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252-328-6481
ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard, right, laughs with John Durham, center, assistant secretary to the ECU board of trustees, during Durham's retirement reception held at the Harvey Banquet Hall in Murphey Center on Thursday, July 19, 2012. (Aileen Devlin/The Daily Reflector)

‘Clustering’ not an issue at ECU
By Wesley Brown
Friday, July 20, 2012

Special notes:

An internal audit at East Carolina University looking for clusters of athletes across courses or majors in the past 12 months found no instances of academic fraud, administrators said Thursday.

The ECU Board of Trustees got an overview of the review on Thursday at its quarterly luncheon. The review was prompted by the continuing scrutiny of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill.

“Has ECU cobbled together classes to benefit the student-athletes, or have we set up specific classes … with low standards?” asked Stacie Tronto, director of the Department of Internal Audit. “We can provide you with a reasonable assurance that this is not going on here.”

Tronto’s department examined more than 2,400 course sections from the summer of 2011 through the spring of 2012 and found that the school’s 2,400-student-athletes cover a “broad spectrum of majors” — a stark contrast to the issue of “clustering” discovered at UNC.

In May, an internal investigation on the Chapel Hill campus revealed academic fraud in the department of African and Afro-American Studies,
including 54 classes in which there was little indication of instruction, as well as unauthorized grade changes and forged faculty signatures.

Thirty-nine percent of students in the irregular courses were basketball and football players.

“Academic integrity,” already an issue of high priority at ECU, was one the board of trustees on Thursday — with the election of its new officers — vowed to spend more time “critiquing.”

The board started Thursday with the Academic Success Committee, a 12-member panel of ECU administrators formed last summer by Chancellor Steve Ballard when the burgeoning fraud investigation at UNC began to gain steam.

Cal Christian, an associate professor of accounting who is on the committee, said a number of new policies already have been put into place to keep student-athletes and their coaches and professors honest.

During the past school year, at the end of each week, student-athletes were required to complete an online questionnaire to confirm they attended classes.

If they missed one class, they were forced to sit out a practice.

Two absences cost them a game or a match.

Next year, Christian said sophomores, juniors and seniors will be surveyed on the effectiveness of school administration, and an anonymous hotline will be launched for all students.

Syllabus policies and faculty bylaws on academic fraud also were revisited.

“I think the key is really monitoring and spot-checking the process,” board of trustee member Danny Scott said.

“If we don’t do that, human nature is that we tend to get lax … and you have issues like those that occurred at Carolina,” Scott said.

“No one around this table or university wants to see that happen to the Pirate Nation.”

Contact Wesley Brown at 252-329-9579 or wbrown@refelctor.com. Follow him on Twitter @CityWatchdog.
New officers

The board of trustees at East Carolina University elected new leaders Thursday. Terms are one year, with an option to serve a second year

- **Chairman:** Bob Lucas
- **Vice Chairman:** Robert Brinkley
- **Secretary:** Joel Butler
- SGA President Justin Davis was sworn in as a new member of the board
- John W. Durham, assistant secretary to the board of trustees, was honored during a special reception Thursday for his 19 years of service to the university.
Survey says GUC customers satisfied

By Ginger Livingston
Friday, July 20, 2012

Greenville Utilities customers have a high level of satisfaction with the services they receive and the people who deliver them, according to the results of a recent customer satisfaction survey.

The company that conducted the survey, Utah-based SDS Research, rarely sees such high ratings in its customer satisfaction ratings, company sales director Todd Morris said.

Morris reviewed a sampling of the results with GUC’s Board of Commissioners during its monthly meeting Thursday.

Using a scale of 1-5, with a 5 being the highest rating, the survey asked customers to answer questions involving customer service, value of service and their impression of the organization.

Nearly 94 percent of the respondents gave top marks to the customer service they receive from GUC, the survey revealed, with 95 percent very satisfied or satisfied with their experience with employees.

Nearly 86 percent of survey respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied when asked “How satisfied are you with Greenville Utilities?” Nearly 90 percent of the respondents said the overall value of the utility, based on what they paid, was very high or high.
When talking with dissatisfied customers, the survey found their dissatisfaction was linked to their belief that utility rates were too high, Morris said. Some residents have the perception that their energy bills are higher than neighboring communities.

He recommended that GUC focus on explaining to customers what goes into setting rates.

The survey was conducted the first week of May. Researchers called 7,000 GUC customer phone numbers to get the 603 people who answered the questions, Morris said.

“You are to be congratulated for this,” Morris said. “This is a strong indication customers are very pleased with the service they receive.”

**Officers elected**

The board elected its new officers for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Vice Chairwoman Virginia Hardy, a board member since 2009, was unanimously elected chairwoman. Stan Eakins, a board member since 2011, was unanimously elected vice chairman.

Hardy and Eakins are employees of East Carolina University. She is vice chancellor for student affairs, and he is the dean of College of Business.

Former Pitt County Commissioner John Minges, a board member since 2010, was unanimously elected secretary.

**Substations updated**

The board received an update on efforts to modernize its substations. The board in 2010 approved spending $3 million to upgrade 16 of its 19 substations. A substation receives electricity from a supplier and then distributes it to GUC customers, substation engineer Todd Rouse said.

The upgrades were needed to reduce environmental risks, extend transformer life and increase reliability.

Updates have been completed at nine locations. The remaining work should be completed by March 2014, Rouse said.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
Just a couple of weeks in advance of the start of a new football season, East Carolina took a punch to the midsection of its defense on Thursday.

Sophomore nose tackle Terry Williams was suspended indefinitely from all team activities by third-year head coach Ruffin McNeill in the wake of Williams’ arrest for felony marijuana possession on Wednesday in Simpson.

“I have suspended Terry as a result of a poor decision and conduct that is certainly not in line with the standards we have in place at East Carolina,” McNeill said. “Representing this university and playing in our program is a privilege and everyone will be held accountable to earn that right. Naturally, I’m disappointed and frustrated by this development, but we will continue to mentor and guide our players to the best of our ability, although it isn’t always an exact process.”

The Loganville, Ga., native had taken all of the necessary steps toward becoming one of the Pirates’ main defensive cogs, having played in 11 games last season behind rising senior Michael Brooks. He was credited with 31 tackles, two forced fumbles, one recovered fumble and a quarterback hurry in 2011.

Although the Pirates are blessed with a solid corps of versatile young linemen like junior Lee Pegues, sophomore Chrishon Rose and redshirts like
Terrell Stanley and Jonathan White, the Pirates’ primary middle men in the 3-4 defense are Brooks and Williams.

Senior former JUCO transfer Leroy Vick hopes to finally make his debut this season after a knee injury derailed his 2011 season and a concussion halted his spring. Redshirt Will Foxx, who was eligible to participate in spring practice, is not currently eligible for the 2012 roster.

Williams was arrested and charged with felony possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana, police officials said. Simpson Police Department Chief John Waters Jr. stopped Williams on McDonald Street in Simpson because Williams’ vehicle had a tag light out and was traveling left of center.

The police chief said he detected a strong odor of marijuana in the vehicle and asked Williams if he had been smoking the substance. Williams said he had, Waters said.

Waters said he received consent from Williams to search the vehicle and found approximately 15 grams of marijuana in the glove box. The police chief said Deputy J. Chick with the Pitt County Sheriff’s Office also responded to the scene to provide back-up.

Williams was arrested and jailed under a $2,500 secured bond at the Pitt County Detention Center.
ECU's Head Coach Ruffin McNeill, left, and UNC’s Head Coach Larry Fedora, listen to N.C. State's Head Coach Tom O'Brien during the Tenth Annual Bill Dooley Triangle/East Chapter Pigskin Preview at Embassy Suites Thursday, July 19, 2012.

**UNC's Larry Fedora, N.C. State's Tom O'Brien are unfamiliar foes amid a familiar rivalry**

By Andrew Carter - acarter@newsobserver.com

CARY—Reminded Thursday about N.C. State’s five-game winning streak against North Carolina in football, first-year North Carolina coach Larry Fedora reminded those listening that he is still counting down the days until the Tar Heels and Wolfpack meet again.

“I know we’re 99 days away,” Fedora said. “So we’ll see what happens.”

Tom O’Brien, entering his sixth season as the Wolfpack’s head coach, was sitting a couple seats to the left on the dais at the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce’s annual Triangle Pigskin Preview, held in a banquet room at the Embassy Suites in Cary in front of a couple hundred people.

“How many days is it?” O’Brien asked, referring to his team’s Oct. 27 meeting against the Tar Heels in Chapel Hill.

O’Brien’s question served as a subtle reminder of his approach – at least the one he endorses in public – of treating games against North Carolina like
any other. Fedora’s attention to the countdown offers a glimpse into his philosophy of emphasizing the significance of rivalry games.

“I hope it’s like any other rivalry I’ve been involved in – (that) it’s pretty ferocious, and the fans get into it,” Fedora said. “And that’s what makes college football what it is, is the rivalries that you have. … The regional rivalries are what makes college football the greatest sport in the world.”

Coaches at N.C. State and UNC have long helped define the rivalry and some, including former Wolfpack coach Chuck Amato and former Tar Heels coach John Bunting, have taken part in the kind of banter that engages fans and creates headlines. The dynamic that Fedora and O’Brien will share, though, remains as unknown as they are to each other.

O’Brien had an established relationship with former UNC coach Butch Davis, dating back to when they coached against each other in the Big East when Davis was at Miami and O’Brien at Boston College. But Fedora and O’Brien are less familiar.

“I don’t know him that well,” Fedora said. “I’ve never coached with Tom. And I’ve never coached against Tom, either. So I really don’t know him that well, you know. We’ve met on one other occasion before I ever came to the conference, and that was just kind of a greeting, and that was about it.”

Fedora and O’Brien shared a quick handshake Thursday before the event began, and then made some brief small talk after it ended. Two others, including Duke coach David Cutcliffe, sat between Fedora and O’Brien during the event, giving them little time to mingle.

Afterward, O’Brien spoke in generalities about Fedora, saying they have been, and will continue, to fight over recruits, and for in-state prestige. Yet they are, for now, almost like strangers.

“He’s a good guy,” O’Brien said. “He’s a good football coach. So I think he’s a good addition to the ACC, and he’ll do a good job at Carolina.”

Still more than a month away from coaching his first game, Fedora already has done a good job of fanning the rivalry’s flame. At a UNC booster club event in late April in Charlotte, a Tar Heels fan asked Fedora about the significance of games against the Wolfpack.

Fedora said there would be “an emphasis” on playing N.C. State, but then said, “I don’t want to talk about (the rivalry) too much because I don’t want to legitimize their program.”
The comment spread over Twitter and on message boards, and drew the ire of Wolfpack fans. Thursday, Fedora playfully pleaded ignorance when Don Shea, the master of ceremonies, brought up UNC’s losing streak against the Wolfpack.

“You know, Don, that’s the first time I’ve heard that,” Fedora said. “I didn’t realize that’s what’s happened the last five years.”

The crowd laughed; and even O’Brien smiled. He later said the UNC game is “one game on your schedule,” and that N.C. State hasn’t “won five games in a row” but “one game at a time for five years.”

Later, O’Brien shared his philosophy on rivalry banter – friendly or otherwise.

“I ignore it,” he said.

The two coaches walked out of the room, and went their separate ways, 99 days before they will see each other, when it counts.

Carter: 919-829-8944
State Superior Court Judge Howard Manning reserved judgment Thursday in a public records battle related to the lengthy NCAA investigation into UNC-Chapel Hill’s football program.

“This is not going to be decided today by any means,” Manning said after listening to nearly two hours of legal arguments from lawyers representing the university, former football coach Butch Davis and a consortium of media companies seeking the records.

At issue is the release of bills for Davis’ personal cellphone, which the coach has admitted he used to make calls related to running the team, as well as other documents related to the investigation that would show who committed the violations that led to major penalties against the team and how the university handled them.

Davis’ attorney, Jon Sasser, contends the phone bills should not be made public because Davis was not a public official under the law, and the release might expose phone numbers of people not connected to the case. He also disputed the records’ informational value.

“It’s just like if (UNC basketball coach) Roy Williams wants to burn the midnight oil, is his Progress Energy bill a public record?” Sasser asked.

Manning questioned that line of reasoning, noting that it would be of public interest if Davis’ phone records showed, for example, that he had talked with a football player at a time when the player was receiving an improper benefit from a sports agent.

The university says it has released all that it considers to be public under the law. It says it can’t release more because of a federal law making many student records private and because some of the records are protected under attorney-client privilege.

“There has been plenty of detailed information about what these students have done,” said Marc Bernstein, a special deputy state attorney general representing the university.

Lawyers for the media companies, including The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer, say the phone bills as they pertain to public business
should be released. One of the attorneys, Hugh Stevens, said his clients would consent to allowing Davis to redact the personal information from the bills so long as he signed an affidavit attesting that he had provided all the calls related to public business.

He said the public records law holds that any record created as part of public business is public regardless of how it was created.

Amanda Martin, another attorney representing the media, said the university has interpreted the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act too broadly to withhold records that do not pertain to educational matters. She said records showing impermissible benefits such as air travel, hotel rooms and other perks unrelated to academic help should not fall under the federal law.

Bernstein said FERPA’s reach goes beyond obvious academic records such as transcripts. He cited as an example a 1996 North Carolina case in which the courts ruled that FERPA allowed for closed hearings related to a misconduct case involving the confiscation of hundreds of magazines from racks on the Chapel Hill campus.

Kane: 919-829-4861
Documents go through the laundry at Chapel Hill

In continuing to resist, with passive-aggressive censorship, the release of complete documents pertinent to the first big athletics scandal in 50 years, officials of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill look more and more like they’re trying to hide something.

Maybe they’re not, but when they delete substantial portions of records related to an NCAA probe of the scandalized football program eventually sanctioned by that governing body, they raise justifiable suspicions: What are they trying to keep from the public and why are they trying to stop public disclosure? How can they justify the heavy censoring of such documents given that this is a public university? Is there something in these documents that would embarrass, or maybe that would further embarrass, top university officials?

And finally, how in the world can they hide behind a federal law intended to protect students’ academic records as justification for whiting out information in reports, for example, that included a reference to one athlete’s visit to a strip club?

The information had been requested by media organizations including The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer.

Long-running

The N&O has been reporting for months on the scandal under former football coach Butch Davis, who resigned after disclosures that athletes had improper contact with agents, that one of his top assistants, John Blake, had a close connection to an active sports agent and that a tutor was doing too much work for athletes.

Then, in a shock, it turned out that a number of football players (and some on the basketball team) had taken questionable courses under the African and Afro-American Studies department then headed by Julius Nyang’oro.

The courses didn’t require attendance, only a final paper. Nyang’oro has since resigned as department chairman and retired.

The university acts as if it is none of the public’s business, the details of what happened and when and why, despite the fact that there may be
clarifying information in these heavily censored documents. UNC-CH simply says it can’t risk giving out too much information on students.

As to those arguments that the white-outs are all about protecting students’ privacy: The university has strained that argument until it now is a most slender thread indeed.

**Not the intention**

Even former U.S. Sen. James Buckley of New York, who sponsored the law that allowed universities to withhold information about students, has said schools have used the law improperly to hide information pertaining to athletics. It is intended to protect only students’ grades and transcripts, he said.

But it appears UNC-Chapel Hill wants to use the law to keep people – the same people who support this institution with their tax dollars, who rely on it as a cornerstone of the state’s well-being and who thus have an interest in a scandal that reflects poorly on their university – in the dark.

And speaking of dollars, let us not forget that the university spent nearly half a million dollars on law firms with expertise in dealing with the NCAA in the course of that organization’s investigation of UNC-CH. Though officials said it was not state-appropriated money, any sum that goes through a public institution is of interest to the people who support it.

Finally, Tom Ross, president of the UNC system, should not tolerate the kind of games the university is playing with what should be public records, and he may well have to intervene to make that point clear to UNC-CH administrators.
North Carolina's Hakeem Nicks blows past Boston College's Robert Francois for a TD after a reception during second quarter action of an ACC game against Boston College in Chapel Hill on October 25, 2008.

UNC star Nicks ineligible during 2008 season, records show

By J. Andrew Curliss and Andrew Carter - acurliss@newsobserver.com

Hakeem Nicks, one of the all-time great football players at UNC-Chapel Hill, played his final season in 2008 while ineligible to be on the field, the university acknowledged Thursday.

NCAA documents show that Nicks received improper academic help in the spring of 2008 from a tutor implicated in the NCAA scandal at UNC. The NCAA called what happened “academic fraud.”

Nicks’ ineligibility has not been widely known and was not previously acknowledged by the university.

Nicks, now with the NFL’s New York Giants, could not be reached.

When told of Nicks’ ineligibility, his agent, Peter Schaffer, said, “We have no knowledge of that whatsoever.”

Schaffer downplayed Nicks’ ineligibility, saying, “It’s low on the totem pole of relevant issues.”
UNC will note Nicks’ career and single-season records with an asterisk in media guides and other university publications as part of sanctions imposed by the NCAA in March. Nicks’ achievements will be flagged with the wording that his “participation later vacated due to NCAA penalty.”

Nicks’ name had popped up as the NCAA inquiry mushroomed in 2010. UNC identified Nicks as being one of three former players who provided “impermissible assistance” to current players in the form of travel, lodging, entertainment and other expenses. The value of Nicks’ assistance was listed in a university report as $3,300.

The university said at the time that Nicks and two other former players “thought they were helping out friends and fellow Tar Heels” and said there was no evidence linking Nicks to agents, prospective agents or runners.

**Academic fraud**

In March, the NCAA issued a report that described rules broken by multiple players, the top UNC assistant coach and a former tutor. The violations were related to academic fraud and improper ties to sports agents. By then, the team’s head coach, Butch Davis, had lost his job.

The Tar Heel football team will not be allowed to play in the ACC championship game or a bowl game after the upcoming season, and the university is losing scholarships for players.

All of the wins for 2008 and 2009 (16 total) are being vacated from record books as well.

On Thursday, a university spokesman, Kevin Best, said in an interview that the NCAA probe and resulting infractions report identified actions involving Nicks while he was on the team in 2008.

“He was involved in the case,” Best said. “I cannot tell you which student athlete he is in the infractions report. But he was in the enforcement case.”

The NCAA infractions report, which outlines a range of rule-breaking at UNC, identifies only one player who played in the 2008 season and was gone by 2009, a description that matches Nicks’ career at UNC.

That player is identified in the infractions report as “student-athlete 1,” a former player who provided at least $3,235 in benefits to other players.

“Regarding student-athlete 1, a review of email communications revealed that on April 21, 2008, the former tutor wrote conclusion paragraphs for five of student-athlete 1’s writing assignments in an education course,” the NCAA infractions report says. “By the time the violations were discovered,
student-athlete 1 was no longer enrolled at the institution, so no further action was taken.”

The NCAA report says the five papers were for coursework in an Education 441 class. The tutor has been identified as Jennifer Wiley of Durham. She has declined to comment and did not cooperate with the NCAA inquiry.

The NCAA report said a total of six football players competed in 2008, 2009 or 2010 while ineligible.

Separate from the NCAA action, an internal probe at UNC has found that 54 classes within the department of African and Afro-American Studies had little or no instruction and that more than half the students in them were athletes or former athletes.

**The numbers will stand***

Nicks played three seasons at UNC, where he caught 181 passes for 2,840 yards and 21 touchdowns. His 2,840 career receiving yards set a school record, and his 1,222 receiving yards in 2008 set a single-season school record. His 21 career touchdown catches are a school record.

Nicks will remain in the UNC record books, but his accomplishments that include numbers from the 2008 season will be listed with an asterisk.

After his junior season ended in 2008, Nicks declared for the 2009 NFL draft. The New York Giants selected him in the first round with the 29th overall pick.

Nicks has developed into a key player for the Giants. He has caught more than 70 passes for more than 1,000 yards in each of the past two seasons. He caught 10 passes in the Giants’ Super Bowl victory in February against the New England Patriots.

Curliss: 919-829-4840
Judge rebuffs Myers Park homeowners; upholds new Queens University buildings

By David Perlmutt

A Superior Court judge on Thursday upheld city zoning decisions that allowed Queens University of Charlotte to begin constructing two buildings that neighbors fear will harm the surrounding Myers Park community.

Those decisions, made by the city Zoning Board of Adjustments, were challenged by a group of Myers Park homeowners and the Myers Park Homeowners Association.

At issue is the construction of the 145,000-square-foot Levine Center for Wellness and Recreation (with a 2,000-seat performance gym) and a seven-story parking deck and dormitory – both well under way off Wellesley Avenue.

A group of neighbors and the Myers Park Neighborhood Association contended that the zoning board wrongly made zoning concessions to allow for the construction. They said the new construction pushes Queens over city density restrictions by more than 70 percent and will place enormous stress on Wellesley Avenue, which is the main entry point to both buildings.

But Judge Timothy Kincaid sided with the zoning board, saying there was ample evidence for its ruling.

The battle began in December, when the homeowners challenged Zoning Administrator Katrina Young’s decision that the buildings were excluded from the rule that restricts development density at Queens to roughly 50 percent of the total campus.

Young said – and the zoning board agreed – that parking decks and dormitories on college campuses are exempt from the restrictions. And she concluded that the wellness complex is also exempt because it is a campus accessory to Queens’ overall mission to educate people.

After a study by city transportation engineers, Young also classified Wellesley as a “connector” street able to accommodate heavier traffic. The neighbors said the street at the entry is 20 feet wide, and should be considered a neighborhood street.
They challenged Young’s ruling to the zoning board, which in March sided with Young. So the homeowners filed a lawsuit challenging the zoning board.

During Thursday’s hearing, Charlotte lawyer Ken Davies, representing the homeowners, told Kincaid that the zoning board made its decision without sufficient evidence.

Davies said that during a zoning board hearing he’d wanted to present a Charlotte city planner who would have testified that Wellesley is a neighborhood street. But, he said, the board cut him off.

He also argued that the Levine Center should be classified as a stadium and included in the ratio that governs development density.

Charlotte lawyer Richard Vinroot, who represented Queens, and Assistant City Attorney Thomas Powers argued that the zoning board had plenty of facts to make its decisions.

Both said the Wellesley designation was based on conclusions by a city traffic engineer.

As for the Levine Center, “they’re (the neighbors) are trying to equate it to Bank of America Stadium or Bobcat Arena,” Powers said. “That’s simply not true. The Levine Center has multiple uses – more than just spectator events.”

Ultimately, the neighbors weren’t seeking to tear down the new buildings. They wanted Kincaid to agree that Queens had reached its development limit and rule that Queens had to re-route the entry away from Wellesley and onto Selwyn Avenue.

Kincaid did neither, but instead affirmed the zoning board’s decisions.

He said the board wasn’t wrong in determining Wellesley was a connector street. He also ruled that the wellness complex wasn’t a stadium and that it, with the parking deck/dormitory, could be excluded from the density rules. “It wasn’t built for any of us to walk from downtown to use as a recreation center. It’s being built for students.”

Throughout the two-hour hearing, Queens President Pamela Davies, no relation to Ken Davies, sat in the courtroom with members of the university’s trustees.

She said she was pleased with Kincaid’s ruling.
Rebecca Anderson, Queens vice president for marketing and community relations, said that the school would continue to update neighbors on campus growth.

“We believe that five or 10 years down the road, when the neighbors look back on this, they will come to realize that it didn’t turn out as badly as they feared,” Anderson said. “And we think they’ll find that the facilities will be a great asset to the neighborhood.”

Perlmutt: 704-358-5061
Duke scientists: Spare the rod, teach the child

By Kerstin Nordstrom - knordstrom@newsobserver.com

DURHAM—Your favorite teacher from high school probably motivated you with kindness and a can-do attitude. But you may also recall a strict teacher, one who motivated with the blackmail of bad grades.

It turns out each teacher was engaging different parts of your brain – and you probably learned more from the nice one.

Scientists at Duke have shown that for simple learning, rewards are actually better motivators than threats. Their recent paper has further uncovered that the two types of learning use separate brain circuits. The work was led by Alison Adcock, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, and published in The Journal of Neuroscience.

The Duke researchers’ most recent work focuses on threat-motivated learning. Subjects were asked to memorize pictures, then tested the following day. A sequence of landscapes flashed before their eyes. Occasionally, an image was tagged as important, and they were told if they failed to remember it they would be punished.

The threat of punishment proved to be compelling. The subjects learned the tagged images better.

“College students will come (participate in a study) even when there is shock involved,” laughed Vishnu Murty, Adcock’s graduate student and the first author of the paper.

The threats were empty; no one was shocked, as the subjects learned after they had seen all the images. The motivation during the learning process was what mattered.

The threat of punishment proved to be compelling. The subjects learned the tagged images better.

During the learning process, functional magnetic resonance images (fMRI) were taken, creating a 3-dimensional map of the subjects’ brains. Their fMRI was tuned to detect oxygen, which is used as fuel in firing neurons. Bright spots in the images show active areas of the brain.

In the fMRI, the amygdala, a region of the brain associated with stress, lit up when tagged images were shown. An instant later, the bright spots appeared
in the hippocampus, which is responsible for crafting a short-term memory that can be saved in other regions of the brain.

Adcock did an identical study on reward-motivated learning in 2006. Subjects were offered money for their memory. Similar to the threat study, the rewarded images were remembered at a better rate.

But the fMRI told a different story. The ventral tegmental area (VTA), not the amygdala, was active with the hippocampus. The VTA is a region of the brain associated with reward and is where many feel-good dopamine-making neurons reside.

The team published a study in 2011 comparing reward-motivated and punishment-motivated people. People who were told they would be rewarded learned a maze more quickly than those threatened with punishment.

They also learned the maze more completely, remembering finer detail.

The 2012 work shows that these different outcomes are likely related to the different brain circuitry involved. Our brains can see two different versions of the same events, depending on whether we feel threatened or not.

“Threat-based motivation seems to lead to a narrow, stereotyped view, while reward leads to a broader, more nuanced view,” said Murty. This would explain why in the 2011 maze experiment, rewards yielded better results than threats.

But this does not mean the narrow view is not useful, especially for survival. “Like when recognizing a snake in the grass, or a fearful face in the crowd,” says Murty.

Further, this type of research has been done only for simple learning. The team studied declarative memory, the memory of things that can be described such as facts, events, and pictures. Learned skills, such as writing, playing a sport, or playing an instrument, are infinitely complicated.

So while reward incentives might help you learn the rules of football, your cantankerous coach may have your best interests at heart.

Nordstrom: 919-829-8983
Matt Rourke, file/Associated Press - FILE - In this file photo taken July 13, 2012, Penn State University board of trustee member Steve Garban take a tour before a meeting at the school’s Worthington Scranton campus in Dunmore, Pa. The former chairman of the board has resigned, the first board member to do so in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal. The board said Garban announced his resignation Thursday, July 19.

Ex-chair of Penn State trustees board resigns; 1st member to do so following sex abuse scandal

By Associated Press

A member and former chairman of the Penn State board of trustees has resigned, saying his presence on the board had become “a distraction and an impediment” to the university’s efforts to move forward following the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal.

Steve Garban’s resignation Thursday night made him the first board member to leave since the crisis engulfed Penn State.

Garban, who had stepped down as board chairman after Sandusky’s November arrest but had remained a board member, was harshly criticized over his handling of the Sandusky case. Fellow board members and alumni had called for him to resign.

Garban didn’t immediately return a call seeking comment Thursday night. In his resignation letter, he said he had “devoted” his adult life to Penn State.
“It has been a privilege and an honor to serve the university that has done so much for me,” the letter stated. “Indeed, it is precisely because of my deep gratitude to and respect for my beloved alma mater that I now step aside.”

An internal investigation by former FBI Director Louis Freeh found that Garban was briefed twice about developments in the Sandusky case but didn’t share what he knew with the entire board, depriving trustees of a chance to prepare for the worst crisis in Penn State’s 157-year history.

Freeh’s 267-page report portrayed a disengaged board that handed too much responsibility to the university president and failed to investigate deeply enough once it became aware of a grand jury probe.

After the report’s release, trustees accepted responsibility for a failure of oversight and said they were “deeply ashamed.” Board Chairwoman Karen Peetz, who announced Garban’s resignation in a letter on the board’s website, said at the time that no trustee would step down, however.

Garban called the past months “some of the most painful of my life.”

“The horrific allegations that came to light in November have haunted us all, but nothing we have experienced compares to that of Jerry Sandusky’s victims,” he said. “My thoughts and prayers will remain with them always.”

In a response posted on the trustees’ website, Peetz thanked Garban for his years of service to Penn State.

While Garban is the first trustee to resign following the Sandusky scandal, he’s not the first board casualty. Incumbent trustee Anne Riley lost re-election last spring as alumni upset over the board’s handling of the crisis picked three new trustees — all of whom campaigned on a reform platform — to sit on the 32-member panel.

Garban, a 1959 Penn State graduate, worked at the university for 33 years, the last 12 as treasurer and senior vice president of finance and operations. Alumni first elected him to the board of trustees in 1998, and he began his fifth three-year term in 2010.

Some trustees felt he was too close to ousted university president Graham Spanier, according to the Freeh report.

“Some trustees thought Garban’s history of being previously employed at Penn State, where as (senior vice president) he reported directly to Spanier, hampered his ability to lead the board,” the report said.

In April 2011, the report said, Spanier told Garban about a grand jury investigation of Sandusky. Garban, in turn, failed to alert fellow board
members. Garban told investigators that Spanier downplayed the Sandusky probe, and he recalled his former boss saying, “It was the third or fourth grand jury and nothing would come of it,” the report said.

Then, on Oct. 28, Garban learned from Penn State’s chief lawyer that two university administrators were about to be charged with failing to report suspected child abuse. Garban told investigators he was “astounded” when he saw Sandusky in the Nittany Lion Club at Penn State’s home game against Illinois on Oct. 29. Yet he informed only two other trustees — James Broadhurst and John Surma — that charges against Sandusky, Athletic Director Tim Curley and Vice President Gary Schultz were imminent.

Former general counsel Cynthia Baldwin told Freeh’s investigators that she thought Garban, as “conduit to the board,” would have alerted his colleagues about the Sandusky investigation. Garban told trustees he kept it from them because he was not sure that criminal charges would come to pass, according to the Freeh report.

Garban stepped down as board chairman three days after Sandusky’s Nov. 5 arrest, handing the job to Surma, the vice chairman. One day later, the board ousted revered football coach Joe Paterno and Spanier.

Sandusky later was convicted of abusing 10 boys, some on campus. He has maintained his innocence while awaiting sentencing.

Schultz and Curley await trial on charges of perjury and failure to report suspected child abuse. They deny the allegations against them. Spanier is not charged, and his attorneys have criticized the Freeh report, saying it contains inaccuracies.