THE DAILY CLIPS

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An East Carolina University police officer is assigned to administrative leave following his arrest in an off-campus sex offense involving a student.

A second officer also is on leave in connection with the April incident, ECU spokeswoman Mary Schulken said on Wednesday.

The Greenville Police Department issued a warrant on April 24, that alleges Clifton Earl Griffin, 50, of 504 Boxelder Way, Greenville, committed sexual battery on April 14.

Greenville police Sgt. Joe Friday said the victim, an ECU student, is 20 years old.

The warrant accuses Griffin of grabbing the woman’s butt, putting his tongue down her throat and putting his hand in her bra.

The warrant did not say where the incident occurred, and officials have declined to elaborate. Schulken said it happened off campus and Griffin was not on duty.

The second officer was present when the alleged battery occurred, ECU Police Chief Scott Shelton said in a statement prepared April 26 by the university. His name has not been released and he also was not on duty.

The two have been on leave since the incident was reported, Shelton said.

“We acted immediately when the incident was reported and are in the process of a vigorous internal investigation to make a determination on any actions that may be necessary,” he said in the statement.

Schulken said Wednesday the internal investigation is continuing and that the Greenville Police Department is investigating the charge against Griffin.

Court records show he was served with the warrant on April 26 and received a $5,000 unsecured bond. A DNA sample was collected from Griffin after he was arrested, records show.

He is set to appear in court on June 11.

Contact Kristin Zachary at kzachary@reflector.com and 252-329-9566 and follow her on Twitter @kzacharygdr.
Vidant names new CEO
Thursday, May 17, 2012

Vidant Health announced Wednesday that David Herman, president and chief operating officer, will take the helm as chief executive officer on July 1.

Dave McRae, current chief executive officer of Vidant Health, will remain with the organization serving in an emeritus role while completing the transition of responsibilities for an unspecified time period.

“We are excited about this transition,” said David Womack, chairman of the Vidant Health board of directors, in a news release. “This is a great opportunity to recognize Dave McRae’s many years of exemplary service to this organization while looking forward with Dr. Herman and embracing this new age of health care.”

Herman has expertise and experience consolidating and integrating physician practice networks, developing formal relationships with national and regional provider groups and building operational structures to serve those relationships, the release said.

Vidant Health spokeswoman Beth Anne Atkins said Vidant is not releasing the salary and compensation package for Herman in his future position or in his current job.

Those figures will become available to the public with the subsequent filing of nonprofit returns with the Internal Revenue Service. The most recent available tax form shows McRae received annual compensation of $1.5 million and received a $7.7 million
supplemental executive retirement fund. Possible compensation for his upcoming emeritus CEO position was not released.

On Tuesday, the Vidant Health board of trustees went into a two-hour closed session to discuss personnel and legal matters. In open session, the board voted unanimously to approve a motion giving the compensation and benefits committee the authority to approve a CEO employment contract and an amendment to the employment contract of the CEO emeritus for Vidant Health. No further information was released.

“That motion was just one of the steps needed in the transition process,” Atkins said Wednesday.

In the release, McRae voiced support for his successor.

“He is ideally suited to carry on the mission of service that we have all shared through this special organization,” McRae said.

McRae has served as CEO of Vidant Health, formerly known as University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, since 1999. Prior to that, he was president, CEO and chief operating officer of Vidant Medical Center, formerly known as Pitt County Memorial Hospital. McRae began his health care career as a physical therapist in 1968.

Herman, a native of International Falls, Minn., joined the system last summer. Prior to his employment with Vidant Health, he was director of the Employee and Community Health Program at Mayor Clinic Rochester. He said his decision to relocate to eastern North Carolina was based on the potential to unify a system of care that will be critical in the coming years.

“I am confident this team can design, execute and demonstrate a new system of health care to serve the people of eastern Carolina,” Herman said in the release.

He also serves on the board of trustees of Ronald McDonald House Charities, the international charity that sponsors and supports Ronald McDonald Houses worldwide.
William Friday hospitalized in critical condition

By Jane Stancill - jstancill@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL -- William Friday, a North Carolina icon and retired president of the University of North Carolina system, was in critical condition Wednesday at UNC Hospitals.

A UNC spokesman confirmed the hospitalization, but no further details were available about the health of Friday, who is 91.

In 2008, Friday suffered a minor heart attack, and in 2009, he had surgery to replace a heart valve. But generally, Friday kept a remarkably busy schedule deep into his retirement. He last taped his weekly UNC-TV interview show, “North Carolina People,” on May 9, as he has done since 1971.

On Sunday, he and his wife, Ida, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

Friday is widely known as an esteemed leader in higher education nationally and one of the most revered figures in North Carolina.

Before retiring in 1986, Friday served three decades at the helm of the UNC system during a period of rapid change and growth. On his watch, the university system expanded from three campuses to six and finally to 16. Enrollment jumped from nearly 15,000 students to 125,500, and the annual budget swelled from $40.7 million to $1.5 billion.

He was instrumental in the creation of the Atlantic Coast Conference for athletics and the development of Research Triangle Park. He became a critic of the influence of big money on college sports as a co-founder of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

A staunch believer in the power of education to lift people from poverty and make them good citizens, Friday was a crusader for state support for universities and making them affordable for families.

In a 2010 interview with The News & Observer to mark his 90th birthday, Friday said the cost of college is a major issue for UNC students of today. “The strength of this place has been that every child in North Carolina could dream of going to one of these institutions, if they did their work,” he said. “Now, the cost is eroding that dramatically.”
Jim and Sue Taylor are working to create KAMPN, a weeklong camp for children with autism and their families. Photo by Kellen Moore.

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**KAMPN to cater to kids with autism**

by Kellen Moore

Deep Gap resident Jim Taylor has devoted most of his working life to helping people with special needs.

Even in “retirement,” he can't seem to stop.

“I didn't know God was going to refire me instead of retire me,” Taylor said.

He and his wife, Sue, are now laying the foundations for a weeklong residential camp in Watauga County for children with autism and their families, with plans to open in July 2013.

KAMPN, or Kids with Autism Making Progress in Nature, aims to provide a fun and relaxing retreat for families whose daily lives may not always be that calm.

Taylor began planning for the camp more than a year ago and secured nonprofit status in May 2011.

But you might say his preparations began decades ago.
Taylor received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Ball State University and his doctorate degree from the University of Florida.

After living and working in Indiana for several years, Taylor and his wife moved to North Carolina in 1985. He worked for a year at the Caswell Developmental Center in Kinston before teaching at East Carolina University.

During a sabbatical from ECU, Taylor and his wife moved to Micronesia for two years, where he served as a preschool teacher for 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities. During those decades, Taylor saw the public response to autism change dramatically. The leading advocacy organization changed its name from the National Association for Retarded Children to simply The Arc, and the prevalence of autism increased substantially.

Working with special needs hit home for the Taylors when their 10th grandchild, Charlie, was diagnosed with autism.

The mission of KAMPN, Taylor said, is to provide an opportunity for families to experience nature together, an option rarely available for families who include children with autism. It also will provide respite for parents who desire it.

The camp will be staffed by college students in special education or related fields who will be trained beforehand, Taylor said. Working at KAMPN will allow those students to get hands-on experience before entering the workforce, he said.

The student staff members will live with the families in primitive cabins Taylor plans to build, possibly on his 25 acres in Deep Gap.

The majority of his fundraising goal — about $250,000 — will go toward construction of those cabins and an executive director position, but Taylor said he also wants to provide scholarships for the families to attend.

“Parents with children with autism have an immense amount of expenses,” he said. “A lot of them can't afford it, so the kids don't go to camp.”

Each week of camp is set to include hiking, barbecues, music, art and other activities, Taylor said.

Taylor has already built a network of support, including a board of directors and a group of parent advisors. Dozens of experts in the field have written letters of support for the program.

One of KAMPN's supporters, Dennis Mashue of Midland, Mich., said he has seen the dramatic benefits of nature in the development of his 13-year-old son, Tucker, who has autism.
Tucker stopped speaking completely at 15 months old and was nearly 4 before he started to speak again, Mashue said. Developmental regressions like those are common among children with autism.

Part of what helped was being outdoors, Mashue said.

“There would go out hiking in the woods and he would sit in the sand and write the numbers in the sand,” he said.

Martha Routh, the former executive director of ASU's Crinkleroot Retreat, said she, too, has observed the tremendous benefits nature provides for children with autism. Crinkleroot Retreat started in 2010 through ASU to provide a weekend-long day camp experience for children with an autism spectrum disorder.

While the program was an exciting opportunity for the children involved, the program also provided parents a brief break from their often-taxing duties, Routh said.

“The parents are very excited just to have time with their other kids or to spend time with their spouse,” she said. “It's a very important part of a lot of our families' lives, to have that week where they can focus on other things that are just as important as their own child's care but are often placed on the back burner.”

Taylor said his goal for KAMPN is to include four families per week for four weeks to start. But he hopes that the camp can be expanded for more weeks in the future — and that it can be replicated in other locations.

Statistics show the need for such programs is growing.

In March, a study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the prevalence of autism has risen about 80 percent in the past 10 years.

Today about 1 in 88 children in the U.S. falls somewhere on the autism spectrum, the study found.

Increasing the community's knowledge and acceptance of people with autism is also a part of Taylor's goal with KAMPN.

While starting such a camp might seem like a formidable plan, Jim and Sue Taylor don't shy from staying active.

For 10 years they were “puppy parents” for New Life Mobility Assistance Dogs and continue to be involved. They have visited lighthouses across the world and last June completed “El Camino de Santiago de Compostela,” a 500-mile hike across Spain. Those are just a snippet of the many activities that keep them moving constantly.

“Get out and give back, that's our motto,” Sue Taylor said.
The pair is hoping this latest endeavor, KAMPN, will open the benefits of nature for local families who live with autism.

“I see that change that happens in nature with them,” Jim Taylor said. “It's been shown through research that it makes a lot of difference. … They're a little more free out there.”

Anyone interested in contributing to KAMPN can contact the Taylors by mail at 1255 Wildcat Ridge, Deep Gap, N.C. 28618, by phone at (828) 264-0054 or by email at (kampn4autism@yahoo.com)
Fayetteville native Bill McMurray will bring his booming baritone back home Saturday, May 19 when the Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra presents "Opera in Narration."

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Fayetteville State University's Seabrook Auditorium and will feature several high-profile and distinctive operatic works, including the Prelude, "Habanera" and "Toreador's Song" from "Carmen"; "Largo al factotum della citta" from "The Barber of Seville"; and "Un bel di vedremo" from "Madama Butterfly."

A narrator will share the meaning behind each opera, adding layers of context to a musical art form that is sometimes rather dense or uninviting to casual fans.

The concert will be the big finish to the symphony's season, said Christine Kastner, the symphony's president and CEO.

"Having a narrator set the story line for each piece before it's performed is going to be a nice treat for our audience," said Kastner. "It's going to help people understand it, and when they understand it, they can appreciate it, and that's a high priority for me."

McMurray, a military brat and 1991 South View High School graduate, will be part of the lineup of opera soloists. He used to sing as a member of Highland Presbyterian Church. The East Carolina University graduate now lives and performs in Chicago.

"I like the concept of this show, as oftentimes you get in front of an audience that isn't familiar with opera, and they're stuck not knowing what the singer is singing about," McMurray said.

Kastner and McMurray said the particular opera pieces are well-known by sound, if not by name.

"These pieces are sort of an all-star lineup of songs," Kastner said.

McMurray agreed.
"A lot of people say they've never heard opera, but when they hear these pieces, they'll be surprised that they actually have," McMurray said. "Basically, if you've ever watched the first 'Bad News Bears' movie or the Tom & Jerry or Bugs Bunny cartoons, then you've heard opera."

Kastner hopes the ease of recognition will help open more doors to opera in the future.

"We'd love to bring more opera to the area," she said.

Tickets are $25 for adults and $20 for seniors and military. A free shuttle will take concert-goers from Highland Presbyterian Church, 111 Highland Ave., to FSU. Call 433-469 for reservations.

The symphony's 2012-13 lineup will be revealed during the concert.

Staff writer Brian Dukes can be reached at dukesb@fayobserver.com or 486-3523.
Hall of Fame OU baseball coach calls it a day

Carbone the winningest coach in OU history

By Adam Flango

Photo Credits: Photo by Joel Hawksley/Ohio University Athletic Department.
Photo Caption: Ohio head baseball coach Joe Carbone is pictured during the Bobcats’ game against West Virginia State on March 6.

As the sun set on a warm Tuesday evening, the Ohio Bobcats were looking to add to a 6-2 lead against Dayton in the bottom of the seventh inning at Bob Wren Stadium in Athens.

Senior right-fielder Jensen Painter, who crushed solo home runs in the second and fourth innings, was on first after drawing a walk. Lanky freshman outfielder Tyler Wells was on third.

Ohio head baseball coach Joe Carbone had a trick up his sleeve.

He signaled to Jensen, who ambled toward second immediately after the pitch was thrown. Dayton catcher Josh Jeffery took the bait.

He threw down to second base, giving Wells the green light to take off for him.

Upon realizing the error, Dayton's Jared Broughtman whipped the ball home but Wells' slide beat the tag. 7-2 Bobcats.

It was a play that showcased sound fundamentals, a staple of Carbone-coached teams for the last 24 years.

Those fundamentals were born in a small industrial and farming town in central Pennsylvania located less than one mile from the New York border. Elkland, Pa., thrived from the Elkland Leather Tannery, the largest leather tannery in the world. The company had contracts with the military to produce soles for boots, and every child's father seemed to work in the factory.

When Joe Carbone was around 6, his father rented a backhoe, circled a hayfield behind the house and dug out the sod. The field was all dirt with a home plate made out of 2' x 8' wooden boards. Pallets were pounded
together for a backstop. Hitting the ball over a chicken wire fence was a home run.

"It was our little field of dreams," Carbone said recently in his office, which is lined with photographs of Bobcat greats.

Carbone took 100 swings everyday at that field, just like Ted Williams, with his three next-door neighbors taking cuts and shagging balls with him.

When he and his friends outgrew their homemade diamond, they took their talents to Elkland High School.

"Everyone played everything," said Carbone, still shy about accepting recognition for his accomplishments.

Basketball was his best sport, and he was pretty good at soccer, too. (Elkland did not have a football team.) But he always loved baseball the most.

In 1966, there were only two baseball camps in the country. One was the Ted Williams baseball camp in Massachusetts. The other was run by a trio of coaches in Chillicothe, Ohio. So when his neighbor asked him if he wanted to go, Carbone started mowing lawns to save up enough money to attend the Ohio camp.

Finally, he boarded a bus with his friend in Corning, Pa., and made the trek to the baseball camp.

The first night he arrived, the camp staff, which was made up of college students, took on a local Legion team. The Legion team featured a tall pitcher who had been selected in the MLB Draft the year before. The staff team was without a second baseman, so they grabbed Carbone.

He stepped in and surprised himself by getting a couple of hits off the soon-to-be major leaguer as a high school junior.

THE GAME CAPTURED the attention of the two main coaches running the camp, East Carolina University head coach Earl Smith and Ohio University coach Bob Wren.

"I thought I got special care the rest of the week," recalled Carbone.

When Wren first approached Carbone about visiting the university, Carbone committed the cardinal sin for Bobcats.

"You mean Ohio State?"

"No, I mean Ohio," Wren replied. "Ohio State is a bad word."

So the next year, Carbone agreed to visit Athens.
"I loved the campus and everything about it," Carbone said. "But I didn't think I could play baseball here."

The future MLB draftees on OU's squad intimidated the undersized utility man, but Wren persuaded him to accept the scholarship offer.

But even with a scholarship, Carbone's spot on the team was not guaranteed. He had to beat out around 140 players and nine second-basemen for a spot on the squad.

Armed with the confidence he gained at the baseball camp and knowledge of how important fundamentals were to Wren, Carbone earned a spot as the starting second baseman his sophomore year.

In 1969, he led the team with a .367 batting average. As a captain in 1970, he led a team that feature future MLB Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt to the College World Series. "The greatest team Ohio University has ever seen," Carbone said with a smile.

But only a few days before heading to Omaha, a wild pitch struck Carbone in the ankle. It hurt, but not badly enough to have it X-rayed. So he continued to play on it, but quickly realized that it might be worse than he thought. The X-ray confirmed his suspicion. His ankle was broken.

"Things were different (after the injury). You feel like you're half a second behind," Carbone said.

But the self-deprecating coach was quick to point out that the injury had nothing to do with his Major League dreams never being realized. That happened with a conversation at a bar.

After Carbone was drafted by the Kansas City Royals in the draft's sixth round, he reported to their minor league team in Kingston, Tenn., then moved to another team in the Midwest League. He was being shuffled from position to position and knew he was overmatched at this level, but he had to hear it from someone else first.

So at a national baseball conference, he approached Royals minor league catching instructor Steve Korcheck.

"If you tell anyone I said this, I'll hunt you down and I'll shoot ya," Korcheck told him. "Our minor league managers all want you as their utility guy, but they just project you to go to AA or AAA. You're not big league material."

WITH THAT, CARBONE'S COACHING CAREER began. It was something he always knew he wanted to do after his playing days were over.
He received his master's degree in physical education at Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., spent five years as an assistant coach for Toledo and another 10 years at Ohio State before being asked to apply for the head coaching job at Ohio.

"It never even entered my mind that someone could come and coach at the same place Coach Wren coached," Carbone said.

But using the tools that his mentor instilled in him, Carbone bested Wren. He will leave Ohio as the winningest coach in school history and the second winningest coach in Mid-American Conference history.

His 1997 squad finished 43-18, the best record in school history.

He has been at the school for 24 years, a remarkable feat considering the ever-increasing turnover rate in collegiate coaching ranks. Only 12.5 percent of collegiate baseball coaches have been with their teams at least 20 years and that figure drops to 4 percent for basketball and 2 percent for football.

And he had opportunities to leave. Carbone was offered head-coaching jobs at one Atlantic Coast Conference school and four jobs at Big Ten schools. But the timing was never right, and he and his family were comfortable in Athens.

But even though he will not return to the dugout at Bob Wren Stadium after this weekend's home finale against Miami, Carbone is not finished coaching. His departure from OU was based on ensuring his family was taken care of and being able to take advantage of the university buyouts offered last year.

He now plans to move to Columbus and call up his coaching compatriots and see if he can find the right fit as an assistant on a low-level minor league team, where he can still work on developing younger players with a hands-on approach.

But he is also going to take more time for himself to improve on his "infinity" golf handicap and bag a couple of eight-point bucks, something he has been doing since he was little.

"There's two places I love being — in a tree stand and in a third-base coaching box," Carbone said. "Because I'm there all by myself, doing what I want to do."
FOUNTAIN

Coaching legend gets key to city

A key to the city unlocked a flood of goodwill on May 8 from town commissioners, staff and audience members as they recognized coaching legend and former Fountain resident Henry “Blacky” Trevathan.

Reading from a prepared document, Commissioner Alex Albright proclaimed May 10 Henry Trevathan Day in Fountain.

“This is all too much,” Trevathan said upon receiving the key to the city presented by Albright and Mayor Shirley Mitchell. “I’m overwhelmed. This really touches my heart.”

Though Trevathan has received many awards during his long football coaching career, May 10 was a highlight. That night he officially was inducted into the North N.C. Sports Hall of Fame during a ceremony in Raleigh.
A boost for N.C.’s education

By Ann Campbell

If ever there were a time to test what we are really made of, that time is now. As our state races to the bottom in funding education and we deprive our children of an adequate education, we need to ask ourselves: How did we arrive at this very sad place? Do we really want North Carolina to be in the bottom 12 percent of all states in funding education? And is there a way – especially for the most fortunate among us – to step up, take a stand, and say, “This is wrong!”?

A good place to start would be working across the aisle and considering the revenue proposal put forward by the Together NC coalition.

In the short term, the Together NC plan calls for (a) restoring the recently cut penny in our sales tax and (b) adding a top income tax bracket for households earning over $1 million per year. To make the tax code more equitable, the plan also includes (c) increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit, to put money back into the pockets of low- and moderate-income working families who might otherwise be disproportionately impacted by the restored sales tax.

We can use this additional revenue to restore funding for education and for making North Carolina an attractive place to do business.

For decades, large and small businesses have thrived here as a result of our high quality of life, skilled labor and our strong workforce development system. Unfortunately, the ongoing economic downturn and resulting budget cuts have strained the public education systems that historically supported our business growth. Since 2009, North Carolina has lost over 16,000 public school positions, according to a survey by the state Department of Public Instruction. Tuition has increased dramatically at our public colleges and universities, funding per pupil has decreased in most public school systems and pre-kindergarten education is available for many fewer children.

Without high-quality schools, a good quality of life and adequate infrastructure, our business climate will suffer and economic growth will slow further. Consider what we know works in and for North Carolina: universities that are hubs of innovation, community colleges that train and retrain our workers, strong public schools that
retain top-notch teachers, well-maintained infrastructure that makes doing business efficient.

In my own business experience, education has been critical to growing our company. First, to serve our clients’ complex needs, we require a highly educated workforce in which a large proportion of our consultants hold master’s or Ph.D. degrees in life sciences, MBAs or MPHs, M.D.s, Pharm. D.s, or other advanced degrees or combinations of them. Second, to recruit those highly sought-after employees to work in a specific office, we have to answer tough questions about quality of life, quality of education available for family members and property values. We couldn’t recruit and retain a high-quality workforce to support our business’ growth without good answers to those questions.

So, although times are hard, now is not the time to engage in rigid partisanship or to cling to dogmatic views that erode our competitiveness. Now is the time to renew our commitment to the public systems and infrastructure that pave the way for economic prosperity in North Carolina.

To do that, state legislators must raise revenue in 2012. After years of multi-billion-dollar budget shortfalls, our state’s schools and colleges need an infusion of resources to get us back on track.

The Together NC plan would raise just under $1 billion in 2013, enough to rehire thousands of teachers, recover some of the lost funding for public schools, lower college tuition and expand access to early childhood education. These investments will spur job growth, attract businesses and develop a highly skilled workforce.

In the long term, we need to overhaul our state’s tax code so that it matches our modern economy. That means taking a comprehensive look at the entire system to ensure that it is stable, equitable and adequate. In the meantime, we should raise revenue to restore our commitment to education and infrastructure. None of these educational systems are accidental or superfluous. We built them all as a state because we wanted to be more, do more, produce more and earn more in North Carolina.

Fortunately, we haven’t gone too far down the wrong path. We can still recover; the foundations of our K-12 and university systems remain intact. But we need to go forward, not backward. To do that, more revenue is needed.

Ann Campbell is co-founder, former president and board member of Campbell Alliance Group and a board member of WasteZero. She is also a parent and a PTA volunteer.
Bipartisanship, the supposed scarcity of which so distresses the high-minded, actually is disastrously prevalent.

Since 2001, it has produced No Child Left Behind, a counterproductive federal intrusion in primary and secondary education; the McCain-Feingold speech rationing law (the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act); an unfunded prescription drug entitlement; troublemaking by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; government-directed capitalism from the Export-Import Bank; crony capitalism from energy subsidies; unseemly agriculture and transportation bills; continuous bailouts of an unreformed Postal Service; housing subsidies; subsidies for state and local governments; and many other bipartisan deeds, including most appropriations bills.

Now, with Europe’s turmoil dramatizing the decadence of entitlement cultures, and with American governments – federal, state and local – buckling beneath unsustainable entitlements, Congress is absent-mindedly creating a new entitlement for the already privileged. Concerning the “problem” of certain federal student loans, the two parties pretend to be at daggers drawn, skirmishing about how to “pay for” the ”solution.” But a bipartisan consensus is congealing: Certain student borrowers – and eventually all student borrowers, because, well, why not? – should be entitled to loans at a subsidized 3.4 percent interest rate forever.

In 2006, Democrats, trying to capture control of Congress by pandering to students and their parents, proposed cutting in half the statutory 6.8 percent rate on some federal student loans. Holding Congress in 2007, and with no discernible resistance from the compassionately conservative Bush administration, Democrats disguised the full-decade cost of this – $60 billion – by pretending the subsidy, which now costs $6 billion a year, would expire in five years.

The five years are up July 1 and of course the 3.4 percent rate will be extended. Barack Obama supports this. So does Mitt Romney, while campaigning against a “government-centered society.” What would we do without bipartisanship?

The low 6.8 percent rate – private loans for students cost about 12 percent – was itself the result of a federal subsidy. And students have no collateral that can be
reposessed in case they default, which 23 percent of those receiving the loans in question do. The maximum loan for third- and fourth-year students is $5,500 a year. The payment difference between 3.4 percent and 6.8 percent is less than $10 a month, so the “problem” involves less than 30 cents a day.

The 3.4 percent rate applies only to one category of federal loans, but because the Obama administration has essentially socialized the student loan business, federal loans are 90 percent of student borrowing and this “temporary” rate probably will eventually be made permanent for all federal student loans.

Unsurprisingly, Obama has used this loan issue as an occasion to talk about himself, remembering the “mountain of debt” he and Michelle had when, armed with four Ivy League degrees (he from Columbia, she from Princeton, both from Harvard law), they graduated into the American elite. The Atlantic’s Conor Friedersdorf notes that if Washington is feeling flush enough to spend another $60 billion on education in a decade, it could find more deserving people to subsidize than a privileged minority of college students who are acquiring credentials strongly correlated with higher-than-average future earnings.

The average annual income of high school graduates with no college is $41,288; for college graduates with just a bachelor’s degree it is $71,552. So the one-year difference ($30,264) is more than the average total indebtedness of the two-thirds of students who borrow ($25,250). Taxpayers, most of whom are not college graduates (the unemployment rate for persons with no college: 7.9 percent), will pay $6 billion a year to make it slightly easier for some fortunate students to acquire college degrees (the unemployment rate for college graduates: 4 percent).

Between now and July, the two parties will pretend that it is a matter of high principle how the government should pretend to “pay for” the $6 billion while borrowing $1 trillion this year. But bipartisanship will have been served by putting another entitlement on a path to immortality.

Campaigning recently at Bradley University in Peoria, Romney warned students about their burden from the national debt, but when he took questions, the first questioner had something else on her peculiar mind: “So you’re all for like ‘yay freedom and all this stuff and yay like pursuit of happiness.’ You know what would make me happy? Free birth control.” While awaiting that eventual entitlement, perhaps she can land a subsidized loan so she can inexpensively continue to hone her interesting intellect.

Washington Post Writers Group
Judge denies request to order UNC to pay imprisoned professor

By Dave Hart - dhart@newsobserver.com

HILLSBOROUGH - An Orange County judge on Wednesday declined to order UNC-Chapel Hill to resume paying salary and benefits to physics professor Paul Frampton, who is in an Argentinian prison on drug charges.

Superior Court Judge Allen Baddour denied attorney Barry Nakell’s request for a temporary restraining order that would have required the university to pay Frampton his salary and benefits pending a hearing on a preliminary injunction.

Frampton, the Louis D. Rubin Jr. Distinguished Professor of Physics and Astronomy at UNC, was arrested Jan. 23 in the Buenos Aires airport after two kilograms of cocaine were found in his checked luggage. He says he is innocent and is confident of being exonerated in court.

University officials informed Frampton in February that his salary and benefits would be halted until he was able to resume his duties.

Nakell argued that the university cannot legally do that.

“The university has no legal basis to terminate Professor Frampton’s salary and benefits,” Nakell said. “Even if the university took action to discharge or suspend him, there are detailed procedures that have to be followed.”

Baddour didn’t rule on that argument Wednesday.

He denied Nakell’s motion because, he said, it failed to meet two of the requirements necessary for a temporary restraining order.

First, Baddour said, the complaint failed to demonstrate that Frampton had a likelihood of success on the merits of an “underlying claim,” such as an allegation of breach of contract or some other violation.

Frampton’s complaint included no such underlying claim, and therefore, Baddour said, “the court is unable to find that a likelihood of success on the merits is possible.”

The judge also said the complaint failed to demonstrate that Frampton would suffer “irreparable harm” without a restraining order.

The matter will almost certainly come before the court again. Nakell said he intends to file an amended complaint.
Shaw University board elects new chairman

By Jane Stancill The News and Observer

RALEIGH - Willie Gary, the Florida multimillionaire lawyer, is no longer chairman of the Board of Trustees at Shaw University.

The university announced Wednesday that the board had elected a new chairman – Joseph Bell of Savannah, Ga. He is a Shaw alumnus and banker who had served as the board’s vice chairman.

Gary will remain on the board, the university said, having been re-elected to another two-year term.

The longtime chairman grabbed headlines in 1991 with a $10 million pledge to Shaw, but acknowledged in a 2010 interview that he had not kept up with payments on the planned donation. The university’s student center is named for Gary.

In 2010, Shaw’s national alumni group called for the university’s trustees to step down in a letter to Gary.

Shaw, the South’s oldest historically black college, has seen several years of turmoil, including leadership changes, financial hardship and an accreditation review.

Last spring, the university suffered trauma when a tornado ripped through the campus, damaging virtually every building and shutting the school down for the remainder of the semester. The university worked to repair the damage and reopened last fall.

The university also saw triumph this year when the Lady Bears women’s basketball team won the Division II national championship.
Embezzlement charges filed against ex-US House candidate

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. - A former chairman of the University of North Carolina's governing board and two-time Democratic congressional candidate faces criminal charges that he stole more than $2 million from law clients.

The state embezzlement charges against disbarred attorney Sam Neill come on top of Neill pleading guilty last month to a federal income tax fraud charge. Prosecutors say he understated his 2008 income by more than $850,000. He faces up to three years in prison and a $250,000 fine in the federal case.

Neill was the Democratic nominee for Congress in 2000 and 2002, losing both times to then-incumbent Republican Charles Taylor. Neill also served 12 years on the UNC Board of Governors, including two years as chairman.
May 16, 2012, 7:00 am

The Power of Nursing
By DAVID BORNSTEIN

Fixes looks at solutions to social problems and why they work.

In 2010, 5.9 million children were reported as abused or neglected in the United States. If you were a policy maker and you knew of a program that could cut this figure in half, what would you do? What if you could reduce the number of babies or toddlers hospitalized for accidents or poisonings by more than half? Or provide a 5 to 7 point I.Q. boost to children born to the most vulnerable mothers?

Well, there is a way. These and other striking results have been documented in studies of a program called the Nurse-Family Partnership, or NFP, which arranges for registered nurses to make regular home visits to first-time low-income or vulnerable mothers, starting early in their pregnancies and continuing until their child is 2.

We tend to think of social change as more of an art than a science. “What’s unique about Nurse-Family Partnership is that the program was studied in what’s considered the strongest study design, and it showed sizable, sustained effects on important life outcomes which were replicated across different populations,” explained Jon Baron, president of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, a nonpartisan group. “This is very unusual. There are probably only about ten programs across all areas of social policy that currently meet that standard.”

What that means, notes Baron, is that if policy makers replicate the program faithfully they can be confident that it will change people’s lives in meaningful ways — improving child and maternal health, promoting positive parenting, children’s school readiness and families’ economic self-sufficiency, and reducing juvenile delinquency and crime.

NFP is not a new idea — it’s almost 40 years old — but after decades of study the program, which has assisted 151,000 families, has the potential for broader impact, thanks to the Affordable Care Act’s Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, which provides $1.5 billion for states to expand such programs.

Done well, it could be among the best money the government spends. Investments in early childhood development produce big payoffs for society. (A 2005 RAND study estimated that NFP provided $5.70 in benefits to society for every dollar spent.) But there’s an important concern: home visiting programs are not all effective. When carefully studied, only a few have been shown to reduce the physical abuse and
neglect of children. Among the programs that meet the government’s standard for funding, there are large variations in evidence of impact (pdf). Policy makers and proponents of home visiting would do well to pay attention to the specific elements in the Nurse-Family Partnership’s model that account for its success.

NFP was founded by David Olds, who directs the Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Early in his career, Olds worked in a day care center in Baltimore because he believed that quality preschool attention would help disadvantaged children succeed in life. What he began to see was that, for some kids, it was already too late to make big gains. If children had been abused or neglected or exposed to domestic violence, or if their mothers had abused drugs, alcohol or tobacco while pregnant, their brains could have been damaged in ways that limited the children’s abilities to control impulses, sustain attention or develop language.

Olds developed NFP in the early 1970s. He conducted his first large study in 1977, in Elmira, N.Y., a semi-rural, mostly white, community with one of the highest poverty rates in the state. The program produced strong results. Follow-up studies would reveal that, by age 19, the youths whose mothers received visits from nurses two decades earlier, were 58 percent less likely to have been convicted of a crime. In the 1980s and 1990s, Olds spread the work to Memphis and Denver and subjected the program to more randomized study with populations of urban blacks and Hispanics. The results continued to be impressive. In 1996, NFP began wider replication; the model is now being implemented by health and social service providers in 40 states.

As Olds published his results, the idea gained momentum, but the imitations did not remain faithful to NFP’s approach. “People adopted all kinds of home visiting models and used our evidence to make claims,” he recalled. In the early 1990s, for example, the federal government, inspired in part by NFP, began a $240 million program to train paraprofessionals, rather than nurses, to make home visits to low-income families with young children. NFP also experimented in Denver, using paraprofessionals (trained from the communities they served) in place of nurses for a subset of families.

In both cases, paraprofessionals didn’t get the same results. When it came to improving children’s health and development, maternal health, and mothers’ life success, the nurses were far more effective. In the federal program, paraprofessionals produced no effects on children’s health or development or their parents’ economic self-sufficiency.

What’s special about nurses? For one thing, trust. In public opinion polls, nurses are consistently rated as the most honest and ethical professionals by a large margin. But there were other reasons nurses were effective. Pregnant women are concerned about
their bodies and their babies. Is the baby developing well? What can I do for my back pain? What should I be eating? What birthing options are available? Those are questions mothers wanted to ask nurses, which was why they were motivated to keep up the visits, especially mothers who were pregnant for the first time.

Nurses had more influence encouraging mothers to delay subsequent pregnancies, Olds explained. They could identify emerging complications more promptly, and they were more successful at getting mothers to stop or reduce smoking, drug or alcohol use. This is vital. Prenatal exposure to neurotoxicants is associated with intellectual and emotional deficits. It can also make babies more irritable, which increases risks of abuse. (A mother who was abused herself is more likely to misinterpret an inconsolable baby’s crying as “bad behavior.”)

“A lot of the young mothers have had some pretty terrible early life experiences,” says Olds. “It’s not uncommon for them to have been abused by partners or never have had support and care from a mother. Their lives haven’t been filled with much success and hope. If you ask them what they want for themselves, it’s not uncommon for them to say, ‘What do you mean?’”

A big part of NFP’s work is helping them answer this question.

Consider the relationship between Rita Erickson and Valerie Carberry. Rita had had a methadone addiction for 12 years and was living from place to place in Lakewood, Colo. She found out she was pregnant; a parole officer told her about NFP. “I’d burned bridges with my family,” Rita told me. “I was running around with the wrong people. I didn’t have anyone I could ask about being pregnant.” In the early months, Valerie had to chase her around town, Rita recalled. “I was worried she might say, ‘This is too much hassle. Come back when you have your act together.’ But she stuck with me.”

Over the next two years, they embarked on a journey together. “I had a zillion questions,” Rita recalled. “I was really nervous at first. I had lived most of my adult life as a drug addict. I didn’t know how to take care of myself.” On visits, they discussed everything: prenatal care, nutrition, exercise, delivery options. After Rita’s daughter, Danika, was born, they focused on things like how to recognize feeding and disengagement cues, remembering to sleep when the baby sleeps, how to manage child care so Rita could go back to school. For Rita, what made the biggest impression was hearing about how a baby’s brain develops — how vital it was to talk and read a lot to Danika, and to use “love and logic” so she develops empathy. Once Valerie explained that when babies are touching their hands, they’re discovering that they have two. “To me that was really amazing,” Rita said.

This month, Rita is graduating from Red Rocks Community College with an associate degree in business administration. She’s going to transfer to Regis
University to do a bachelors degree. Her faculty selected her as outstanding graduate based on leadership and academic achievement — and she was asked to lead the graduation procession and give one of the commencement speeches. Danika is thriving, Rita said. Recently, she came home from preschool and announced: “Mommy, I didn’t have a good day at school today because I made some bad decisions and you wouldn’t be proud of me.” (She had pushed another child on the playground.) As for the NFP, Rita says that it helped her recover from her own bad decisions. When Valerie came along, she needed help badly. “I didn’t care about my life. I didn’t care about anything. I never ever thought I would have ended up where I am today.”

“When a woman becomes pregnant whether she’s 14 or 40, there’s this window of opportunity,” explained Valerie, who has been a nurse for 28 years and has worked with more than 150 mothers in NFP over the past seven. “They want to do what’s right. They want to change bad behaviors, tobacco, alcohol, using a seat belt, anything. As nurses, we’re able to come in and become part of their lives at that point in time. It’s a golden moment. But you have to be persistent. And you have to be open and nonjudgmental.”

Beyond the match between nurses and first-time moms, there are multiple factors that make NFP work. (NFP has identified 18 key elements for faithful replication.) The dosage has to be right: Nurses may make 50 or 60 visits over two and a half years. The culture is vital: It must be non-judgmental and respectful, focusing on helping mothers define their own goals and take steps towards them. The curriculum should be rigorous, covering dozens of topics — from prenatal care to home safety to emotional preparation to parenting to the mother’s continuing education. Nurses need good training, close supervision and support, and opportunities to reflect with others about difficult cases. And, above all, data tracking makes it possible to understand on a timely basis when things are working and when they are not.

With the government making such a large investment in home visiting, it’s crucial for programs to get the details right. Otherwise, society will end up with a mixed bag of results, and advocates will have a hard time making the case for continued support. That would be a terrible loss. “When a baby realizes that its needs will be responded to and it can positively influence its own world,” says Olds, “that creates on the baby’s part a sense of efficacy — a sense that I matter.” It’s hard to imagine higher stakes.

David Bornstein is the author of “How to Change the World,” which has been published in 20 languages, and “The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank,” and is co-author of “Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know.” He is the founder of dowser.org, a media site that reports on social innovation.
The (college) kids are alright

By Valerie Strauss

This was written by Stephen Whittaker, a professor of rhetoric at The University of Scranton.

By Stephen E. Whittaker

For three decades, I have taught rhetoric in a university honors program, so I see the academic cream of the crop. Many of my former students today are doctors, lawyers, educators, managers, editors and non-profit leaders, and when I see them at reunions, they strike me as articulate, humane and conscientious.

Are these high achievers so different from the majority of college students? There have been reports that college students aren’t learning anything. If these claims are true, then we have a problem that is as dire as can be imagined, and this year’s commencements should cause alarm, not jubilation.

I am not in a position to judge the validity of the research about student learning. But I do know that these kinds of indictments are not new. In fact, they always remind me of a Paul Simon lyric from the early 70s that pretty well describes the ambivalence I feel, as a college teacher, 40 years later:

When something goes wrong
I’m the first to admit it;
I’m the first to admit it
And the last one to know.

I teach my students Plato’s Phaedrus, in which the Greek philosopher argues that the goal of education is to understand students’ souls, gifts, capacities and mastery of the material, and then lead them from that point. It is in this work that Socrates cites the latest technology — writing — as something that will rot the brains of the young, making them clueless, lazy and lacking in both information and critical thinking.

Sound familiar?

My students never fail to note that Socrates offers this critique on writing within a piece of writing by Plato. Upon further inquiry, we find that this new technology is corrupting only if it is allowed to reduce the student to the passive posture of a consumer.
Contemporary culture and technology rot our student’s minds and beguile their souls, no doubt about it. But they always have. The key for professors worth their salt is to meet students where they live and help them in the growth of their souls, help them learn to love better things.

That’s exactly what Socrates did with Phaedrus — he met him literally where he lives: a promising youth in love with the gaudy, corrupting, and stupefying technology of his age. Socrates leads the lad by careful stages to appreciate more profound and virtuous methods of communication, both with his own soul and with the souls of others.

Today’s faculty need to understand young people, how they learn, what they value. Only then can we convince them they should get up out of their seats and express themselves, argue their points and refine their intellects and consciences. It’s called academic rigor, and it’s more difficult that imparting information so they can pass a test.

The frailties and corruptions of today, though superficially different, seem comparable to any time in human history.

So while we bemoan the findings in last year’s book, “Academically Adrift,” let’s remember that is was only 25 years ago that Alan Bloom wrote “Closing of the American Mind,” that previous generation’s obituary on education and the youth of the day. Bloom was right. So are today’s critics. And so was Socrates.

When I go to reunions and speak to my former students who read Phaedrus, I can tell they got it. I listened to a seasoned MD and a pre-med student agree that less broadly educated colleagues, though always skilled technicians, sometimes lacked the ability to communicate with their patients and therefore were less effective in diagnosis and treatment.

Books and studies that predict the demise of the academy miss the point Plato is trying to make — the ills of the day are always trumped by education that develops both mind and soul.
Washington’s Catholic archbishop, Georgetown president spar over graduation invitation to Kathleen Sebelius

By Michelle Boorstein, Published: May 15

The already-boiling debate about Georgetown University’s decision to invite Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to speak during graduation hit the highest levels of Catholic Washington on Tuesday, with the region’s archbishop slamming the school’s president for the “shocking” invitation and saying the real issue was being distorted.

Since Sebelius was announced earlier this month as one of the speakers for this week’s Georgetown graduation ceremonies, about 27,000 people have signed a petition, circulated by a conservative Catholic think tank, urging the university to withdraw the invitation. Sebelius was a key architect of the 2010 health-care law, and she authored the requirement that employers, including most religious ones, provide their employees with contraception coverage.

On Tuesday, the archdiocese of Washington, led by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, criticized Georgetown President John J. DeGioia for remarks he issued a day earlier
— apparently to address the controversy — saying DeGioia had mischaracterized the issue as being about birth control. As the region’s top Catholic official, Wuerl is responsible for making sure Catholic institutions, including Georgetown, follow church teachings.

DeGioia “does not address the real issue for concern — the selection of a featured speaker whose actions as a public official present the most direct challenge to religious liberty in recent history,” reads the statement from the archdiocese, which covers the District and suburban Maryland.

The Catholic bishops have led opposition to the mandate, arguing that it violates religious freedom. Liberal and moderate Catholics and other religious advocates also opposed the mandate when it was announced in January but their opposition died down after the White House shifted the requirement from the employers to insurance companies.

Addressing the controversy Monday, DeGioia noted that debate about the mandate “dominated public discourse” in the months after Sebelius was invited in January to speak at an awards ceremony for the school’s Public Policy Institute.

“The Secretary’s presence on our campus should not be viewed as an endorsement of her views,” DeGioia wrote. “As a Catholic and Jesuit University, Georgetown disassociates itself from any positions that are in conflict with traditional church teachings.”

But the statement from the archdiocese said DeGioia was avoiding the real issue.

“Contrary to what is indicated in the Georgetown University President’s statement, the fundamental issue with the HHS mandate is not about contraception,” the archdiocese’s statement read.

The back and forth reflects the intense debates among American Catholics about the degree to which Catholic institutions should reflect the official teachings of the church on contraception and other things. Pope Benedict and his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, have focused more on Catholic institutions — schools and hospitals, in particular — and how they hew to official church teachings.
MIT names current provost L. Rafael Reif new president to succeed Susan Hockfield

By Associated Press, Updated: Wednesday, May 16, 12:35 PM

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — MIT provost L. Rafael Reif, an internationally recognized electrical engineer who learned to speak English after coming to the U.S. for graduate school from his native Venezuela, was named MIT’s 17th president on Wednesday.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Corporation elected Reif to the position shortly before making the announcement. The 61-year-old Reif takes over as president July 2, succeeding Susan Hockfield who announced earlier this year that she is stepping down.

“I cannot tell you that this is a dream come true because it’s a dream I never dared to imagine,” said Reif, an expert in microelectronics who received graduate degrees from Stanford University. “I’m deeply moved by the trust you are all placing in me.”

As provost, Reif has spearheaded a strategy that helped MIT weather the global financial crisis and led to partnerships with governments and the creation of new research centers around the world. He promoted a faculty-led effort to address race and diversity, and headed the development of the MITx online learning initiative and an edX online initiative with Harvard University.

Reif has overseen the school’s Lincoln Laboratory, which operates for the U.S. Department of Defense. And prior to his provost duties, he was director of MIT’s Microsystems Technology Laboratories and served as associate head and later chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, the school’s largest academic department.

Joining the MIT faculty in 1980, Reif holds 15 patents and is co-author of more than 350 published papers in his field.

As president, Reif said, he will lead MIT by its traditional values of intellectual pursuit and a positive commitment to society. He said he will continue his practice of staying in touch with students and issues important to them. A focus on innovation, including the exploration of hybrid classroom models to better serve students, will be a priority, he said.

Hockfield commanded the school for nearly a decade and announced in February that she would step down. She was the first woman and the first biologist to lead MIT.
During her tenure, MIT launched research initiatives on cancer, energy, the environment and manufacturing, as well as the initiative with Harvard.

Corporation Chairman John Reed said the selection process included an intense search and input from the MIT community. He described Reif as “someone with exceptional qualities.”
Two phantoms have come back to life, making their presence felt in the real world. One is a phantom body locked in a paralyzed patient’s mind, which has taken control of a robot arm. The other is a research venture, locked into a company that vanished in the economic disaster of 2008, only to reappear as academic science, supported by major universities, that today scored a dramatic success.

But what’s truly amazing here are the patients, doing what you see in this photo: A woman named Cathy, who hasn’t been able to move anything below her neck for 15 years, is drinking coffee from a bottle she lifted to her lips, with a computerized arm that is wired into her brain. The connection, a plug in the top of her head, is called BrainGate, and it was developed by the Brown University neuroscientist John Donoghue and his team. What BrainGate and Cathy have done, along with similar feats by another paralyzed patient named Bob, are described in detached scientific prose in today’s issue of Nature. (Cathy is patient “S3″ and Bob is “T2.”)
But even dry language can’t hide this: These otherwise frozen people have an image of their arm and how it moves mapped onto a group of brain cells—that’s the phantom—and the device is able to read it. When Cathy thinks “grab,” the robot does what her real arm used to do.

When I first wrote about linking mind and machine several years ago for National Geographic, BrainGate got only a few sentences because it was facing some trouble. Matt Nagle, one of the earliest paralyzed patients in this study, had learned to move a cursor around a computer screen but then had his plug removed so he could take advantage of some therapy. (He subsequently passed away.) And Cyberkinetics Neurotechnology Systems, the private company Donoghue formed to supervise the clinical trial, went under in 2009. “It closed because of the 2008 financial crisis,” Donoghue says.

So another technology, helping amputees by connecting robotic arms to the severed nerves of their stumps, took center stage. I drank several cups of coffee with a woman named Amanda Kitts, who lifted a cup and angled it into her mouth just as if she were using her real arm. And in a sense she was: Her phantom limb still existed in her brain, and she just thought about natural movements and they happened.

At the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, which pioneered this work, scientists were able to conjure up the phantom on a computer screen, by attaching electrodes to Amanda’s stump to read the nerve signals. We watched the arm on the screen twist and grab, although Amanda’s flesh arm ended above her elbow.

But now “my hat is off to John Donoghue,” says Todd Kuiken, a physician and biomedical engineer at the institute who figured out how to link real nerves and artificial arms. “I let the brain and the nerves process these signals, and then I hijack them,” he says. By the time signals make it to the stump, they are refined and a lot of extraneous noise is removed naturally. “But John is reading activity directly from the brain, and extracting meaningful signals,” Kuiken says. “He’s right at the source.”

Indeed, the BrainGate plug is an array of 96 electrodes attached to the top of the skull and extending into the motor cortex, a brain region that controls body movements. “We’re focused on a little collection of cells, really just a few dozen neurons,” Donoghue says. A computer takes their electrical activity, finds signatures when Cathy and Bob are thinking “reach forward” and “bend the elbow,” and turns them into commands that move motors in the robot arm.

To make this happen after Cyberkinetics went under, Donoghue says, “we brought [the trial] back into the academic setting.” Brown University, Massachusetts General Hospital (an affiliate of Harvard Medical School), and Providence VA Hospital formed a collaboration, with Mass General administering the clinical trial. Stanford
University recently joined the group. The academics, unlike the private company, found it easier to get financing from federal agencies.

And what they’ve been able to show is that paralyzed patients, after years of immobility, maintain a sophisticated phantom that can move in three dimensions, in the real world rather than just the flat two dimensions of a computer screen. BrainGate—a device inserted through the skull, tethering a patient to a computer with wires—is proof of feasibility, not therapy itself. (Kuiken’s arms, in contrast, have left the lab and gone home with dozens of patients.) But what BrainGate illuminates is a path along which the patients, through their phantoms, may be able to reach out in reality.

To learn more about Cathy’s journey along this path, you can read her biography, The Electric Mind, written by Jessica Benko and available today from The Atavist, an online publisher of short books, for iPads and Kindles.
McGraw-Hill Announces E-Book Program With University of Minnesota

By DANIEL E. SLOTNIK


The textbook publisher McGraw-Hill Higher Education announced a pilot program with University of Minnesota bookstores last week that may eventually make early semester lines and sold-out core texts as obsolete as the diskette.

McGraw-Hill will offer its complete catalog of more than 1,600 e-books to University of Minnesota students starting in the 2012 fall semester (the number of participating students was not yet available). Professors decide whether to sign up their classes.

The full texts will cost significantly less than a hard copy and appear in the university’s learning management system, or online interface, as soon as a student registers for a class. Tom Malek, the vice president of learning solutions and services for McGraw-Hill Higher Education, said the company’s standard rate for e-books was 40 percent of the list price, but that they would charge slightly less in this program. The amount is billed to the student as a course fee, and if students drop a course before the end of the add/drop period, they will not be charged.

The program comes after another that began this year and that was designed to lower the cost of e-books by buying them in bulk. Mr. Malek said that lower prices were not the sole intended benefit of the initiative.

“We want to provide not just a price alternative but a student experience alternative,” Mr. Malek said. “Affordability is the headline, but student success is what needs to be the headline here.”

He cited a high rate of attrition for courses in the United States, particularly general education classes, which he thought was often a result of students who fell behind in their reading because they delayed buying books. “What happens a lot is that kids get behind, and they never catch up,” Mr. Malek said. “One of the things that’s solved with our e-materials is that you have it immediately. You don’t fall behind.”

The e-textbooks are designed to work across multiple platforms because they will eventually be available over a number of different e-text readers. (The University of Minnesota uses Courseload.) Many e-text readers will allow students to download textbooks, so they can be read without Internet access.
The e-textbooks also offer assessment, adaptive learning and social networking applications, depending on the e-text reader used. Courseload allows students to interact with their professors and one another, and to send feedback to the book’s author (for example, a professor could point out an important paragraph, and students could tell a textbook author when a concept is unclear).

Mr. Malek said that piracy was not a concern because students automatically bought the books when they joined a class.

Paper textbooks will still be available for professors who prefer to assign them.

Mr. Malek said another purpose of the pilot program was to create a scalable model for the burgeoning e-textbook industry, one he compared to Ticketmaster.

“Right now, we sell our books to the bookstore, and they mark them up and sell them to the students,” Mr. Malek said. “We’re buying shelf space. Our hope is that a service fee model will replace the shelf space model.”
Up to 15 percent of American children are chronically absent from school, missing at least one day in 10 and doing long-term harm to their academic progress, according to a new study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University.

They argue that policy makers tend to look at absenteeism in the wrong way, requiring districts and states to measure average daily attendance rates, but — with the exception of a few states — not focusing on the relatively small number of students who account for most absences. They found that some schools report an average of more than 90 percent daily attendance, masking the fact that 40 percent of their students are chronically missing.

“We don’t see the problem clearly because, in most places, we don’t measure it, and average daily attendance really skews the way we view this,” said one of the authors, Robert Balfanz, a research professor at the university’s School of Education.

Many studies have linked frequent absence to low academic achievement and high dropout rates; recent studies of children in New York, Chicago and other cities suggest that attendance may predict a student’s academic progress as effectively as test scores do. Poor children — who stand to benefit most from attending school — are also more likely to miss school.

Professor Balfanz and Vaughan Byrnes, a research associate, found that only six states — Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon and Rhode Island — measure chronic absenteeism, as do some local systems, including New York City and Oakland, Calif. Based on data from those states, they estimated that in a given school year, nationwide, more than 10 percent and possibly as many as 15 percent of students miss at least one day in 10.

Though the states report the data in different ways, making direct comparisons difficult, Oregon had the highest rate, with 23 percent of all students missing 10 percent of their school days or more.

While truancy — unexcused absences — and illness play a part, the researchers said the primary problem is absences that are optional but excused with a parent’s permission.
“There are so many efforts at school reform, but what people overlook is that none of them work if the kids don’t show up,” said Marie Groark, executive director of the Get Schooled Foundation, a nonprofit group that commissioned the Johns Hopkins study.

She said she became aware of the issue while teaching at a public high school in the Bronx. “There might have been 35 kids theoretically in my class,” she said, “but on any given day, only 20, 25 were there, and it wasn’t the same 20 or 25 from one day to the next, so we were always playing catch-up.”

A few states and local school systems are taking steps to address the problem. Alabama and Virginia have automated systems that look at warning signs, like frequent absences, to identify students who are at a greater risk of dropping out.

Nonprofit groups formed recently to promote attendance and to lobby for better data collection, like Get Schooled and Attendance Works. Hedy N. Chang, director of Attendance Works, called the Johns Hopkins study an important milestone.

Experts say that in the last two years, New York City, where 20 percent of public school students are chronically absent, has built one of the strongest campaigns against the problem. Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg set up a task force to address it, with officials from several agencies — from social services to law enforcement — that had long worked with the schools but had not shared information with each other.

“As early as sixth grade, we could have known that kids were on the train to drop out, and too often our efforts in the past began when it was too late,” said John Feinblatt, senior policy adviser to the mayor and head of the task force.

Some of the resulting projects include automated wake-up calls from athletes and other celebrities to about 30,000 at-risk students, urging them to go to school.