

Initiative to bolster schools

5 local companies to contribute funds

BY CHRIS GLAZNER
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Five major local companies committed Friday to donating a combined \$2.5 million to Triangle high schools over the next five years, with the goal of reducing dropout rates and better preparing students for college.

Superintendents from Orange, Durham, Wake and Johnston counties were present for the announcement, and the 31 high schools in those counties will join the effort, which is called High Five.

The program will receive \$100,000 each year for five years from The (Raleigh) News & Observer Publishing Co., the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, SAS, Progress Energy and Capitol

Broadcasting Co.

Although no specific plans for the effort have been made, leaders say they hope to increase graduation rates to 100 percent by 2013 and to put 90 percent of students on a college tech prep track by 2009.

They also hope to increase the number of students who meet the minimum admission requirements for UNC-system schools.

"Where we are at this point is developing the capacity within our school district to move forward with that mission," said Ann Denlinger, superintendent of Durham Public Schools.

After it hires a director, the next step for the program will be to determine what changes students, teachers and administrators want to see.

"It's going to be a journey of trying to understand what the structural problems are," said Bob Greczyn, CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, which will join the consortium, are already in the process of high school reform.

The CHCCS school board likely will decide in April whether to undertake several proposed reforms, including changing schedules and class requirements as well as creating a system of themed academies within the high schools.

Some of the possibilities in the High Five effort echo those of the CHCCS reform, including offering early college programs with help from area universities.

N&O publisher Orage Quarles said businesses have a strong interest in improving the quality of high school education.

"The reason business is involved is because we get the end product," he said.

"We want to show these students what it's going to be like to come work for us."

Dropout rates vary across the five-district region. The CHCCS district graduates more than 99 percent of its students, while Durham Public Schools and Orange County Schools have dropout rates approaching 6 percent.

The discrepancy also is reflected in other statistics. Ninety percent of CHCCS students meet the requirements to enter the UNC system, while only about 63 percent in Durham Public Schools and Johnston County Schools meet the requirements.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Md. delegates OK tax hike to aid universities

BY KAVITA PILLAI
STAFF WRITER

In a move that addresses the state's steep tuition increases, members of Maryland's House of Delegates voted to increase corporate income taxes and devote the extra revenue to higher education.

The bill, which passed the lower chamber of Maryland's General Assembly 80-60 last Monday, would increase the state's corporate income tax from 7 percent to 7.9 percent and could add fuel to the debate in North Carolina to increase the tobacco tax.

Tuition for the University of Maryland system has increased 30 percent during the past two years and could go up another 10 percent by next year. The new revenue would serve to offset the increase and reduce it to only 5 percent.

"The state budget should not be balanced on the backs of public education students," said Nancy Lineman, spokeswoman for Maryland House Speaker Michael Busch, who introduced the bill.

"The speaker, I think, and the House leadership certainly value higher education and believe it should be available to any student who wants to go."

But increasing the corporate income tax in North Carolina is out of the question, some say, because opposition from the business sector in the state is staunch.

"The idea of raising corporate taxes will be vigorously opposed by the business community," said Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange. "They've maintained that North Carolina corporate taxes are too high and we can't attract business."

Sen. Richard Stevens, R-Wake, is one of those opponents and believes that any tax increases, including a controversial tobacco tax hike, will further injure an already hurting economy.

"The (Maryland) state budget should not be balanced on the backs of public education students."

NANCY LINEMAN, SPOKESWOMAN

"We have the highest corporate income tax rate in the Southeast now, and I don't see it going up any more," said Stevens. "If anything, it will go down."

But some, including Rep. Paul Luebke, D-Durham, say increasing the cigarette tax would bring in much-needed revenue.

"By the time the short session starts in May, North Carolina will have the lowest cigarette tax in the country," he said. "That is an obvious source of revenue."

If the Maryland Senate passes the bill and Gov. Robert Ehrlich signs it into law, \$65 million will be given to Maryland-system schools, half of the money cut since Ehrlich took office. Such a move in North Carolina would be welcome by many struggling students.

"In general, I think that the tuition increases have been excessive over the last few years," Luebke said. "I would prefer to see more dollars come from the general fund to help keep state tuition down."

Closing loopholes in the corporate tax code also would bring in more revenue but "that's a harder sell than the cigarette tax," Luebke said.

Regardless, strong opposition to any form of tax hikes likely will prevent this from occurring. "I'm pretty cynical that it will go anywhere, even in Maryland," Kinnaird said.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Students give firms a leg up on campus

Offer companies marketing help

BY TIM PRICE
STAFF WRITER

College students always have been a hot sell when it comes to magazine subscriptions, said Dan Sachar of People magazine.

The magazine created a program with EdVenture Partners, a company that finds college students willing to work as marketing representatives on university campuses. People selected students on 10 campuses across the country to begin advertising campaigns.

Kavitha Balachandran and Jeff Wood, both juniors in UNC's business school, applied together for a single position, thinking that People would see that two heads are better than one. The students' plan worked, and the two now split the wages from the job.

"Because we are students, we have a better insight into what's going on on campus and what students want," Balachandran said.

The pair were given a \$2,000 budget to put together an ad cam-

paign for People's student subscription package. With the money, they've put up flyers and posters, donated to Dance Marathon and begun giving out incentives such as gift certificates to new subscribers.

But People isn't the only magazine looking for student attention. Nationwide, companies are just beginning to pursue employing students as marketing representatives to reach college-age consumers.

To get things moving for a new magazine, Time Inc., the publisher that owns Sports Illustrated among other publications, sought out student promoters.

Sports Illustrated On Campus, distributed at UNC on Thursdays in The Daily Tar Heel, hired Laura King to act as its lead marketing representative. Students Megan Serow and T.J. Breeden participate as unpaid workers eligible for work study credit.

The magazine provides the representatives with weekly assignments, promoting either the magazine or its sponsors, which include Nike and Frito-Lay, and also accepts proposals to fund other promotional campaigns.

"I've had to develop from scratch a lot of the things we've done on campus this year," King said. "I've been given a lot more responsibility than the general intern."

While Balachandran and Wood applied for their positions because they're interested in marketing careers, King, an English major, said she never considered sports marketing before she received the internship.

Matt Davis said he didn't expect to be working as a representative of Apple, the company that sells everything from Macintosh computers to the hot new iPods.

After working in what he called a mini-internship for Apple during high school, Davis was asked to serve as a representative for the company on campus. Now he speaks with interested customers, addresses people's concerns and carries out promotions on campus.

"This job has made me realize how much fun marketing and advertising is," Davis said.

Working as promoters for Adult Swim, Cartoon Network's late night collection of programs for more mature audiences, Adam Geller and Will Moore entered their student marketing gig looking for entertainment rather than résumé-building.

"I looked at the job, and I thought, 'Working for Cartoon Network can't be anything but fun,'" Geller said.

Both students said they got involved with the program because of an interest in the brand rather than the field. But Geller, a senior in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, said he can use the people skills he's learned as a promoter, making his work more than just a fun job.

"Anyone with an interest in getting up from their chair and going and getting people has the chance to do something like this and gain some life skills," Geller said.

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