

BLACK COLLEGE DAMAGED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

Xavier president urges students to return

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO—The choice for 18-year-old Bria Miller was an easy one. Once she heard that classes were resuming at Xavier University in New Orleans, she re-enrolled without hesitation.

"I made a home there so quickly, and I want to go back," said Miller, a freshman, who transferred to the University of Illinois in Chicago when Xavier closed. "I was always thinking 'When would the school be

ready so I could go back?"

Miller's decision to move back to New Orleans is good news to Xavier President Norman Francis, who came to Chicago Saturday to encourage students to return to the nation's only historically black and Roman Catholic college. It reopens on Jan. 17.

"We're rebuilding the university as an island in the city," Francis said during a reception at Columbia College in Chicago. "People didn't think we could do it,

but we did."

After Katrina, colleges around the country took in an estimated 18,000 displaced New Orleans students. About 55 of Xavier's 4,000 students came to Chicago. Most of them enrolled in local colleges and universities, Xavier officials said.

Now, New Orleans schools desperately need those stu-

dents to return next semester and pay tuition.

Founded in 1825, Xavier has built a reputation as a liberal arts college for black students seeking medical careers.

After Katrina struck on Aug. 29, the university's New Orleans campus was flooded. School administrators have estimated losses at more than \$90 million in storm

damage and lost revenue, a devastating sum for a university whose endowment is only about \$50 million.

The losses forced the university to cut 396 faculty and staff positions.

Dillard University, another historical black college, also had to lay off about half of its faculty. Tulane University, meanwhile, plans to phase out about 50 faculty positions in its undergraduate and professional degree programs and another 180 at its medical school. Loyola University has laid off 28 faculty members.

But all are scheduled to open their doors again in January.

"If we stayed out another

semester, we'd procrastinate and in July '06, we'd say we can't open. So, we set a date, and we're opening in January," Francis said.

Early projections estimated about 2,000 students would return to Xavier. But more than four weeks before classes are scheduled to start, about 3,100 students have pre-registered. The numbers don't surprise Francis.

"If we were like any other school, there would be no reason to come back," Francis said. "But we have a product and a brand that's successful."

On the Net:
Xavier University:
www.xula.edu

'DON'T COUNT ME OUT'

Singer Rawls is battling lung cancer

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES—Grammy-winning singer Lou Rawls has confirmed he is being treated for lung cancer.

"Don't count me out, brother," Rawls, 70, said when reached Thursday night in his hospital room by the Arizona Republic. "There's been many people who have been diagnosed with this kind of thing, and they're still jumpin' and pumpin'."

Rawls was diagnosed 12 months ago and in May was found to also have brain cancer, his 35-year-old wife, Nina, said Thursday during their marriage annulment hearing in Maricopa County

Superior Court.

Rawls, whose voice has been described as "sweet as sugar, soft as velvet, strong as steel, smooth as butter," said he has received both "alternative and traditional treatment." He said he quit his regular cigarette smoking habit 35 years ago.

"He's getting great care; he's in a great mood," Rawls' publicist, Paul Shefrin, said Thursday from the singer's hospital room.

But Rawls' wife suggested his condition is dire.

"By his doctor's admission, he is not expected to live much more," a crying Nina said Thursday.



Rawls

Rawls has sold more than 40 million albums and won three Grammys during a career spanning more than four

decades.

His hits include "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing," "Dead End Street" and "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine."

He has appeared in 18 movies, including "Leaving Las Vegas" and "Blues Brothers 2000", and 16 television series, including "Fantasy Island" and "Fall

Guy."

Rawls also is known for his charitable work and has helped the United Negro College Fund raise nearly \$200 million in telethons.

Rawls in court papers said he is trying to annul his two-year marriage and protect hundreds of thousands of dollars of assets that he says his wife "absconded with."

His wife, who has worked as Rawls' manager since 2003, says she transferred nearly \$350,000 into an account that she solely controls to prevent one of Rawls' two adult daughters from seizing the money.

Obesity, inactivity expensive in North Carolina

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK — Obesity, physical inactivity and other health problems related to weight cost North Carolina more than \$24 billion a year, a non-profit organization said.

The report, released Tuesday, was commissioned by Chapel Hill-based Be Active North Carolina. It said the costs come in the form of medical problems, lost worker productivity and workers' compensation claims that place a drag on the state's \$336.4 billion economy.

"I can't go anywhere where someone doesn't want to discuss how much their health care premium is going up," said state Treasurer Richard Moore, who wore a pedometer during the announcement. "Part of (those costs) they can do something about."

Moore and Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, who introduced the study, both serve on boards that aim to boost the health of North Carolinians. "Anyone who can balance a checkbook understands that's

a ton of money," said Perdue. She pointed out that state Medicaid costs also increase because of poor health choices. "We all pay the price. We all pay taxes."

Be Active North Carolina gets sponsorship money from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, the state's largest health insurer. It also receives funds from the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund that was established with tobacco lawsuit settlement proceeds.

The nonprofit has explored costs of unhealthy lifestyles among adults twice before. But this is the first time it also looked at the future prospects for young people, said Shellie Pfohl, executive director of Be Active.

The study analyzes data collected in 2003 and looks at health costs for adults and children. The total economic cost for children is \$38.2 million a year, according to the estimate.

Children who grow up overweight and stay that way will spend more than \$200,000

each during their working careers on costs associated with obesity, the study says.

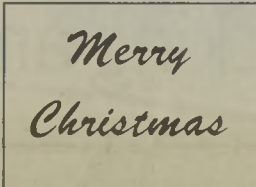
"The good news is that we know ... if we could just get ... 5 percent of our adults who are overweight or diabetic to be more active and engage in healthier lifestyles, we could save over \$1.5 billion every year," Pfohl said.

The report highlights what ultimately are individual decisions, said a health care policy expert.

"Certainly, they're important questions and should be

addressed," said Chris Conover, a professor of health policy at Duke University. "Ultimately, it requires changes in individual behavior."

The report will be forwarded to state lawmakers.



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