hardest working and most sincere people I have ever had the joy of knowing,” Reyes said. “Even as a young eighth-grader, he was eager to go help out the West Rowan High School Band in anyway possible.

“Later, as a drum major (at West Rowan), he was a natural leader and a true servant leader; no job was too small or too dirty for him to do.

Today, Smith serves a number of roles on campus ranging from drum major of the Marching Pirates to founding member of the ECU chapter of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. “I think Tremayne is probably the most involved and excited student I’ve ever met,” Keith Tingley, director of Greek Life at ECU, said.

At 22 years old, Smith, a music education and political science major, can play french horn, trumpet, baritone, saxophone, trombone, clarinet, tuba and flute.

“He’s self-motivated, and I don’t think you see that in a lot of students,” Tingley said. Smith has become a role model for his fellow Pirates.

“Who doesn’t know Tremayne?” Tingley said.

Rising freshman Wade Butner, a 2010 Salisbury High School graduate, met Smith during orientation this summer.

“Tremayne is a very inspirational person, not only to me but to many of the entering freshmen at ECU,” Butner said. “Tremayne has taught me to always be prepared and to have good time management.

“He says time management is the key to success in college to maintain a good balance between my extracurriculars and my academics.”

Growing up in a single-parent home without a solid male role model, Smith learned from an early age to channel his anger toward his drug-addicted father into ambition and drive. “He leads by example and is a very inspiring person who can also offer constructive criticism to young people striving to achieve,” Reyes said.

For the past three summers, Smith has taught band camp at Hickory High School, where Reyes now serves as band director.

“The kids adore him and respond well to him,” Reyes said.
Smith’s mother, Patricia Watkins, has also been a driving force in the lives of Tremayne and identical twin brother, Dewayne Smith.

“In large part, it’s her support that allowed us to be able to do the things we’ve done and be able to do the things we do,” he said. “My faith in God, my love for my family and the support of my friends and fraternity brothers allowed me to become the young man I’ve become.”

Adding the role of president to his list of extracurricular activities wasn’t a leap for Smith. “Music and politics are the two loves of my life,” he said. “I sometimes joke that music was my first love and I cheated on it with politics.”


“That kind of sparked my interest,” he said. “I just like being involved on a local level.” Smith will serve as an intern in Hagan’s Greenville office this fall. He hopes to use his leadership skills and experience to continue his political career.

“I do plan to be president in 2024,” he said. “I’ve experienced many different things, worn many different hats, walked in a lot of shoes.

“I’ve been there with them, I am there with them and I am there for them.”

After graduating next May, Smith plans to either head to law school or work in politics in Washington, but he said no matter where he goes, Rowan County is never far from his heart.

“It’s part of me,” he said. “When I introduce myself, I say ‘Hello, my name is Tremayne Smith, and I’m from Salisbury, home of Food Lion and Cheerwine.’”

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UNCW ranked 17th on Forbes' best college buys list

Published: Monday, August 16, 2010 at 6:28 p.m.

Forbes magazine ranks the University of North Carolina Wilmington No. 17 among "America's Best College Buys."

The ranking is especially important because tuition and fees at four-year schools have grown 91 percent beyond the rate of inflation, the magazine said.

Forbes said it divided each school's overall quality score by its average tuition and fees for 2008. Schools with a graduation rate of less than 20 percent are excluded.

Forbes remarked that "the North Carolina university system is well represented on the list, with four schools in the top 25 and seven in the top 50."

The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill ranked the highest at 13, followed by UNCW; Appalachian State at 20; UNC Asheville, 21; N.C. State, 35; East Carolina, 36; and UNC Greensboro, 37.

The service academies – which have no tuition – all scored in the top 10. The magazine also pointed out that high overall rankings plus special aid programs effectively make tuition free for Cooper Union, College of the Ozarks and Berea College – all in the top 10.

— Wayne Faulkner

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New building, programs greet larger group of PCC students

By JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector
Monday, August 16, 2010

Fall classes at Pitt Community College begin this week with new programs, a new building and likely an increase in enrollment.

Enrollment numbers for the fall will not be available until after classes start Thursday, but officials have been inundated by financial aid requests and an increase in applications for admission.

PCC has seen double-digit enrollment increases every term since the fall of 2008. Nearly 4,000 students took classes this summer, an all-time high. The school received more than 5,000 admission applications for the fall.

PCC also has seen a 48 percent increase in the number of financial aid applications for the fall semester. The college received more than 9,350 financial aid applications compared to about 5,000 last year.

Due to the increase in applications, some students will not be awarded financial aid until after classes start.

New building
A large percentage of the increase interest in classes at PCC can be attributed to students interested in health care fields. The new Herman Simon Building with its chemistry and biology labs will provide new space for health sciences classes.

The $5 million building will provide 35,765 square feet for classrooms, laboratories and offices, a welcome addition of space because PCC ranks last among all North Carolina community colleges in space per student.

The school has plans for three more buildings in the coming year.

New programs
PCC is offering several new programs this year and heading up a 21-community college consortium that will train thousands of new health information technology professionals.

As a result of federal health care reform legislation, officials estimate that 50,000 new positions will be needed to establish, adapt and maintain electronic health record systems nationally by 2015.
The consortium of colleges led by PCC received a $10.9 million cooperative agreement from the Department of Health and Human Services for the first year to begin training students in health information technology.

Other new programs at PCC include a post-baccalaureate diploma option within the paralegal technology curriculum for students who have a bachelor’s degree in any area of study from an accredited college or university.

The 40-credit diploma includes eight required paralegal classes, two general education classes and 12 credit hours chosen from a list of 13 electives.

The North Carolina State Bar recently specified that candidates cannot apply to take the paralegal certification exam until they have graduated from a qualified paralegal studies program.

Those with bachelor’s degrees who are working as paralegals cannot become certified until they complete a paralegal studies program.

PCC also has added alternative energy coursework to its electrical/electronics technology curriculum as part of an overall effort to emphasize sustainable housing through its construction and industrial technology programs.

Photovoltaic systems technology introduces students to the techniques and materials needed to understand systems that convert solar energy into electricity through photovoltaic technologies.

Students who complete the course can use it toward a solar photovoltaic systems technology certificate.

A new media relations course for law enforcement at PCC will teach law enforcement personnel how to work with media during crises.

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More university students taking advantage of cheaper community college courses

By Daniel de Vise
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, August 16, 2010; B01

Sean Daly's friends in Potomac spend their summer days planning their summer nights, savoring three months of freedom from the college grind.

But Daly returned home from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and headed straight to the local community college for more classes.

Community colleges in the Washington region are doing brisk business this summer with students from four-year universities. The students are taking advantage of increasingly flexible transfer policies to load up on cheap, convenient credits that will help them graduate more quickly and at a lower expense.

Prince George's Community College enrolled 136 students from four-year colleges this summer, nearly double last year's number. Tidewater Community College in Virginia has 2,150 four-year college students, up 14 percent. Montgomery College has 3,100 four-year college students, about one-quarter of its summer enrollment. No comparison with last year's enrollment was available.

"The community college is part of the rhythm of four-year college attendance, more and more," said Cliff Adelman, a senior associate with the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

The growing role of two-year colleges is part of a broader trend. Three-fifths of those who earn bachelor's degrees attend more than one college, and the percentage is slowly rising, according to federal data.

In a mobile society with an abundance of classes available online, students increasingly view college as a collection of credits rather than a four-year term on one campus. These collegiate nomads, called "swirlers," are becoming a major force in higher education.

Daly, 20, is spending $1,600 this summer for courses in statistics, 20th-century history, nutrition and anthropology. He's satisfying several graduation requirements and completing nearly a semester's worth of credits at Loyola Marymount, where a year of study costs $52,705 in tuition, fees and living expenses.

"I'm saving so much money going to Montgomery College and getting all these classes out of the way," he said.

Daly is paying for college himself and hoping to graduate in three years with a double major in theater and communications. He leaves home each morning with his father, spends the school day at the college, then goes to a lifeguard job at a community pool. He dines with his family at 10 p.m. -- a concession to his lifeguard hours -- then goes out with his friends if he has the energy.
"The hardest part is saying no to people," he said. "It's like every night, no one else has anything to do."

**High quality**

Federal data show that about 15 percent of four-year college students take classes at community college, chiefly in the summer. Picking up a few summer credits is a well-worn custom for students who have failed classes or are missing general-education requirements. Some Washington area community colleges advertise on four-year campuses.

But college officials say the economic downturn after the 2008 financial crisis drove more students to view the community college in a new way: as a source for high-quality credits at a bargain-basement price.

"They come home for the summer; they see us as a good value; they take advantage of that; and then they take those credits back with them," said Tracy Harris, dean of enrollment services at Prince George's Community College. "They're starting to understand the idea [that] the sooner you get through those credits, the less costly it is for you."

Community college courses, which typically cost a few hundred dollars apiece, are among the least expensive ways to acquire credits. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams are cheaper, less than $100 each, but those are high school programs, and some competitive colleges are growing more stingy in awarding credit.

Lower cost at a community college doesn't necessarily equate to lower quality. Classes are generally small, and the pace of instruction is swift. Summer schedules often compress semester-long courses into five weeks.

Danielle Morgan DeLoatch, a rising sophomore at Virginia Tech, is studying microbiology at Tidewater this summer. The campus is five minutes from her home in Chesapeake, Va.

The course was so rigorous that enrollment dropped from 30 to 12 after the first week.

"It's the smallest class I've ever had," DeLoatch said. "I'm used to 500 students in the lecture hall. I asked so many questions. That's why I feel like I learned so much."

**Mixed feelings**

College leaders harbor mixed feelings about transfer credits. They don't want to hinder students from pursuing credits wherever possible. But they are wary of watering down their academic brand.

"We believe -- I think, rightly -- that a degree here adds up to more than just a list of credits accumulated," said Larry Poos, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Catholic University. "On the other hand, we want to accommodate our students and make sure they make progress toward their degrees."

He adds, "We would be very wrong if we didn't recognize that our students and their parents may be under particularly strong financial pressure these days."

Krista DeNovio is spending $800 on two courses this summer at Montgomery College to hasten her graduation from Catholic, where total annual costs are more than $40,000.
DeNovio was laid off from a desk job at a hotel and hasn't been able to find work since, apart from some babysitting. At 24, she is worried about finding money to complete her degree.

"I'm trying not to take out any more loans, not to go hundreds of thousands of dollars into debt like all of my friends," she said.

Two electives at Montgomery College will count toward her planned December graduation from Catholic: U.S. History From 1865 to Present and Introduction to World Mythology. DeNovio walks to class from her apartment in downtown Silver Spring.

"Don't get me wrong. I love Catholic University," she said. But the community college is "a million times less expensive."
Campus Overload - Overdoing the dorm move-in

Overdoing the dorm move-in

This is the week when thousands of college students move into the dorms. Most of them show up with a moderate car full (or two) of stuff. But then there are the epic mover-iners -- college students who bring stuff that surprises residence hall directors and staffers who think they have already seen it all.

The Minneapolis Star-Tribune had a story this weekend about a freshman who showed up at his Minnesota college (that went unnamed) with a semi. This was the same student whose parents asked if they could send an interior designer to take measurements of the room and do a complete makeover without asking for the roommate’s opinion.

It’s not the only odd move-in.

At Albright College in Pennsylvania, a student once hauled his dorm stuff in the family Winnebago. (Photo courtesy of Dave Johnson of Albright College.)

At Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania, a student tried moving a full-size refrigerator into his 14-foot-by-14-foot dorm room.

“I couldn’t help but ask him what he could possibly need it for, given the fact that the hall had only one small kitchenette with only a microwave and sink,” said Erica Stephenson, associate director of residence life. “I mean, he wasn’t going to be able to bake or anything, so what was he going to fill that refrigerator with? Oh, wait, I think I know.”

At the University of Iowa, massive flat-screen televisions have become the norm, according to the Associated Press.

At Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama, housing staffers have fielded lots of odd requests to alter on-campus apartments. One mother wanted to install sliding shower doors. Some have asked if they can re-upholster the dorm furniture. One parent wanted to remove the carpet and install hardwood floors. Lots of parents have hired maids.

Mansfield University in Pennsylvania has seen lots of students trying to sneak pets (ferrets, tarantulas, boa constrictors, you name it) into the halls. And highway signs are a popular dorm decoration.

At Sewanee: The University of the South in Tennessee, one student asked for permission to bring his own personal compact clothing dryer.

These examples are extreme, but there is a move-in crime that most students are guilty of: Bringing way too much stuff.

What not to pack:

Do not bring childhood mementos, like that first-grade trophy, advises the Oklahoma Daily.
Avoid bringing any more furniture, even an extra chair, because chances are it won’t fit, suggests the Sun Sentinel.

Don’t bring anything that might be forbidden – “pets, firearms, unsanctioned microwaves and hot plates, unsafe loft building materials, explosives, halogen lamps, illegal drugs, proof of extraterrestrial life, etc.,” says Jayce Scott of North Carolina State University.

Leave your book collection at home because you really won’t have much time to read during the semester, and “no one will care that you read Ayn Rand in high school,” advises Andy Boyle of the St. Petersburg Times.

Skip anything that you don’t use all of the time, the Star Tribune suggests. “Most dorms barely have enough storage space for oft-needed items. Skis, golf clubs and the sousaphone are best left at home. … if you have to choose between an ironing board or an X-box, go with the latter.”

Have you seen anything ridiculous hauled into a dorm? Any tips for what not to bring to campus? Let me know in the comments.

Campus Overload is a daily must-read for all college students. Make sure to bookmark http://voices.washingtonpost.com/campus-overload. You can also follow me on Twitter and fan Campus Overload on Facebook.
Solutions to Dorm Crowding
By ELSA BRENNER

KYLE HARRY, a 21-year-old student about to begin his fourth year at Iona College in New Rochelle, was content living in a dormitory as a freshman and sophomore, but by his third year, he said, “I was ready to step into more adult shoes and negotiate the challenges of the outside world.”

This fall Mr. Harry, who is majoring in mass communications and business management, will be living off campus in a rented duplex apartment with five other students.

At Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, Matthew Walsh, 21, a senior majoring in health sciences, has also opted to live away from campus, in a five-bedroom house he shares with fellow students in nearby Ardsley.

“Too many rules in the dorm,” said Mr. Walsh, a center fielder for the college baseball team. “I like my independence.”

But according to college administrators, most students prefer the predictability and security of campus life. The problem is that securing space in a dormitory can be as challenging as a calculus exam, thanks to burgeoning enrollment and the fixed number of dorm beds. The result at Westchester colleges is an institutional scramble to find more large-scale off-campus housing. The path often leads straight to a nearby hotel.

The crunch is tied to the recession and the resulting shortage of funding sources for new construction. The rise in enrollment is, in large part, the result of the matriculation of a generation known as echo boomers — children born to baby boomers between 1983 and 2001.

At Mercy’s Dobbs Ferry campus, where 2,435 undergraduates are enrolled, applications have doubled in the past two years, reflecting both the demographic changes and the relatively low cost of tuition there, said Joseph L. Schaefer, the private college’s chief operating officer. At $16,000 for two semesters, Mercy’s full-time tuition is lower by $10,000 or more than that of other private colleges in the area.

About 800 students applied for on-campus housing at Mercy this year, Mr. Schaefer said, but
only 325 dorm beds are available. In response, the college has leased 180 beds at the Marriott Hotel in nearby Tarrytown, providing shuttle service and requiring that students comply with the campus curfew and other rules. The cost to the student at a hotel is the same as at a dorm.

The Marriott chain has a similar arrangement with other colleges, including Marist in Poughkeepsie, said Peter Maruzzella, a sales representative. Like many other hotel franchises, the Marriott has seen occupancy rates drop in the past two years, and welcomes colleges as paying guests, he said.

Mercy considers hotels a kind of residential cushion. “It’s a little nerve-racking to just send students into the community to fend for themselves, when they may not be ready for that,” Mr. Schaefer said. The goal “is not to turn anyone away,” especially with some students coming from abroad, without the option of commuting from home.

Of 3,249 undergraduates at Iona, one-third live on campus, one-third commute and one-third live in apartments nearby, said Michele L. Sampson, the director of off-campus housing.

“Yes, there’s a sense of freedom associated with living off-campus,” Ms. Sampson said, “but those arrangements often come with problems.” On its Web site, Iona offers detailed information to help students find safe and legal housing.

At Purchase College, a part of the State University of New York, 2,600 of the 4,000 undergraduates live on campus, said John Delate, the director of residence life there. The college has five dormitories for 1,600 students and three apartment complexes for another 1,000 students.

The apartments, Mr. Delate said, “provide a transition for juniors and seniors and prepare them for real-world living.” They are more expensive than a dorm, but he said they appealed to the current crop of students, whom he described as tending to be independent, self-sufficient and goal-oriented. Purchase also leases 64 beds at an extended-stay hotel in White Plains.

But if the economy precludes a spate of dorm building, said Ms. Sampson of Iona, it has opened up rooms for students in private homes. In addition to the people who buy investment properties and rent them to students, she said, there are those who “rent space for supplemental income, and I got a lot of these listings as the economy got worse last year.”

The good news for college administrators, on housing at least, is that the enrollment surge won’t last forever. The Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics predicts that college student enrollment will peak around 2013.

For right now, the question is how best to deal with a demographic bubble that is destined to burst, Mr. Delate said.
Innovative health programs counter primary care shortage

Nurse practitioner Donna Torrisi is the founder of the Family Practice and Counseling Network in Philadelphia, a network of nurse-managed health centers providing primary health services to public housing residents. Although much of her time is spent on administrative responsibilities, she still sees patients at least one day a week.

By Rita Rubin, USA TODAY
About 65 million Americans live in communities with a shortage of primary care doctors, physicians trained to meet the majority of patients' health care needs over the course of their lives. How much more difficult will finding a primary care doctor become as a result of the recently passed health care reform legislation, which will extend coverage to an estimated 34 million currently uninsured Americans by 2019?
Massachusetts, which in 2006 passed a law that led to nearly universal coverage of its 6.6 million residents, might provide some clues.

'NOBLE FIELD': The challenges of primary care
In that state, fewer and fewer internists and family practice doctors are taking new patients, and wait times to see family practice doctors are lengthening, according to the Massachusetts Medical Society and the non-profit Massachusetts Health Quality Partners.
Even before Congress in March passed the landmark law designed to make health care more affordable and expand coverage, an aging population and doctors' increasing preference for higher-paying specialties set the stage for a primary care shortage. And what many believe to be an outdated reimbursement system — one that drives doctors to schedule office visits when a quick phone call or e-mail might do — doesn't help.

The shortage of primary care doctors could lead to longer waits not only for primary care, but also for specialty care as well as greater use of expensive emergency rooms for non-emergencies, researcher Walt Zwyik of Computer Sciences Corp., an international consulting company headquartered in Falls Church, Va., noted in a July report.

But some innovative programs provide a glimpse of what the future of primary care — a future in which a one-on-one visit at the doctor's office takes a back seat — could look like. They include:

- A Portland, Ore., practice where doctors provide more care via the phone or e-mail than face-to-face.
- A Massachusetts practice that offers "shared medical appointments" for six to 14 patients.
- A Philadelphia clinic in which nurse practitioners, who have earned master's or doctorate degrees and have trained in the diagnosis and management of health problems, provide primary care.

Better communication

GreenField Health, founded in Portland in 2001, gets its name from a Harvard Business Review article in the early 1970s, chief operating officer Steve Rallison says. If you could create a business from scratch, it said, you'd start with a green field.

GreenField Health has leveled the playing field as far as how its doctors — five internists, one family practitioner and one pediatrician — care for patients. "We're not going to be caught in the tyranny of the visit," Rallison says. "The pressure for most internists, family physicians, is they have to see lots of patients to generate revenue."

More often than not, GreenField's doctors answer questions and resolve problems, such as interpreting test results or adjusting medications, without seeing patients. Office visits make up only a quarter of their work effort, Rallison says, with phone calls 35% and secure messaging 40%. Doctors get to know patients with 90-minute initial visits. Annual visits are an hour, follow-ups a half-hour.

How can GreenField afford to do this, given that insurers usually don't pay doctors to talk on the phone or send e-mails? Patients pay an annual "retainer fee," from $350 to $650, depending on the patient's age, to cover what insurance doesn't.

Before joining the practice in 2002, internist Cynthia Ferrier had always been in a traditional fee-for-service — or fee-for-office visit — practice. She'd see 20 to 25 patients a day and usually would be late for every appointment except the first because they ran over the allotted time. Responding to patients' e-mails was out of the question. At GreenField, which doesn't have a waiting room, Ferrier sees eight to 10 patients a day. She answers phone calls and e-mails between appointments.

Colleagues at her old practice warned she'd be swamped with phone calls and e-mails. "You're going to get every worried crazy person out there," one told her. But that hasn't happened, she says. Because they know they can get a timely response, patients aren't bombarding her with questions.

Shelly Holly, 46, of Portland, says her $400 annual retainer fee is well worth it.

Holly, an environmental planner, liked her former doctor, but didn't like how long she had to wait for an appointment or how long she had to hang out in the waiting room. When she heard about GreenField, "it just seemed to make sense. My time is valuable, too."

With her GreenField doctor, "if I have questions ... I just slip out my iPhone and type out an e-mail and e-mail it to him. Lo and behold, I might get an answer back in 20 minutes."

Help for doctors
GreenField Health may be a model of the practice of the future, but it's not typical today, Philadelphia internist Richard Baron says. Compared with many cities, he says, Portland is fairly affluent, so it's easier to attract patients who can pay a retainer fee.

"In our marketplace, and in most marketplaces in the U.S.," Baron says, "if you try to charge patients supplemental fees, you're on the edge of violating agreements with insurance companies." He echoes the call for reimbursement reform. Instead of paying primary care doctors per visit, he says, pay them a preset amount per patient per year, an approach called "capitation" that's used by HMOs.

Although some primary care doctors, worried about inadequate payments, regard capitation as a dirty word, Baron says it "can work just fine if it's based on an accurate understanding of the volume of services a group of patients is going to need."

Besides freeing doctors to provide care in the most efficient way, capitation would enable them to hire support staff, such as medical assistants, says Baron, chair last year of the American Board of Internal Medicine.

"We don't ask surgeons to stop in the middle of an operation and go find a scalpel. We arrange it so that there's a skilled team of people that are supported by the reimbursement system."

Baron and Thomas Bodenheimer at the University of California-San Francisco use a phrase that's kicked around a lot these days: "Work up to the top of your license." Translated: Doctors shouldn't waste their time on tasks that could be handled by someone with less training.

"Physicians do a huge amount of work that you do not need an M.D. to do," Bodenheimer says. "There's so much stuff that's routine, you could teach a high school student to do some of these things in a week."

But doctors usually don't hire someone to do that work, Bodenheimer says, because "you can't keep hiring people who don't get reimbursed." He says physicians might find that hiring medical assistants, who typically have one or two years of training after high school, increases efficiency and saves them money, although no one has studied that issue.

Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, a non-profit multi-specialty group practice that cares for nearly a half-million people in eastern Massachusetts, may have hit upon a way to have its medical assistants — as well as nurses, social workers and dietitians — and pay for them, too.

Shared appointments
In 2008, Harvard Vanguard began offering "shared medical appointments," or SMAs. They're not classes, emphasizes internist Gretchen Gaida.

SMAs are scheduled for physicals, well-child checkups, chronic illness management and other types of primary care, as well as for specialty care. Six to 14 patients, who sign agreements to keep information about the others confidential, participate. SMAs last 1½ hours, but patients can leave when they feel their questions have been answered. Doctors take blood pressures and listen to hearts in front of the room but examine patients in a private room when necessary.

Physicians bill the same for patients seen in an SMA or individually. Considering doctors might schedule only four individual patient visits in 90 minutes, Gaida says, income from SMAs enables Harvard Vanguard to pay for the extra health professionals needed to run them smoothly.

Instead of thumbing through magazines in the waiting room, SMA patients meet in a conference room, where a "behaviorist," a nurse, social worker or psychologist who serves as a facilitator, writes down their questions for the doctor.

"The hardest part is getting patients to try it," says Gaida, who offers three SMAs for physicals each month in Chelmsford. But once they do, she says, 80% to 90% return for another.

Deborah Phillips, 57, of Billerica, Mass., is a convert. "I felt so comfortable, every time I go now that's what I do," says Phillips, who has diabetes. "You'll hear how someone else is handling the same problem that you have, only differently. I don't feel so alone out there."

Many in the health care field look to nurse practitioners and physician assistants, or PAs, to help fill the primary care gap. Both types of providers require graduate-level training.
"There is so much work that physicians do that they could be unburdened of," says Perri Morgan, director of PA research at Duke University. Eugene Stead, then Duke's chair of medicine, founded the physician assistant profession in the 1960s to train former Vietnam medics to help fill a shortage of primary care doctors, Morgan says. Today, PA classes are 70% to 80% women, she says, and, while the profession is growing, the proportion opting to practice in primary care has declined, while an increasing number are following physicians into specialties.  
"We should just make more PAs," says Morgan, who wrote about the move away from primary care in May in the journal Health Affairs. "We can make PAs so much faster than doctors. There aren't going to be enough doctors anyway. And I'd like to see a larger proportion going into primary care."  
Unlike nurse practitioners, PAs can't work independently of doctors anywhere, Morgan says. "PAs are committed to being dependent practitioners," she says. Still, some practice fairly autonomously, she says, and don't consult doctor supervisors every day. 
In the past 18 months, many states have begun to re-examine laws governing what nurse practitioners can do, says nurse practitioner Mary Naylor, a University of Pennsylvania gerontology professor. Currently, Naylor says, the most restrictive states don't allow nurse practitioners to prescribe medication or practice without a doctor's supervision. 

**Nurse-managed centers**  
Donna Torrisi, a member of Penn's second graduating class of nurse practitioners in 1976, was instrumental in persuading Pennsylvania legislators to grant nurse practitioners prescribing authority and recognition as primary care providers. In 1992, she helped found the Family Practice and Counseling Network in Philadelphia, which she still directs. Supported by the non-profit Resources for Human Development, the network of nurse-managed centers offers primary care for all ages, serving public housing residents, the poor and the uninsured. 
This past fiscal year, Torrisi says, the network's three sites racked up 60,000 patient visits; this year, it expects 70,000. As a federally qualified health center, the network is reimbursed on the basis of its costs, not the number of patient visits. 
On a sunny spring day in the network's sprawling, tastefully decorated North Philadelphia center, Torrisi, who sees patients one day a week, stopped to chat with patient Irene Pegram. Pegram, 76, clutched a paper bag of medication and worked on word puzzles while she waited for a ride home. A network patient for 16 years, she was diagnosed with diabetes five years ago. "Right now I'm coming in every week for the diabetes class," she says. 
In the class, a nurse trained as a diabetic health educator sat at a table with eight patients. They played a board game that provided tips on managing their disease. Elsewhere at the center, a social worker led a "Stress Less" class, which utilizes such stress-releivers as yoga and essential oils, while a recovering addict, hired 17 years ago, led a support group for people battling their own addictions. 
While nurses rule at Torrisi's clinics, "you need everybody" to meet the need for primary care, she says. "You need the doctors. You need the physician assistants, you need the nurse practitioners."