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Budget negotiations near completion

EDUCATION PLAN FINALIZED AS PRIMARY BATTLES LOOM

BY CHRIS COLETTA
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

As negotiations on the state's \$15.8 million spending plan rolled into their second week, lawmakers continued work on resolving their differences but were significantly closer to the process's end.

As budget conferees in the House and Senate returned to Raleigh on Tuesday after the long July 4 weekend, they already had wrapped up talks on the education budget — the largest chunk of cash — and moved on to dealing with

about \$10 million in discrepancies. Though the fiscal year began July 1, legislators are working on making adjustments in the second year of a two-year budget. They therefore have some leeway in the amount of time they can take to finish their talks.

A major impasse was cleared late last week when lawmakers agreed to give Gov. Mike Easley full funding for More at Four, his signature preschool program, and another initiative to reduce third-grade class sizes to 18.

The House's budget included that money, but senators initially had balked, giving Easley only \$25 million of the \$59 million asked for in his recommendations for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

The move came after a heavy push from the governor's office. Last year, Easley threatened to veto the budget, which he viewed as not fiscally conservative enough, but made no such admonition this year.

Sen. Linda Garrou, D-Forsyth and co-chairwoman of the Senate's budget delegation, told The Associated Press last week that negotiators couldn't spend any more time arguing about the funds.

"You've got to come to the point and decide," she said. "This is a three-legged stool."

Legislators last week also ended work on the budget for the UNC system.

Last week, Sen. Kay Hagan, D-Guilford, said conferees agreed to set the amount of financial aid doled out to the system's campuses at \$26 million.

That's significantly less than what the Senate asked for but more than the \$21 million allotted in the House's proposal and the \$23.8 million called for in the 2003-05 budget.

"I'm very concerned not to

System officials react to latest round of cuts

BY CHRIS COLETTA
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

As the N.C. General Assembly wound down its work on the state spending plan this week, officials and student leaders in the UNC system said they were pleased the system got the amount of money it did.

"I know it could have been much worse," said Jane Helm, vice chancellor for business affairs at Appalachian State University.

"Of course, we would have been happy if there were no cuts, but ... we know we're part of the state system."

As it stands, the budget calls for cuts of 1.7 percent to the system, which amounts to \$27 million across 16 campuses. And even though they arrive on the heels of years of similar cuts, leaders expressed hope that this might be

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KERRY TAPS EDWARDS AS RUNNING MATE

BY CHRIS COLETTA
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Sen. John Kerry picked John Edwards as his running mate Tuesday, calling on the Southern populist in hopes that his small-town demeanor and skill on the stump will invigorate Kerry's bid for the White House.

The formal announcement came Tuesday morning at a rally in Pittsburgh after the Massachusetts Democrat phoned Edwards, a first-term senator from North Carolina, to inform him of his decision.

"I have chosen a man who understands and defends the values of America, a man who has shown courage and conviction," Kerry said of his choice.

For his part, the 51-year-old Edwards released a statement Tuesday morning expressing his gratitude at being chosen. He and Kerry were scheduled to campaign together Wednesday in Ohio before flying to six more states, wrapping up in North Carolina later this week.

"I was honored this morning to receive a call from Senator Kerry asking me to join his ticket," Edwards said in the statement. "I was humbled by his offer and thrilled to accept it."

In making his decision, Kerry passed over a bevy of other candidates, including Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri and Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack. The pair were widely believed to be the leading alternatives to Edwards.

Kerry's choice marked the end of a search that lasted about four months, during which Kerry was able to keep his decision secret until a few hours before the official announcement.

President Bush said Tuesday that Vice President Dick Cheney called Edwards to congratulate him and that he welcomed Edwards into the race.

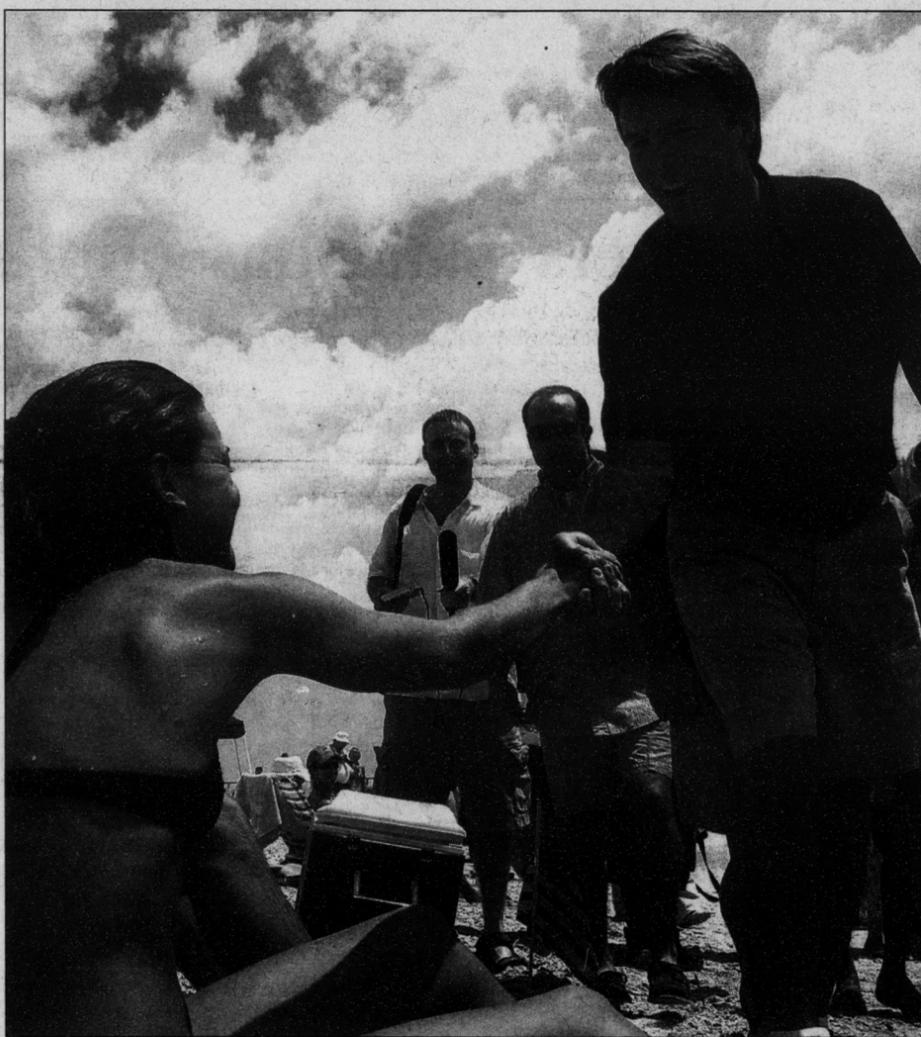
"I look forward to a good, spirited contest," Bush told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

Kerry's choice pleased many Democratic leaders, who had been stumping for the Tar Heel in hopes that he could energize what has, at times, seemed to be a lethargic campaign.

Ultimately, that seemed to be the deciding factor in Kerry's decision despite the fact that he and Edwards often were at each other's heels during the primary season earlier this year, when Edwards wound up as Kerry's last major competitor.

But if any animosity was present Tuesday, Kerry wasn't about to let on.

"I have worked with John Edwards side by side and sometimes head to



N.C. Sen. John Edwards shakes hands with Heather Miller as part of his sixth annual July 4 walk along Wrightsville Beach, two days before he was picked by Sen. John Kerry, the presumed Democratic presidential candidate, as a running mate.

head," he said. "I've seen John Edwards think, argue, advocate, legislate and lead for six years now. I know his skill, I know his passion, I know his strength, I know his conscience. I know his faith."

The decision came a few weeks before the Democratic National Convention, when Kerry and Edwards are set to accept their party's nomination.

Thad Beyle, professor of political sci-

ence at UNC, said the early decision will win the ticket favorable media attention before the Senate begins debate on a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage.

Now that he has been chosen, however, Edwards is almost certain to come under scrutiny. Already, the Bush campaign has begun to air an ad, titled "First Choice," which suggests that Arizona Sen. John McCain, a Republican, was Kerry's real pick for the vice presidential nod.

And indeed, Edwards brings many negatives and positives to the table.

He has proven himself a born politician during his few years on the national stage, winning his audacious first run for public office by defeating incumbent Sen. Lauch Faircloth in 1998 and lasting longer than anybody expected in this year's primaries.

And he's used his populist roots as the son of a Seneca, S.C. mill worker to great effect, bashing Bush by insisting that the president has created "Two Americas" — one for the rich and one for everyone else.

"He kind of brought a new perspective to what you do in politics," Beyle said.

Furthermore, the Southerner could narrow Republicans' large leads in some Southern states, particularly

North Carolina — a state that hasn't been carried by a Democrat since 1976, when Georgian Jimmy Carter was able to capitalize on the backlash from the Watergate scandal to defeat Gerald Ford.

"I think it's going to make the state more competitive," Beyle said. "It's probably going to make it competitive enough that the Bush people are going to have to spend a little more money here, and a little more time."

On the other hand, Edwards is sure to be dogged by questions about his experience.

The former trial lawyer, who has spent only six years in the Senate, has left many wondering about his foreign policy experience and whether he could succeed Kerry in case of disaster — questions Kerry himself raised during the primary season.

For now, however, the questions are likely to be pushed to the side as the new ticket introduces itself to the nation.

"(Kerry) probably had had enough of the questions: 'Who's it going to be? Who's it going to be?'" Beyle said.

"So he probably said: 'I've made that decision. It's time to announce it.'"

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

Task force kicks off diagnosis of safety

BY ALEX GRANADOS
STAFF WRITER

Last Thursday, a UNC-system task force took the first steps toward squelching student and parent fears regarding campus safety.

After the recent deaths of two UNC-Wilmington students, a 16-member panel with jobs ranging from admissions director to chief of police met in Chapel Hill to discuss safety.

UNC-system President Molly Broad said the circumstances necessitated a second look at safety on campus.

"I think the coincidence of events really demanded that we take a clear and careful look at a variety of issues regarding campus safety," she said.

Stephen Farmer, senior associate director of admissions at UNC-Chapel Hill, said the task force primarily gathered the background necessary to make future decisions.

"It was more in the nature of a general conversation, getting the lay of the land," Farmer said.

He said the task force was split into two subcommittees — one for admissions and one for campus safety.

SEE SAFETY, PAGE 4



Kim Isaacs, a digestive diseases specialist in UNC's highly ranked program, examines Allison Millard.

Hospital's programs ranked high

BY MATT STODDARD
STAFF WRITER

UNC Hospitals was honored this week when seven of its medical programs were listed among the top 50 of their kind in the nation, according to a ranking by the U.S. News and World Report.

The report, which will be published in the July 12 issue, states that just less than 4 percent of the nation's hospitals "were of high enough quality to be ranked in a single specialty." Four of the seven specialties that were included moved up in the ranks from last year's list with the Department of Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery in the ear, nose and throat area showing the biggest advancement, a 15 point jump.

The individual categories in which UNC programs placed are digestive disorders at 14 (up from 18); cancer at 29; ear, nose and throat at 22 (up from 37); gynecology at 29; kidney disease at 22 (up from 36);

SEE UNC HOSPITALS, PAGE 4



Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. John Kerry had been tight-lipped about his decision in the months leading up to the Democratic National Convention.



ARTS
WONDER BOYS
Nerd-cum-hunk Tobey Maguire springs into action in the summer sequel "Spider-Man 2." Thwip. **PAGE 6**



INSIDE
WAS IT EASY BEING GREEN?
Independent hopeful Ralph Nader faces trouble with getting a spot on the North Carolina ballot. **PAGE 2**

WEATHER
TODAY Mostly Sunny, High 92, Low 69
FRIDAY Mostly Sunny, High 91, Low 67
SATURDAY Partly Cloudy, High 88, Low 69