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The first black student admitted to the University of North Carolina Law School was Harvey Beech. Kenneth Lee, at right, is Kenneth Lee who attended the law school with Beech. (Photo By Alex Rivera)

Beech, one of UNC's first black graduates, dies at 81

KINSTON (AP) - Harvey E. Beech, one of the first black graduates from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has died at age of 81. Beech, who died Aug. 7 after an extended illness, was one of five black students admitted to the university's law school in 1951 after a lengthy court battle. He was a student at Durham's North Carolina School for Negroes - now North Carolina Central University - when Thurgood Marshall asked him to join a case against UNC-Chapel Hill. Marshall, who eventually became the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, challenged the separate-but-equal status of the law school. The case won admission for Beech and four others in a decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals. Beech and J. Kenneth Lee became the first black graduates from the university the next year. Three years later, the school admitted its first black undergraduates.

Still, Beech talked about the tough times he endured while at the law school. "He wasn't always treated as well and with as much respect from his fellow students as he should have been," said David Brown, senior associate editor of publications for the school's General Alumni Association. "He spoke very openly about it in recent years." George Graham, a friend and chairman of the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners, said it was a "struggle" for Beech. "All through it, he stood up for what was right, what is decent and what was - and is - in the best interest of all people," he said. The Kinston native practiced law for 40 years, serving on the university's Board of Visitors and the Board of Directors for the UNC Law School Alumni Association. Last November, the school honored Beech with the William Richardson Davie Award for extraordinary service to the school or to society.

Duke Researchers Working to Isolate Glaucoma Gene in Ghana

By William L. Holmes
RALEIGH (AP) - In his waiting room, Dr. Rand Allingham saw all the evidence he needed of glaucoma's disproportionate impact on black patients - the speed and density with which the disease ravaged eyes, robbing victims of their sight. To find the reason, and a potential treatment, the ophthalmologist decided to seek an answer in the DNA of blacks. His journey took him into the eyes of Ghana, a west African nation where glaucoma is so widespread. Allingham believes researchers have a better chance of finding the offending gene in Ghana because the nation is more than 98 percent African. He and his researchers

hope the lack of outsiders in the population will help them isolate the gene or genes that lead to glaucoma in that nation - and possibly in blacks in the United States, many of whom trace their ancestry to slaves brought to this country from Ghana. Trying to find a potential genetic cause of glaucoma in blacks is difficult in the United States, where blacks have lived alongside Europeans, Asians and Native Americans for centuries, he said. "I really didn't think African-Americans came to this country and then developed glaucoma," he said. "The U.S. is a melting pot. When you look at it genetically, 25 percent of African-Americans have European blood. Our population in

the U.S. is not what you'd call a pure population genetically." Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness in the world and affects about 2 percent of the American population 40 years and older, according to the National Eye Institute in Bethesda, Md. Blacks are nearly three times more likely than whites to suffer from the disease. It acts slowly. Over time, it prevents fluid from draining properly from the eye, increasing pressure and inflicting damage. The disease rate isn't known in Ghana, where no studies of glaucoma have been conducted, Allingham said. The entire country has

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UNC Tuition Issue Raises Questions About the Budget Change Feared Detrimental to Black Schools

By Gary D. Robertson
RALEIGH (AP) - The storm over whether campuses in the University of North Carolina system should have the authority to set their own tuition rates has abated at the General Assembly. Hours after lawmakers passed the third temporary spending measure of the year, Senate negotiators backed off demands in the still-unfinished budget to grant two schools the power to set a portion of their tuition rates independent of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

The issue pitted well-to-do alumni, particularly at UNC-Chapel Hill, who want their school to gain the power to charge more tuition, against UNC board members and former political leaders, among others, opposed to the change.

In between sat dozens of legislators who attended one of the state's 16 public schools, trying to determine relatively quickly what is best for the university system as a whole.

"It's complex. It's emotional," board chairman Brad Wilson said.

Senate leader Marc Basnight, D-Dare, said the proposal raised a larger question: "How you pay for education in North Carolina is the nut to crack."

Supporters of changing the tuition system are worried that UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University - which also would have received the special authority - will not have enough money to hang on to talented professors tempted by bigger paychecks offered by other schools. Campus

leaders are also worried about supporting new members of the faculty that are just starting out, Basnight said.

"They're wincing at how to pay for it," he said.

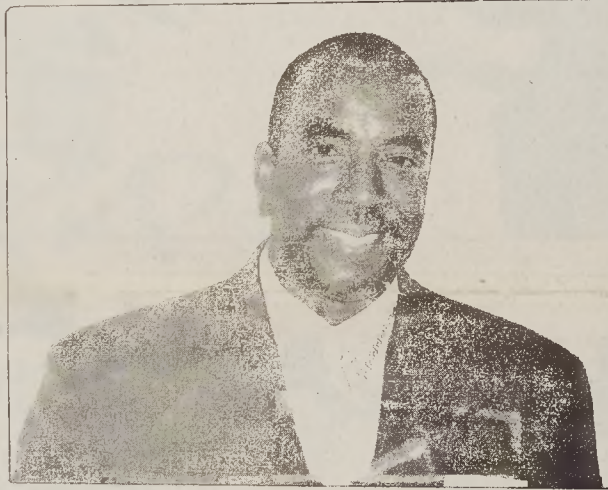
But opponents say making such a dramatic change to the state's higher-education policy deserves its own debate, and shouldn't be hashed out during the often private budget negotiations.

Inserting "special provisions," or items that make policy changes but don't directly affect spending, into

the budget lengthens the negotiations process and the legislative session, said Ran Coble of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, a nonpartisan policy think tank.

And it's happened before with the UNC system. In 2001, the budget granted UNC schools the authority to ask the Board of Governors for tuition increases specific to each campus. And this year, a provision that remains in the budget would treat all UNC scholarship winners

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Matthew L. Ramadan was introduced to community as the new Imam at the Ar-Razzaq Islamic Center at 1009 W. Chapel Hill St. Below, Ramadan, left, was greeted by Rev. Joseph Harvard, center, First Presbyterian Church; and Rabbi John Friedman, Judea Reform Congregation. Ramadan is executive director of Operation Breakthrough.



Judge Says Busing Unlikely A Remedy in Charlotte Case

RALEIGH (AP) - A state judge told civil rights lawyers Aug. 9 he is unlikely to restore busing to Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools to address academic problems at the system's poorest high schools.

"Busing is not going to solve it, Mr. Chambers, because you can't move all the children out" of poor schools, Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. told attorney Julius Chambers on Aug. 9.

Chambers and other civil rights lawyers had asked Manning to consider declaring the system's student assignment plan unconstitutional. A federal judge ordered an end to race-based student assignments and busing six years ago, saying the school system was desegregated.

One result of the current student-assignment system has been high concentrations of poverty at some schools.

Manning is presiding over the long-running Leandro school financing case. His ruling that the state was not doing enough to ensure a "sound basic education" for its poorest students was upheld by the state Supreme Court last summer. Since then, Manning has been holding hearings aimed at finding solutions to the problem.

The hearing focused on persistent low test scores at some 44 high schools, including 10 in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Chambers is one of the lawyers who helped win the landmark 1971 Supreme Court decision in Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education that opened the door to court-ordered busing to achieve school desegregation. He and other lawyers from the University of North Carolina's Center for Civil Rights told Manning that the existing system doesn't work and leaves some schools unable to provide their poor students with an equal education.