THE DAILY CLIPS

December 23, 2011

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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Life-saving gift exchange
By K.j. Williams

Early Christmas gifts came in the form of organ donations in North Carolina’s first simultaneous kidney transplants involving three sets of donors and recipients earlier this month.

The transplants, performed at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, were the result of an exchange in which three donors who weren’t good matches for their loved ones were matches for other people and agreed to switch, donating to someone else who was able to provide a donor in return.

The effort to find donors who could switch with each other was driven by Stephanie Richardson of Hollister, a donor recipient whose mother, Darlene Williams, 49, of Warrenton was not considered a good match.

Williams agreed to provide a kidney for someone else if that person could find a match for her 31-year-old daughter.
It took more than a year for a match to be found, said Dr. Robert Harland, chief of transplant surgery at PCMH and a professor and chief of immunology and transplantation at East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine, at a Thursday news conference. Along the way, two other matches were made.

“The safest thing to do is to do them all at once,” Harland said, adding that otherwise some unforeseen event could lead to someone donating but their loved one not receiving a kidney in exchange. “We pretty much overlapped operations. We had three operating rooms. … There were a lot of people involved in performing six transplants in one day.”

Richardson started crying as she talked about how much it meant to her to be off dialysis.

“I’m so happy,” she said. “It’s one of the best things that could ever happen to me.”

She said the wait for a transplant was difficult, “especially after I found out that my mom was so willing to do it and, you know, when they told me that she was not the best match. But I just continued with my faith in God and I knew that one day it would happen.”

Richardson said the health care workers she saw three times a week for dialysis became like a second family to her.

“I miss them, but I don’t miss going to dialysis,” she said to laughter. “I don’t miss it at all.

“It just drains you, and as soon as you start feeling better, it’s time to go back, and you’re back to feeling bad again,” Richardson said.

Harland said donations from living donors are much less common than kidney transplant surgeries involving deceased donors, but the success rate is higher.

“But it’s hoped that if more and more of this (exchange) can happen that we could increase the number of transplants by as many as 5 to 10 percent,” he said. “And that would go a long way towards alleviating the shortage of kidneys that exists right now.”

The surgeries were done on Dec. 13 at PCMH. In addition to physicians from ECU, doctors from other practices took part, including Eastern Urological Associates and Eastern Nephrology Associates.

Five of the six donors and transplant recipients attended the news conference. All the patients were released from the hospital on Saturday or
Sunday. One donor, Timur “Tim” Saltuklaroglu, 43, of Knoxville, Tenn., was absent because he went to Canada for the holidays.

James Collins, 30, of Durham was a match for Richardson. In exchange, his mother, Lynette Collins, 56, of Jamesville received a kidney from Saltuklaroglu, who was fulfilling the exchange for recipient Joe Kalinowski, 53, of Greenville.

James Collins said he was “elated just to have the opportunity” to help his mother by donating to Richardson.

“I was all in,” he said. “I was ready to do whatever they needed me to do to make sure that everything went well.

“We donors, we don’t have to do any shopping,” he joked about his early Christmas gift to his mother.

Williams donated a kidney to Kalinowski in exchange for her daughter, Richardson.

“I thank everyone for the opportunity and the gift that James has given me,” she said.

Kalinowski said he had been on dialysis for 13 months for four hours a day.

“It was hard on the household; it was hard on everyone involved,” he said, adding that the transplant already has transformed his life. “It’s great. I don’t have to hook up at home every day.”

Later, his adult daughters hugged Williams, his donor, as they cried.

Typically, the donor process is kept anonymous, but Harland said the donors all were eager to know about each other. They met for the first time Thursday.

It may have started with a search for a donor for Richardson, but it grew. The hospital team “found James was a good match for Stephanie. And it turned out Tim was a good match for Lynette, and then it turned out that Darlene was the right blood type to match Joe,” Harland said.

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Dr. Robert Harland, Chief of Transplant Surgery at PCMH, discuss the triple kidney transplant operations as he stands with the recipients and their donors Thursday.

Kidney transplants

- About 200 out of about 200,000 kidneys transplants nationally are the result of exchanges.
- The one-year survival rate with a live donor is 98 percent. It is 91 percent with a deceased donor.
- At 10 years, the survival rate with a live donor is about 70 percent. With a deceased donor, the 10-year survival rate is 40 percent to 50 percent.
- The surgery takes about three to four hours.
- Recipients take anti-rejection medications for life.
- A transplant can add 10 to 15 years to a recipient’s lifespan when compared to those on dialysis.
- There have been 82 kidney transplants at PCMH this year.

Sources: Dr. Robert Harland, National Library of Medicine, ECU, PCMH
ECU School of Art and Design professor Catherine Walker talks about her mixed-media art exhibit on display at Starlight Café in downtown Greenville as her son, Louis, looks on. Walker's art features elements from other paintings in her portfolio as well as passages from favorite books and musical score excerpts. (Rob Taylor/The Daily Reflector)

**Mixed media art exhibit on display**

By Jackie Drake

A new art exhibit from an East Carolina University professor shows the many layers of life, in more ways than one.

Art professor Catherine Walker’s mixed media exhibit features more than 130 small pieces composed of layers of her oil paintings along with memorabilia from her life, like photographs and clippings from books and sheet music.

Themed “Journal,” the exhibit was hung at StarLight Café in downtown Greenville last week and will remain on display through January.

“It’s like a diary almost,” said Walker, referring to the personal memories embedded in her work: photos of her son Louis, quotes snipped from his children’s books, a photo of a doll’s head found on a beach during a trip to Costa Rica, a print of a chess piece from a set her parents owned, a map from a bicycle journey she took with a friend.
Born in London, Walker lived there and in South Africa for a time before selecting an art school in the southern United States to join an American friend. She came to ECU in 1980 when she was 19. After finishing her undergraduate and graduate degrees, she was hired to teach at ECU and has been ever since.

Walker’s primary medium of oil painting takes a long time to create, so she was looking for a quicker way to produce pieces.

She makes color photocopies of her main oil paintings, cuts and arranges them, adds clippings of text and photographs and pastes everything to a small block of wood. Occasionally she’ll paint over it again or add a touch of gold leaf. Then everything is sealed under two coats of varnish that produce a crackled finish as they dry.

While most artists are partial to canvas, Walker prefers to work on wood. “I like the stiffness and perfection, I can sand it down perfectly smooth,” she said. “I don’t like how canvas gives.”

Coming up with ideas and images to fill her wood blocks is the easy part for Walker. Making time to work on them every day is more difficult, but Walker takes a disciplined approach.

“The hard thing is to just make yourself go in there and do it, you can’t always wait until you’re inspired,” she said. “Some of my best drawing has been when I didn’t feel like it but I worked anyway.”

Sometimes she’ll take a finished block, make a color photocopy of the whole thing, and use clips of that copy in newer pieces of work. As a result certain images will appear multiple times in new forms.

“It’s very generational,” Walker said, especially appropriate since her son inspires much of her work.

Walker also inspires new generations of artists by teaching foundation courses to first-year students in the ECU School of Art and Design.

“That’s my favorite, that’s the most fun,” she said. “They come in knowing so little; some of them can’t draw a box on a table, then by the end of the semester they’re making these beautiful drawings. It’s so satisfying seeing that improvement.”

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Durham artist wins Bravo's 'Work of Art' competition

I'm so ashamed of myself. I was so busy last night watching the "Dexter" finale (before it got spoiled for me) and the "American Horror Story" finale (just to ensure I would have nightmares), that I didn't watch the season finale of Bravo's "Work of Art" reality competition show when it aired live at 9 p.m.

The shame is because Durham artist Kymia Nawabi was a finalist -- and she won!

The East Carolina grad did some great work this season and also showed herself to be a really nice person working alongside a group of bratty, immature mean girls. We're proud of Kymia for winning and for not being a witch to her fellow contestants. Like some people we could name.

Here's more about last night's episode and an interview Adrienne did with Kymia right as the season was starting. We hope to catch up with Kymia again soon!
AIDS work led by UNC scientist wins high praise

BY JAY PRICE - jprice@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL An HIV discovery from researchers led by a UNC-Chapel Hill scientist is the biggest scientific breakthrough of 2011, according to the prestigious journal Science.

The study found that early treatment with anti-retroviral drugs sharply cut the risk that infected patients will transmit HIV, which is the virus that causes AIDS. That finding could help slow the spread of the disease, perhaps dramatically.

The journal announced picks for the year's top breakthroughs in its latest edition, which was published online Thursday afternoon. In addition to the HIV study, there were nine runners-up.

"In combination with other promising clinical trials, the results have galvanized efforts to end the world's AIDS epidemic in a way that would been inconceivable even a year ago," said an editorial appearing in the journal, which went on to cite a statement by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last month that the goal of an AIDS-free generation is ambitious, but now possible.

"This is not to say that we can abandon the search for an AIDS vaccine," the editorial said, "or profound change will come overnight from the promise of using treatment as prevention. But for its role in making success..."
conceivable, we have chosen the results of this trial as our Breakthrough of the Year."

Dr. Myron S. Cohen - a professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology, and public health at UNC-CH and the director of the UNC-CH Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases - is the principal investigator of the study, which he designed and organized.

The study found that people infected with the virus are 96 percent less likely to spread it to a partner if they begin a regimen of drugs sooner than normal.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of that finding. The disease is estimated by the US Agency for International Development to have killed more than 25 million people since first reported in 1981. It also costs billions of dollars worldwide each year in treatment and prevention efforts and lost productivity.

The nine-nation, $73 million study was funded by the National Institutes of Health. It began in 2005 and had been expected to last until 2015. But the results were so important that an independent monitoring board recommended last spring that researchers release their findings early and tell the study participants.

Since then, key international players in public health - such as the World Health Organization, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS - have incorporated or are expected to incorporate the concept of treatment into their policy guidelines for battling AIDS.

'This is big'

Cohen said Thursday that he is elated about the honor from the journal not just for himself but for the research team and the university. "This is big," he said. "I'm not going to have this happen again."

Cohen's expertise with HIV/AIDS is in transmission and prevention, and he has spent more than two decades building a team at UNC-CH to study those topics.

After the board's recommendations, the researchers traveled to the 13 study sites spreading the word. They not only talked with study subjects but also explained the findings to ministers of health in all nine countries.

Antiviral drugs can be expensive and have side effects, so doctors often wait until a patient's immune system weakens to a certain level before recommending them.
The study was designed partly to determine whether early use of the drugs could reduce transmission and partly to look at the effects of the earlier treatment on those already infected.

It enrolled 1,763 couples at sites in Botswana, Brazil, India, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Thailand, the United States and Zimbabwe. Each couple included one partner who had HIV but still had a relatively healthy immune system, and one partner who was not infected.

These couples were randomly assigned to one of two groups. In one group, partners found to have HIV were immediately put on the drug regimen. In the other, the drugs were withheld unless the immune systems weakened to a certain point, though that point was still above the range recommended by the World Health Organization for beginning the use of the drugs.

When the board recommended ending the study, data indicated that among all couples enrolled, only 28 people contracted new infections of HIV that were linked via genetic testing to the infected partner in the study. Only one of those new infections occurred among couples in the immediate treatment group.

Heterosexual couples made up 97 percent of those in the study. The study results can't be used to draw conclusions about homosexual couples because so few were enrolled.

All the study subjects got health care, HIV testing and counseling on safe sex and condoms. It's not clear to what degree the subjects used the condoms, though they self-reported high rates of use. After the board recommended halting the study, patients with HIV in the deferred treatment group were offered the drugs. It's likely that both groups benefited from the study's focus on safe sex, Cohen said in an earlier interview.

**Recognition**

UNC-CH not only led the overall study, it also oversaw one of the study sites, enrolling 251 couples at UNC Project-Malawi, the university's research, care and training center in Lilongwe.

Cohen was being interviewed Thursday when, at exactly 2 p.m., Science published the news online. A cavalcade of congratulatory messages immediately began popping up in his email.

"Wow, here's an email from NIH, which is really nice," he said.

Including the research involved in building up to the initial theory, the researchers has invested two decades in the study, he said.
"It's really cool to have your peers recognize a lot of work, 20 years of work," he said.

The entire university was basking Thursday in the recognition, with stories appearing on various UNC-CH web pages. A video interview with Cohen popped up in the most prominent spot of the main university web page at precisely 2 p.m.

Cohen, though, wasn't able to revel in the honor much. Despite a role as one of the world's most respected HIV researchers, he still practices medicine. He was interviewed while on a brief break from treating patients with infectious diseases.

"So I get to enjoy this for about 10 minutes," he said, laughing.

Price: 919-829-4526

**What the journal says**

The magazine's cover trumpets "Breakthrough of the Year," "HIV Treatment as Prevention" over a hyper-magnified image of HIV viruses on the surface of an infected cell.

"Given resource constraints and logistical hurdles, treatment as prevention isn't going to sweep the world any time soon. But (the study) has made imaginations race about the what-ifs like never before, spotlighting the scientifically probable rather than the possible," author Jon Cohen wrote in a story about the study.
N.C. Central University officials said they fired campus police Lt. Michael Shaw last year after learning he sold sex toys out of the trunk of his patrol car while on duty.

A state administrative law judge on Wednesday upheld the university's decision, according to documents filed in the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Selling sex toys to the officers he supervised wasn't the only mark on his record during his six years of employment at NCCU.

According to the court affidavit filed Wednesday, Shaw's commanding officers described him as someone "who typically refused to accept responsibility for his actions."

In 2010, his commanding officers reprimanded him for failing to contact the campus counseling service after a student attempted to commit suicide.

A year before, he was reprimanded after his actions caused an automobile accident on campus, and, in 2008, commanders said he conducted an illegal search. He also failed to receive firearm certification "despite the university providing him with numerous hours of practice time and ammunition," the affidavit stated.

NCCU Police Chief Willie R. Williams and Capt. A.J. Carter would not comment Thursday on why Shaw, despite the blights on his record, had not been fired even before they discovered he sold sex toys at work.

On May 19, 2010, Shaw's supervisors learned he operated a business, "Shaw & Son's Enterprises," and that he emailed D Squad officers under his command information about one of his products, "Magic Power Coffee." In addition to the email, Shaw handed out to his fellow officers a brochure that claimed "Magic Power Coffee" would "improve overall sexual experience," according to the court affidavit.

Two days later, campus authorities said Shaw sold "Magic Power Coffee" to fellow officers Bobby Bunch and Myron Wade Bigelow in the parking lot of the police department.
On May 27, 2010, while on duty and in uniform, Shaw opened the trunk of his patrol car and showed officer Cheryl Geiger a variety of sex-oriented products - phalluses, handcuffs, oils and whips - that he was selling.

Geiger selected several items but did not have the cash to pay. Shaw told her to take them and pay him later, according to the affidavit. On June 4, Geiger returned the items to Shaw after she filed a report of the sale to a campus police detective.

Williams and Carter launched an investigation.

Shaw admitted to selling Geiger the sex toys but said it occurred during his break. He also argued that the items were not pornographic, his conduct was not illegal, and disciplinary action, particularly dismissal from the department, was unnecessary.

The department fired Shaw on Aug. 15, 2010.

Shaw's lawyer, Mark Key of Lillington, said his client will appeal the judge's ruling. Shaw sold items to officers who were his friends, he said, not to students or faculty members. Shaw showed Officer Geiger only after she approached him about the items he had for sale, Key said.

McDonald: 919-829-4533
Financial Aid Changes Game as Ivy Sports Teams Flourish

By BILL PENNINGTON

The eight Ivy League colleges, renowned for their academics, were also once among the country’s highest-achieving athletic institutions, with national champions and multiple prominent and ranked sports teams.

But that was 70 or 80 years ago, right?

This month, the Harvard men’s basketball team, which has played the sport for more than a century, was ranked in the nation’s top 25 for the first time. For two months last season, the Yale men’s ice hockey team was No. 1 in the country. Cornell’s wrestling team was No. 1 throughout the same winter, one year after the Cornell men’s basketball team advanced to the final 16 of the N.C.A.A. tournament.

In the last two years, the Ivy League has produced 108 first-team all-Americans and won numerous individual national championships. Nineteen of its athletes competed at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, and 10 won medals.

This renaissance in a league known as the Ancient Eight can be traced to something that has nothing to do with sports: new policies that have
substantially enhanced financial aid for all admitted students, making it easier to recruit elite athletes, coaches and athletic administrators said.

The Ivy League does not award athletic scholarships, but led by endowment-rich members like Harvard, Yale and Princeton, the conference has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in additional need-based aid — with most of the universities all but eliminating student loans and essentially doubling the size of grants meant for middle-income families.

The financial-aid enhancements have had a profound effect on the quality of athletic recruits. Rosters are now fortified with top athletes who would have turned down the Ivy League in the past because they would have been asked to pay $20,000 to $30,000 per year more than at other colleges.

“We’re seeing a significant change in the caliber of the student-athlete,” said Steve Bilsky, the University of Pennsylvania’s athletic director, one of more than 50 Ivy League administrators and coaches interviewed. “It’s not even the same population because the pool has widened. We see a considerable number of student-athletes turning down athletic scholarships from places like Stanford, Northwestern or Duke to come to Penn.”

Andy Noel, Cornell’s athletic director, said: “Eighty percent of our best recruits in the current freshman class would not have come here 10 years ago because we couldn’t match other schools’ offers. The impact has been enormous. And will continue to be.”

A recruited Ivy League athlete must have the academic credentials to survive the stringent and highly selective admissions process at each institution. Coaches have little sway in the admissions process, although they do provide a list of potential athletes to admissions officials. Across the league, about 13 percent of each university’s incoming class is composed of athletes chosen from coaches’ lists.

But the new, plentiful financial aid awards have permitted Ivy League coaches to compete head-to-head in the same recruiting arena as some big-time scholarship programs. And in sports like baseball, soccer, wrestling or lacrosse, where most athletic scholarships are split into partial scholarships worth a half or a quarter of the cost to attend, it is not uncommon for an Ivy League financial aid package to be superior to the athletic scholarship.

At most Ivy League institutions, families earning less than about $65,000 annually are now asked to make no contribution to their children’s education. Families making $65,000 to $180,000 might be expected to pay 10 percent to 18 percent of their annual income on a sliding scale. Ten years
ago, such families would have been expected to pay almost twice as much, and their child would probably have accumulated a debt of about $25,000 after four years.

The current guidelines vary from institution to institution and can be affected by multiple factors, but each Ivy League member has significantly increased aid packages and has shown noteworthy largess. And in another unprecedented move, a vast majority will match the aid package offered by another Ivy League member. That makes the financial aid awards in the Ivy League generally the most generous of any group of colleges or universities in the United States.

“When I was a senior in high school, I had about 20 basketball scholarship offers from all over,” said Shonn Miller, now a star 6-foot-7 freshman forward at Cornell. “But when they said I could come to Cornell for $2,000 a year, it made my decision pretty easy. I mean, are you kidding me? “With the finances out of the way, a lot of good players are taking the education, the prestige and the athletics in one package.”

Christian Webster, the second-leading scorer on Harvard’s basketball team last season, made the same choice even when the cost to attend Harvard was $20,000 a year, including room and board.

“It’s a sacrifice, but it’s doable,” said Webster, a junior who was Maryland’s high school player of the year in 2009 and had about 25 full athletic scholarship offers. “It’s not free, but it’s also not the full price of $50,000 or more. To me, it was a 40-year life decision, not a four-year decision.”

Around the Ivy League, financial-aid initiatives adopted in the last few years and directed at all students have significantly altered the decision-making of as many as 700 top recruited athletes. Erica Reetz, an outside hitter on Yale’s two-time defending Ivy League championship volleyball team, was weighing full athletic scholarship offers from colleges near her Wisconsin home as a high school senior.

But when Yale’s financial aid office offered her $33,000 to attend, she could not accept soon enough.

“Now I was going to Yale for the same cost as any other kid going to a state school,” Reetz said.

The Ivy League gradually stepped away from the upper tier of college athletic competition beginning in the late 1950s, most conspicuously in football. As other larger universities gave away thousands of athletic
scholarships and relaxed admissions standards for superior athletes, the Ivies retreated to focus on play against peer institutions with similar academic and athletic philosophies. Regional and national team championships were still won but more rarely, especially in major sports.

For decades thereafter, if elite athletes were also standout students, they were increasingly lured away by places like Notre Dame, Vanderbilt or Duke, which offered athletic scholarships and academic excellence.

“It got to the point where the only elite athletes we could reasonably recruit were either relatively poor or very wealthy,” said Rob Koll, Cornell’s wrestling coach for the last 19 years. “That’s because in either case, money was out of the equation. One kid was going to get full aid from us and the other kid’s family wasn’t much concerned by the cost.

“The new financial-aid policies level the playing field with middle-class recruits. Of course, we still lose recruits all the time.”

Indeed, no one is predicting that Ivy League football teams will be competing for a national championship any time soon. For starters, they have not been allowed to compete in the postseason for decades. There are other rigorous institutional checks, with Ivy League presidents routinely wielding complete authority over athletics. Last month, Ruth Simmons, the Brown president, announced she was cutting the number of recruited athletes admitted by 20 spots. And getting aid at an Ivy League university is not like accepting an athletic scholarship; it involves filling out arduous federal financial aid forms, writing admission application essays and taking multiple standardized tests.

Still, Ivy League coaches have enthusiastically entered the recruiting wars with a new zeal, and one of the first things they do is direct recruits to the financial aid calculator on their institutions’ Web sites. After students enter personal data, the costs to matriculate are revealed in less than 10 minutes.

“That calculator is the greatest thing,” said Erin Appleman, Yale’s volleyball coach. “Parents call me right back and say, ‘Hey, we can pay that much.’ ”

Appleman, like more than a dozen other coaches interviewed, said at least half of her recent recruits were from middle-class families who would not have attended Yale, or any Ivy League university, even five years ago.

“I can tell the demographics of my team are changing because not everyone is going to Cancún for spring break,” she said, laughing. “The middle-class kids are going home.”
Benefits, and a Few Snags, in Recruiting

By BILL PENNINGTON

For Ivy League athletics, there have been some additional, indirect benefits — and veiled complications — to the new financial-aid initiatives instituted throughout the league.

For example, because the improved financial aid packages are available to all students, there is no limit to the number awarded on a given team, unlike athletic scholarships, which are regulated with specific maximums set by the N.C.A.A. Ivy League-recruited athletes, however, must meet admission standards significantly more stringent than the rudimentary eligibility standards established by the N.C.A.A — as well as academic guidelines tied to individual fields of study. But some Ivy coaches still see a new opportunity.

“If I can find 30 guys who can qualify for $40,000 a year and be admitted, then all the better,” said Brett Boretti, Columbia’s baseball coach, referring to a complete four-year roster. “No other coach can do that. That would be pretty hard, but the point is there’s no maximum.”

Because the new financial aid packages are largely aimed at middle-income families, they have also allowed Ivy coaches to deliver a contemporary recruiting message that resonates during uncertain economic times.

“A lot of parents want to hear that their child will get a good job upon graduation,” said Mike Murphy, Penn’s men’s lacrosse coach. “I can go to our Web site and show them first-year, fifth-year and 10th-year average salaries for Penn grads. That’s effective, especially if the family is considering an athletic scholarship offer but wants to determine the real end worth.”

The new policies, at the same time, have some unresolved wrinkles, like the interplay of matching aid packages within the league. Because Harvard, Yale and Princeton are seen as the gold standard in financial aid, they create an additional layer of strategy. It is sometimes to the advantage of a coach at another Ivy institution to have a recruit get a financial aid appraisal from H-Y-P, as Harvard, Yale and Princeton are continually referred to in the league.
The coach knows that his institution will match any H-Y-P package, which is good not only for the athlete, but also from a competitive standpoint if the athlete has scholarship offers from outside the league.

“It’s also Russian roulette,” said Rob Koll, coach of Cornell’s wrestling team, which has finished second in the last two collegiate national championships. “I’ve never encouraged a recruit to get a Harvard financial aid number, but I have explained our policy and seen a kid go down that road. He ended up taking the Harvard offer and winning an individual national championship. So that didn’t work out so good.”

Mentioning any kind of national championship in the context of Ivy sports makes coaches, administrators and athletes in the league revel in an aura of rebirth. Tommy Amaker, now in his fifth year as Harvard’s men’s basketball coach, recalled his first days recruiting for the Crimson.

“People would sometimes say, ‘I didn’t know Harvard had a basketball team,’ ” said Amaker, an all-American at Duke in the 1980s. “But you could also see they were intrigued by something they had never considered, and they were attracted to the newness of our accomplishments.

“That has been powerful. Harvard has been around since 1636; it’s pretty hard to accomplish anything new.”
December 22, 2011

Colleges Fail to Complete Required Safety Plans

By SARAH J. PAWLOWSKI and MATT MANETTI

More than three years after the fatal shootings at Northern Illinois University prompted a state law requiring colleges and universities to put safety plans in effect, few of Cook County’s 63 higher-education institutions have filed them and many may not have made them public.

Widespread noncompliance with the Illinois Campus Security Enhancement Act illustrates serious shortcomings of the law: lack of both an enforcement provision and a clear mandate as to which public agency is responsible for ensuring compliance, lawmakers and people who have administered the statute said.

“Nobody has the authority to enforce this act,” said Gretchen Jarrett, the state’s campus security coordinator.

Ms. Jarrett is the only employee responsible for helping the state’s 189 colleges and universities make violence-prevention plans and plans for any kind of emergency, conduct annual security training and assemble behavior-assessment teams to track dangerous conduct on campuses.

There was no campus security coordinator until November 2010 — nearly two years after the law took effect — when the Illinois Terrorism Task Force appointed Roy Garcia, a 35-year law enforcement veteran.

“The unfortunate thing about the Campus Safety Enhancement Act is that there really is no teeth for any type of enforcement,” said Mr. Garcia, who left the post in October.

Senator John Millner, a Republican from Carol Stream who was one of the 12 sponsors of the legislation, said schools that were not complying with the law should be sanctioned. “Just because they found a loophole in the law,” because it has no enforcement provisions, failing to comply is irresponsible, he said. Just 7 of the 63 Cook County colleges and universities said in interviews with ChicagoTalks, a news Web site, that they were complying.

ChicagoTalks is run by students and overseen by the journalism faculty at Columbia College Chicago.

Eleven of the county’s higher-education institutions are not in compliance with at least part of the law, according to the interviews. The other schools
could not or would not provide enough information to show whether they were complying.

Officials at several institutions expressed frustration, saying that they had received little or no guidance from the state.

“We try to comply,” said Bruno Bondavalli, dean of academic and student affairs at St. Augustine College in Chicago. Mr. Bondavalli said he did not know whether the college, which hired consultants to help create its plan, is doing what is required by the law.

Senators Edward Maloney, a Chicago Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Higher Education Committee, and Ira Silverstein, also a Democrat from Chicago; and Representative Angelo Saviano, a Republican from Elmwood Park, pledged to revisit the law when legislators return to Springfield next year.

“I’ll look into this immediately to find out why they can’t implement this,” Mr. Silverstein said.

Austin Quick, speaker of the Northern Illinois student senate, said schools should be held accountable.

ChicagoTalks reporters Elizabeth Beyer, Ellyn Fortino, Mario Lekovic and Blair Mishleau contributed reporting. A grant from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and awarded by the Chicago Headline Club helped support reporting for this article.