The Board of Trustees approves budget cuts and the smoking ban

The NECC Board of Trustees voted unanimously at its Nov. 5 meeting to approve President David Hartleb's proposed smoking ban, despite continuing student efforts to strike a compromise.

"It's final," Hartleb said, referring to the campus-wide smoking ban that will take effect next semester.

"It had to do with the health of employees and students," Hartleb stated as the reason for implementing this ban.

"The harmful effects of second-hand smoke are well documented, as are the effects of smoking on the smoker," Hartleb said. Smoking cessation programs will be introduced in the spring as part of implementing this ban.

"It's a major concern for students, and faculty as well. It's more detrimental to the college. People will be coming to class late because they have to go out to their car to smoke on breaks," Student Senator Bill Haslett said at the Dec. 3 senate meeting.

"It's an educational opportunity," Hartleb said.

"We're not going to do anything but ask people to cooperate. The policy is in effect and people to observe. The policy is in effect and will be enforced in the fall of 2009. NECC is now the second state college to ban smoking everywhere on campus, joining Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner."

The Board of Trustees at its Dec. 3 meeting approved the college's budget for the upcoming year including $1.23 million of budget cuts, which equals a reduction of roughly 3 percent of the college's budget.

These cuts are the result of the reduction in the budget appropriation the college receives from the state, which was announced in October.

"We are facing some very difficult challenges with the budget," President David Hartleb said.

The fiscal year '09 budget for NECC included cuts in departments such as Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management and Student Services, Administration and Finance, the President's office and Workforce Development and Continuing Education.

Faculty and Staff Development took the largest percentage cut, losing 18 percent, or $20,000, of its budget.

Cuts were also made in the Human Resources, Institutional Research and Information Technology departments.

According to Hartleb cuts were made in travel, copying, office, computer and library expenses.

Hartleb said one of the biggest cuts would come from the college's heating bill.

By reducing the temperature in all buildings to 68 degrees the college will save $120,000 a year, according to Sue Wolfe, vice president of administration and finance.

Layoffs are also a result of these budget cuts. According to Hartleb, the budget cuts include the elimination of three full-time staff positions.

Hartleb declined to identify which positions were cut.

The college has also eliminated two security guard positions, one each from Haverhill and Lawrence campuses.

Chief of Security Bill Blouin was able to eliminate those positions without laying off any guards as a result of cutting shifts and pooling hours for those currently employed.

Hartleb said the college would also save money by eliminating unfilled positions that are currently vacant.

The college will also reduce the hours of work for a number of part-time employees, particularly in Enrollment and Student Services, according to Hartleb.

Hartleb also said he wants to create more efficiency in scheduling and classes by having faculty as well. It's more detrimental to the college. People will be coming to class late because they have to go out to their car to smoke on breaks," Student Senator Bill Haslett said at the Dec. 3 senate meeting.

Under the new smoke-free policy the only place smoking will be allowed is in private vehicles.

The policy prohibits smoking everywhere on campus, within "all college grounds, buildings and property including college vehicles."

This includes the college's main campus in Haverhill as well as its two satellite campuses in Lawrence.

Starting this spring there will be a "soft opening to the policy," according to Hartleb.

"We're not going to do anything but ask people to cooperate. The policy is in effect and we are going to ask people to please observe the policy... if security sees them [smoking], they'll inform them," Hartleb said.

The smoke-free policy will be fully enforced in the fall of 2009.

"From my perspective we spent all last [spring] semester discussing it. We had open meetings, people came and we had discus-
Editorial's farewell

Instead of the usual fare I’ve decided to step outside of the box a little. Normally this space is used for an editorial, the unsigned opinion of the newspaper. Today, however, it will not be a collective opinion, but rather a singular voice with a message.

I, Daniel Potocki, have worked on the NECC Observer for two years, and for the last year I have been in charge. I’ve been the Trends Editor, the Opinions Editor, and the Editor in Chief. While on the paper I have traveled the country, and had many sleepless nights on deadline. I’ve worked with a hippie, who was against shoes; a conservative that wants to be an accountant; and a comic book amateur philosopher.

These people have grown from just a motley crew of galley of some-what anti-social miscreants, to what I consider to be members of my extended family. It has been my deep and pleasurable honor to work with all of them, and to get to know them through the stories we wrote.

It has also been my pleasure to work with the fine folks at NECC, both student and faculty alike. It wasn’t always easy, and disagreements were frequent, but it was never boring and that’s all that really matters.

In closing I’d like to use my farewell address, in the line of President Lyndon B. Johnson, to give a stern warning. Many young people have turned away from politics and social issues in favor of more entertaining things like TV shows and movies. I for one am all for entertainment but we must not allow ourselves to be lulled too deeply into sleep. We must watch those who claim to protect us, and we must live each and every day with an awareness of the weight of our freedom and how easily it is lost. Journalists tend to get a bad rap these days, but the good ones work for the community not against it and I encourage anyone with the guts to give it a try.

Benjamin Wright, General Studies

Without Barack Obama as a guy, but I don’t agree with his policies.

Alyssa Gilliam, Liberal Arts

“I didn’t like it, there’s too much bad in the world. And Barack Obama is going to destroy the world.”

Cristina Napoli, Journalism

“It’s been insane, I’m going to be very grateful for the winter break.”

NeoBridge cartoon

What are your thoughts on 2008?

Robert Buxton, General Studies

“It was a big year, there was so much that went on. I can’t wait for it to be over. I like the end result of the presidential campaign, but it was a bit tiring.”

Corey Giachereau, Media Design

“If you removed the year 2008 from history nothing important would happen.”

Christian Ramos, Illustration

Two words: ‘Dark Knight’
The administration realized they need to re-think this issue. Personally involved with this issue and am glad that I had a discussion about the minimum class size arose. I am ty to be involved in a candid, honest, open and public look at Areas of Excellence in the Academic Master Plan. Achieving the Dream Initiative, Strategic Planning and what this means and what role you may play in this process by attending this college. And if I don't graduate I will feel that I have wasted my time. Quentin Tarantino movie. It's all star spoofed Obama, McCain and inimitable Maria. Yes unfortunately, is a celebrity (well sort of) and has what is she going to do now that she is a celebrity? Perhaps NECC could increase the size of a directed college, enjoy meeting and working with colleagues, and if I don't graduate I will feel that I have wasted my time. Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber, Judith Kamber. While I am typing, I would like to bring up another issue. Nearly all of the students at this college work on some way. NECC should address class size issue. Perhaps what is disconcerting is that on the other end of the disagreement, the other side is willing to make relevant arguments. The conflicts of freedom. For offering insight and raising a question which is absolutely necessary in our political climate, we still hold slaves in the nation that turned out to be the United States, we still held slaves in the slave nation, that is a social injustice (I really, really hope he does) or will never reemerge or will he try his hand again at business. Will he write a tell all memoir revealing his true inner workings and detailing how the American presidency actually functions (I really, really hope he doesn't) or will he pick a political protégé and teach him his cowboy brand of leadership (that would be interesting also). Hey maybe he'll get his own sitcom and finally have people laughing with him instead of looking at him in glee. But I do know that he needs to be really sure what way to put all those “business” issues behind him and put to the side. This year was definitely an upgrade to 2007. We saw gas prices go up all time to the lowest it has been in my lifetime (you know, a tank). Our president is a new one. Complete botching the rescue plan for Halliburton and I wouldn’t go hunting with him. He somehow has the power to shoot somebody in the face and then makes the victim a lobbyist for getting shot. But that’s when you know there are forces at work in our understanding in Washington. But there was one guy who made all the difference. His name is Joe Wurzelbacher. Known to the masses as Joe the Plumber, he quickly became a celebrity and has appeared on a string of TV and radio shows. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be a rockstar (Barack Obama), the other end of the disagreement, the other side is willing to make relevant arguments. The conflicts of freedom. Freedom is something that is absolutely necessary in our political climate. We still hold slaves in the nation that turned out to be the United States, we still held slaves in the slave nation, that is a social injustice (I really, really hope he does) or will never reemerge or will he try his hand again at business. Will he write a tell all memoir revealing his true inner workings and detailing how the American presidency actually functions (I really, really hope he doesn't) or will he pick a political protégé and teach him his cowboy brand of leadership (that would be interesting also). Hey maybe he'll get his own sitcom and finally have people laughing with him instead of looking at him in glee. But I do know that he needs to be really sure what way to put all those “business” issues behind him and put to the side. This year was definitely an upgrade to 2007. We saw gas prices go up all time to the lowest it has been in my lifetime (you know, a tank). Our president is a new one. Complete botching the rescue plan for Halliburton and I wouldn’t go hunting with him. He somehow has the power to shoot somebody in the face and then makes the victim a lobbyist for getting shot. But that’s when you know there are forces at work in our understanding in Washington. But there was one guy who made all the difference. His name is Joe Wurzelbacher. Known to the masses as Joe the Plumber, he quickly became a celebrity and has appeared on a string of TV and radio shows. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be a rockstar (Barack Obama), the other end of the disagreement, the other side is willing to make relevant arguments.
Opinion

Holiday volunteers

Via charities and donations everyone enjoys the holidays
By Ryan Jackson
Contributing Reporter

The holiday season is often a time for family, friends, and of course, gifts. Whether it be receiving or giving gifts, this time of year tends to bring out the shopper in all of us. But some might agree the most important gift a person could give is a better holiday for those less fortunate.

Charities and donations such as “Toys for Tots” and “The Salvation Army” have been helping to better the lives of others during the holidays for a number of years. That is why it is almost a certainty that as soon as we put Thanksgiving behind us, we can plan to see the selfless men and women who stand proud, ringing their bells in front of local grocery stores, collecting money for the less fortunate.

These are the volunteers of the “Salvation Army”.

Ted Liacos, an Amesbury resident, and a volunteer for the “Salvation Army” for the past four years feels this is something very important.

“It makes me feel good, you know?” said Liacos. “There’s a lot of people who don’t have a lot, and it does me good to give back.”

Do the long hours, numerous shifts, and the occasional “Scrooge”, ruin this work for him? Absolutely not.

Liacos remarks “It gets frustrating when you say something as simple as Happy Holidays, and people yell at you, pointing out that not everyone celebrates the “holidays”. Which is true, but we don’t mean any harm by it.” Liacos continues, “The hours don’t bother me at all. This work isn’t about keeping track of hours; I couldn’t even tell you how many hours I work in a day, because I’m not interested in that. It’s about doing something for someone other than yourself. I work almost every day of the week for either all day or most of the day, it doesn’t bother me any.”

When asked if the economy had any effect on people’s donations this year Liacos said, “I’ll plead the fifth on that. I’m not here to say people aren’t giving as much as they should or anything, the economy has had some effect on us, but we’ll leave it at that.”

The four year veteran says he does indeed plan on coming back for a fifth year claiming he enjoys it too much to give it up.

“The best days are the ones where its freezing out, and the little kids come up to you and give you a huge big hug, thinking you work for Santa” said Liacos, “does me good and it warms you right up, it makes what I do worth it.”

And of course the question we all wonder every year, does it ever get tiring swinging that bell all day? Liacos says after four years he has got it down to a science, altering hands about every twenty minutes. “There are days where you get tired but the key is switching hands and keeping warm.”

For men and women like Mr. Liacos, the holiday season is about more than the latest fashion or trend. It’s more about giving rather than getting, and it doesn’t come with a price tag. For people like him, they do their work with a smile on their face, knowing that because of them, the unsung heroes of the holidays, they can be assured that someone out there will have a better holiday thanks to them.
**NECC focus of slow news week**

**By JULIE VARNEY**  
News Editor

President David Hartleb announced no spring tuition increase and explained the college's budget situation in a recent email sent to all students in response to local news coverage of the budget cuts at NECC.

“I am sure news about recent budget cuts has raised questions for you,” Hartleb said in the email dated Dec. 4.

This news included two days of front-page stories on the college's budget cuts from The Eagle Tribune on Dec. 2 and 2. Hartleb said he was surprised it was a front-page story in the newspaper on two days in a row.

“It must have been a slow news week,” Hartleb said at the recent Board of Trustees meeting.

In the email Hartleb told students that the college had decided not to raise tuition for next semester “knowing how important it is that we remain affordable,” but with additional upcoming budget cuts likely it was necessary to discuss this back to the table.

Hartleb also told students that the college is “committed to insuring that (they) budget cuts will have no negative impact on the quality of the education you receive from this college.”

Student Senate questions itself

**By JULIE VARNEY**  
News Editor

The Student Senate indicated they are experiencing an existential crisis this semester as senators questioned what their purpose is.

“We’re the student senate, our vision is very important,” said Senator Bill Haskell said at a recent meeting.

“We’re not respected on campus,” Senator Denya Blanco counseled.

One of the issues that had senators expressing their frustrations at a recent meeting was the opening of the senate office in B108 for office hours.

“People don’t even know we exist,” Senate President Brenda Canner said, as one of the reasons for originating the hold to senate office hours.

“What is the senate office there for, our reason for being there?” Senator Will Fisher said, in regards to why students don’t come by the senate office.

“We’re down there [in senate office] for a purpose...we need to try to make the student senate, the senate office, a more viable resource for students. We need to be more visible. We are here for the students, for their questions, complaints. We want to get people to go to the office,” Haskell said.

Despite the recent frustrations of the senate, Vice President Babak Alian has hope that the senate will be more involved and active next semester.

Alian is planning a retreat for over the break to talk about what the senate wants to accomplish, and to start working on it, for next semester. Hartleb said there will be more assistance and make the [next] semester better,” Alian told his fellow senators.

The obligation on the senate is to focus more on students, to voice their concerns, be the voice of the students,” Alian said.

The senate tackled issues facing NECC students this semester, such as the shuttle bus and smoking ban, and formed subcommittees specifically to deal with these issues.

Hartleb answered to the administration voicing their opinion on the shuttle bus issue and is working on doing the same for the smoking ban.

Student debt grows as loans increase

WASHINGTON, D.C.–Already high student loan rates are going to go up even more because of the bad economy, according to the Project on Student Debt, a group focused on cost-effective education.

“Student debt was a big burden even before this economic downturn,” said Edie Lapsansky, communications director for The Project on Student Debt. “With unemployment on the rise and wages not keeping up with the costs, it’s certainly going to be that much harder for students graduating now to stay afloat.”

In total dollars, student loans were up 17 percent over last year. Nationally, almost 1.3 million more FASPA’s were submitted, according to the Information for Financial Aid Professionals Library, a government organization.

The nation’s credit crunch will likely cause another increase. One-third of parents are slowing college savings because of declining home values and rising unemployment, leaving students with less money, according to a survey by TD Ameritrade Holding Corp., an investment firm.

The United States is losing $200,000 per month, according to Jared Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute. Graduates of all degree levels will be 8 percent less likely to repay their loans compared to last year, according to a study by the College Board and the Research Institute at University of Michigan.

When they graduate, students are relying on private, federal loans to get them through school, but fear graduation and paying off their debt.

Yael Hartmann, 31, from Bethesda, Md., took out a $60,000 loan for Columbia University’s School of International Public Affairs, a master’s program.

“I’m working in not going to be able to take a loan out next year because of the financial situation,” she said. “Even if I do, my interest rates will go up.”

But getting a second loan is just the start if her worries. After graduation, she hopes to get a job at the World Bank.

“It’s competitive, especially in my market there have been a lot of layoffs,” Hartmann said. “I think it’s almost better to be in school right now, you can at least stay out of the job market and hope it will get better sooner rather than later, I’m banking on that.”

Lina Wu, a third-year student at the University of Maryland Law School in Baltimore, estimates she needs more than $400,000 of debt by graduation.

She wants to work in public journalism.

“It will require a lot of sacrifices,” she said. “The extreme of it is I might have to move in with my parents.”

She said her classmates are giving up dream jobs in public service for jobs that pay more. For example, her roommate turned down a family law job because the $37,000 salary wouldn’t cover her debt and cost of living.

Student debt is a deterrent to people taking important, but low-paying jobs,” said Lapsansky. “College is supposed to open doors and expand opportunities for young people to follow their dreams.”

Traditional upcoming budget cuts likely it was necessary to discuss this back to the table.

Hartleb also told students that the college is “committed to insuring that (they) budget cuts will have no negative impact on the quality of the education you receive from this college.”

Ambulance called made

With the help of Eagle Security, this security officer was recently released to inform students and staff about the incidents requiring assistance from Eagle Security at the NECC campus in Haverhill. This log covers incidents between Nov. 15 through Dec. 15.

Nov. 26- A distraught person was reported at the bus stop on the Haverhill campus, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 5- A female student in the science building was released to inform students and staff about the incidents requiring assistance from Eagle Security at the NECC campus in Haverhill. This log covers incidents between Nov. 15 through Dec. 15.

Dec. 9- A male student was ill, an ambulance was called, 12:30 p.m.

Dec. 19- A disabled car was towed from the Lawrence campus, 2 p.m.

Tough economy halts students’ college plans

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Joe Perri had big college dreams.

He wanted to pursue a degree in photography from an arts school.

He and his family saved, hunted for scholarships and applied for financial aid, but they eventually realized they simply couldn’t find enough help to offset the $40,000-a-year cost for his first choice schools, the California Institute of the Arts and Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Fla.

“It was a big bummer, but I understand,” said Perri, 18. “You get accepted to this big school, and you get so excited, but then your parents start throwing reality at you. We don’t have that much money.”

So Perri changed course. He’s now a freshman at Broward College, formerly Broward Community College. He plans to spend two years there, saving money that he earns through a photography business he started on the side.

Getting into college is tough enough, but students now have to face a tough economy. About one out of six students have put their search for a college on hold, according to a survey conducted in October by MeritAid, a scholarship Web site.

Another 57 percent said they’re looking for a less expensive, lesser-known school, just as Perri did. Here’s what they face:

- The most difficult competition ever: A record number of high school seniors are applying to college now.

- Tough new economic hurdles: More restrictive college admission requirements, driven by the national credit crunch, has led to a decline in the availability of private student loans.

- According to Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of Student Aid and Scholarship Web sites, devoted to financial aid, 37 of 60 private lenders are not offering student loans this year. Federal student loans remain available.

- Savings have taken a hit. The sinking stock market that has slashed college savings accounts for many families and declining home values have also made it difficult for families to borrow against their houses to finance an education.

- Rising costs: Public college costs have doubled in the last decade.

- With his own retirement nearing and college costs coming at the same time, Perri’s dad says it’d be very difficult to pay big tuition bills without taking on student loans.

- For most parents, with the economy being the way it is, the last thing you want to do is to add to your own debts.

Mike Perri said that Joseph, your dream is still there, but sometimes we have to take side roads. The point is, you’re going forward.

- That cherished family and financial goal of sending the kids to college is under serious pressure.

“You can hear about the economy a million times in school, but when it really hits home, the students realize what’s needed,” says Pam Kattman, a vice president at Nova High School in Davie, Fla. “A college education is very important to them, but they may be losing their houses, their parents are losing their jobs, and even professionals aren’t working.”

- Community colleges are gaining, too. At Palm Beach Community College, enrollment 28,600 students currently is 11 percent higher than last fall. At Broward College, current enrollment is up 6 percent over last year at 33,660. The number of applications from high school students jumped by 20 percent.

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- One issue all schools have to face is private student loans, which have become both essential and very difficult to find because of the credit crisis.

- Two-thirds of all undergraduates borrow some amount.

- “I don’t want to do student loans,” says Sarah Cochran, a senior at Pembroke Pines Charter High School, who is searching the concerns of other students. “All those people are still paying them off while they’re paying bills when they’re older.”

- Cochran wanted to go to the California Institute of the Arts, and was turned down, as was Brother to MeritAid, a scholarship Web site.

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Celebrate writing

Remembering what the holiday season is really about

BY MELISSA DECOSTA
Contributing Reporter

It is the holiday season once again. People will blow their way through the days trying to find the best deals on traffic lines and curse and every time someone online pops up of holiday shopping, a mad frenzied panic breaks out. I am not alone in my consumption of "gifts." But I am alone in my belief that I may actually change the outcome of a gift.

Now the students take pride in their finished product. It has been a long time coming for those who write a paper. Ashley Cook emphasized the value that the writing process plays in her essays. "To me, the writing process is a way of thinking. It is a good tool to have and everyone should learn it at least once. I think it should be taught in high school so that when you come to college you will already know how to use it. It is important to me because it helps me make my essays stronger," she said.

This new writing strategy translates into other aspects of their academic careers, and it can change the way they view some of the occupations that they are pursuing.

Thanks from the help of their professors, the students are producing strong pieces and will continue to further their skills in writing.

"If I feel like I have grown as a writer, I am able to express myself better in my writing," wrote Kaitlin Bernier. "I am more enthusiastic about writing because I know I am more comfortable with writing," said Jeannette Guerrero.

Features

First Guitar Fest held at NECT

BY AARON SOUCY
Contributing Reporter

The North Shore Guitar Festival, which was held at NECT on Nov. 1, sounded like what you’d expect: loud guitars and happy music.

Eric Clemenzii, a local guitar teacher and member of the Eric Clemenzii Trio, was inspired to hold the festival after he attended the North American Music Markets (NAMM) conference in California. Eric loved the atmosphere of the NAMM conference.

They have clinics and concerts. People can come out and grab cool gear," he said.

This year’s event, which was clearly modeled off of the NAMM show (on a smaller scale, of course), took place in the Technology Center of the Haverhill Campus. On Thursday, Feb. 23, the likes of musical acts Hypaspace, David Newsham, and Eric Clemenzii Trio and Dave LaRue of Joe Satriani and Steve Morse Band fame. The audience was able to ask questions about guitar and bass playing during the performance.

The adjacent room held a setup by Peavey Amplification where music students could test amps to their liking. The clinic room on the second floor of the Tech Center included clinics by custom bass/guitar builder Chris Stambaugha, radio producer Brian Packer, and local studio owners/engineer Thomas Eaton. You’re encouraged to come and see what made this event worthwhile for Clemenzii to organize: “Seeing people who are interested in music. That’s the payoff. Also getting exposure for other performers.”

In this year’s Clemenzii who was excited to participate in the show, however, Hypaspace guitarist Steve Marchena was thrilled as well, which is surprising considering the list of venues he has played includes Gillette Stadium and the Hatch Shell in Boston.

“I make my living as a musician. It’s really, really inspiring to have someone that he (Eric) invited us,” Marchena said.

The event was both information and fun for those who attended. Some of the students at St. John’s Prep, enjoyed the festival. “The music is good. It’s pretty cool being here. I was happy being helpful talking about solos,” Jeremy Weygryn, a friend of Eric’s and recording sound engineer at Umac Lowell, enjoyed himself as well. “It was very worthwhile coming to. The guys here know what they’re talking about. Very good outlook to people this experience.”

While many came to see and hear music, there were others found interested in the clinics.

I went to the Pat Wood clinic at Triton Regional High School, found his interest in recording. “I came to see Eric LaRue joked about his college days at Berklee. “I went to college here, so I love Nana," he said.

All in all it seems the event was a success. But will we start to see North Shore Guitar Festival?

A snowball for Nana

BY SARA PRESCOTT
Features Editor

Students who have issues with writing in the past have embraced a new technique that helps students discovering an interest in the subject while substantially helping them discovering an interest in the subject while substantially improving their skills. With the start of the WAC, Writing Across the Curriculum, an emphasis has been put upon the writing process. The WAC is focused on improving the critical thinking skills of students with an increase in writing instruction.

Many students entered their Basic Writing class with little confidence in their writing abilities. They found that writing was a hard skill to master, attributing their difficulties to problems organizing their thoughts, brain-storming ideas, not knowing the proper format for a paper. Some students even reference their inability to write as a fear.

"Before taking Basic Writing, I had a writing phobia," states Mina Tsekeridi.

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While many came to see and hear music, there were others found interested in the clinics.

I went to the Pat Wood clinic at Triton Regional High School, found his interest in recording. “I came to see Eric LaRue joked about his college days at Berklee. “I went to college here, so I love Nana," he said.

All in all it seems the event was a success. But will we start to see North Shore Guitar Festival?
The last gossip for the fall ’08 semester, enjoy the fun

By MERISSA LIVEMORE
Arts and Entertainment Editor

This is the last gossip column for the fall ’08 semester and there is something here that is truly unique to the Northern Essex Community College. Along with that, of course there are murder mysteries, and friends, enemies, nurses and doctors and deaths. Granted it’s the holidays, but there is no current “Holiday Gossip,” and there will be weeks before the Observer’s next issue. Have a nice holiday and enjoy the latest gossip.

NECC Alumna is Paris Hilton’s “Repo!” BFF. Miss Flickenger was unguarded inside when we heard about Paris Hilton’s new T.V. show based on the horror musical/ opera “Repo! The Genetic Opera.” Hilton and her ex-BFF Nicole Richie would force each other and be friends forever would never happen. Some of us watched it; others avoided it like the plague, while the rest just sat there when there was nothing else on. Finally this season for most of the planet, the film swept most of the planet, the film served as a sort of Greek chorus to the events that take place in the film. All of these plots collide at GenCeCo’s Genetic Opera.

Did I mention that the entire film is a musical, with over 50 songs displayed on the screen, and many songs had wide range of musical genres present here, from pop to rock to operatic, with all the songs playing an important part to the storyline and its characters.

Despite being directed by Darren Lynn Bousman, the rumors are false. LionsGate dropped over $150 million of dollars for production company LionsGate with the Saw films, and it’s only been a modest success. As it is, it will be unlikely for the showing to sell out. They were wrong by the time the theater opened on the final day, every ticket had been bought. As a long line of patrons waited to enter, a young woman came asking, calling to buy a ticket from someone, but to no avail.

Inside the theater, Bousman explained how the film once began as a stage play, and how the film had been a labor of love for all involved for LionsGate’s lack of encouragement. He told everyone in the audience not to worry about being late during the theatrical run. Because of this, director Bousman and writer Zdunich took the film on a “Repo! Road Tour” with their own money, taking their film to different cities for late-night showings, personally presenting the film themselves.

This reviewer managed to attend the Boston showing of “Repo!” I was told a week earlier by the theater that given that only 100 out of more than 300 seats had been sold, that it would be unlikely for the showing to sell out. They were wrong by the time the theater opened on the final day, every ticket had been bought. As a long line of patrons waited to enter, a young woman came asking, calling to buy a ticket from someone, but to no avail.

Alsion Zdunich signed autographs and took photos with the fans. You do know that LionsGate dropped the ball on this film, at this the very least, it most likely could have been a modest success. As it is, it will most likely live on as a cult classic and playing in midnight showings. If you missed it in theaters, the DVD will be released on Jan 20. Consider giving it a try. If anything, you can’t say you’ve seen something like it before.

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Who needs Rolling Stone to tell you what albums to buy

A list of the best metal albums of the year

BY HANSEL LOPEZ
Opinion Editor

Up next is “Shogun” from Trivium. Once considered (unjustly?) more of a side project for bands like Metallica and Megadeth they broke out of that mold with a masterpiece of dense compositions and searing guitar work. Metallica lives again proven by their new disc “Death Magnetic.” A return to classic 80s form while Otep returns with another flawless blend of death metal, Jazz and prog rock.

And if you really like “Watershed” then you might as well just check out “The Way of All Flesh” by France’s Gojira. The heaviness and atmospheres of Neurosis meets Meghullah style precision and Morbid Angel like death metal. All this coupled with insightful lyrics. Longtime melodic metal purveyors In Flames just keep getting better at what they do as evidenced by “A Sense of Purpose.” You know what you’re going to get, which isn’t a bad thing if that means flashy guitar work and really catchy hooks.

This is another weird entry, but I like to give credit to who deserves it. Slipknot has finally incorporated really good riffs and strong melodic singing to its nu metal/death metal cocktail. And last, but not certainly least is “Declaration” by Orange County’s last great metalcore band Bleeding Through. Although all their past work has been good it was on their latest effort where they finally carried their tag of “black metal hardcore.”

What do you want? It’s either this or you can read Blender or Spin magazine and their elitist reviews of bland indie rock.

Rating professors equals fun

Students anonymously grade their professors on the Internet

BY JULIE VARNEY
News Editor

At this time of year when stu-
dents are finishing their classes they often look back on the semester that has passed and at the same time look forward to next semester, particular-
ly with registration underway for spring classes.

As part of that reflection, in all of their classes at NECC, students have filled out course evaluations, rating their professors using those fill-in-the-blank sheets.

But if what a student wants to say more? And what if a student deciding what classes to sign up for next semester wants to find out whether a professor is college to college.

One alternative NECC students have used is RateMyProfessors.com. This Web site is a place where stu-
dents can post comments anony-
mously, filling out forms that rate instructors on a scale of difficulty, helpfulness and clarity of their lecture.

“My professor suggested us to visit it,” NECC student Melissa Perkins said.

“On mEvU. I’ve seen it but haven’t used it,” student Christian Ramos said. RateMyProfessors.com claims a database of over 6,000 schools, 1 million professors and 8 million opinions.

The NECC category of RateMyProfessors.com has 461 rat-
ings of professors, with more than 80,000 logging on to the Web site are Theater Professor Jim Murphy, Criminal Justice Professor Paul Cavan, Math Professor Nancy Nickerson, English Professor Amy Callahan, Science Professor Marcy Vozzalla, Business Professor Kelly Lalonde, Foreign Languages Professor Ellen Abrams and Psychology Professor Carolyn Cohen.

If one of the criteria that students have for their professors is their level of attractiveness, professors can also be rated in that category, receiving a chili pepper designation for “hot-ness.”

Despite categories like “hot-ness,” RateMyProfessors.com has been given some credibility by a recent study appearing in the journal of “Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education” which stated there is a high correlation between RateMyProfessors.com ratings and a student evaluation system used by a number of colleges nationally.

RateMyProfessors.com has even recently released its list of the top 10 highest rated professors from colleges across the country for 2008. For the first time, the Web site has also included a separate list of the highest rated junior and community colleges professors and facul-
ty. This is a result of the increased numbers of enrollment at community colleges across the country and the record number of community college students, according to mtvU, which operates RateMyProfessors.com.

“It’s important for us to shine a light on professors around the country who are doing great work at every institutional level,” said Carlo DeMarco, President of University Relations for mtvU.

According to the rankings, Manatee Community College in Sarasota, Fla. has the highest rated faculty of all and the highest rated professor from overall is English teacher Jim Mattimore from Suffolk County Community College in Long Island, NY.

No NECC professors appear on this top 10 list but the college has some consistently high rated professors within its own category.

Some of the highest rated profesi-
sors from NECC appearing on the site are Theater Professor Jim Murphy, Criminal Justice Professor Paul Cavan, Math Professor Nancy Nickerson, English Professor Amy Callahan, Science Professor Marcy Vozzalla, Business Professor Kelly Lalonde, Foreign Languages Professor Ellen Abrams and Psychology Professor Carolyn Cohen.

If one of the criteria that students have for their professors is that they are performing their job well, students can rate who deserves it.

According to mtvU, “The Day The Earth Stood Still” is a celebrated science fiction tale playing off Cold War fears where an alien named Klaatu comes to Earth hoping to warn us of impending disas-
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Remake of 1950s classic proves worth to the toughest critics

BY NICK SERRUKNIS
Alt Edge Editor

Two weeks ago I had never seen the 1950s classic “The Day The Earth Stood Still.” “The Day The Earth Stood Still” is a celebrated science fiction tale playing off Cold War fears where an alien named Klaatu comes to Earth hoping to warn us of impending disas-
ter by our own hand.

Last weekend I walked into my local cinema to see the 2008 remake “The Day The Earth Stood Still” with light ignorance. Remakes occasionally surprise me, but I felt that this particu-
lar film would be a hard restoration project.

Proving me wrong isn’t that hard and I walked out of the theater relative-
ly satisfied. I felt that this new interpre-
tation carried a lot of elements of the original but updated it to fit current events while still reflecting the original intent.

Where the original dealt with the Cold War this Keanu Reeves fueled update dealt with environment and ter-
rorism. It incorporates contemporary America’s love for flashy spectacle and still retains strong character interplay.

Even though the original is still a classic, it can come off dated or cheesy by today’s standards, especially if it’s the first time. When the Earth stood still in the remake I thought it was a

This is one date that won’t go over well, powerful touching moment and occasion-
ally wish that it would happen to our world.

I’ve always liked Keanu Reeves and his cardboard-style acting fits per-
fecly with a creature unfamiliar with our customs. Jennifer Connelly shines

with more than 80,000 logging on to

mEvU. I’ve seen it but haven’t used it,” student Christian Ramos said.

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The Funnies

ZERO
by LOUIS COPPOLA

“I feel like I don’t even know my own husband … and it’s driving me wild.”

“We’re just going for a routine checkup … they only do that operation once.”

“Can we keep him? I don’t know, Robbie — he’s pretty creepy.”

“Our broker just informed me that we have to die in two years.”
Six possible ways to make the economy squeaky clean

By NIC SERMUKSNIS

As an ace reporter of the prestigious inner metropolitan college newspaper The Observer I’ve been kept abreast of the shambles that is our economy. Everyone has their opinion or anxiety on the situation, but many folks are scrambling for a response and I felt it was time for Alternative Edge to step in and offer solutions of its own.

Money Bunkers - 1 was talking with my good friend Joe the Conspiracy Theorist about the ethics of next week friends, lovers and family plans. After mid-week friends, lovers and family plans. Late Monday expect loved ones to open up new job opportunities. Don’t hesitate. Day 21-Feb. 19) - Social relations may be briefly complicated by personal quibbles, but instead of wasting gas driving to the beach, just ride your bike. By pushing other holidays and celebrations in rotation you open up new customer bases and also prevent it from being dragged through the proverbial dirt.

“Giving everyone a chance to shine will reinforce a level of appreciation and acceptance,” believed Joe the Salvation Army Donation Bell Ringer Outside of Finer Grocery Stores Everywhere. "plus I might quell the excessive amount of Christmas movies that come out every winter.”

When “Eight Crazy Nights” is the only Hanukkah tour de force sitting on a shelf with “A Christmas Story”, “It’s A Wonderful Life,” and “A League Of Their Own” (personal favorite) it can get pretty lonely.

I hope you all were able to find ways to celebrate the minor holidays in difficult times, but that is not a reason to give up! We all have to show up and give our all to walk on. I would love to hear from you about your own ideas on what we can do to save our country. E-mail me at observer@necc.mass.edu and I’ll pick the best of the best to be published in the first issue of spring 09!

ARIES (March 21-April 19) - Over the next few days family members may need to clarify their roles. Late Monday expect loved ones to openly discuss family plans. Avoid group pressure, if possible. Some Librans may also experience a brief financial disagreement between loved ones. Plan revised budgets and fresh family activities. Change is needed. After Wednesday Librans will experience a powerful wave of motivation. Sentimental reflection is healthy: pay close attention to insights and wisdoms concerning past friendships and abandoned promises.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) - Cancerians, romantic optimism is now returning. Over the next few days let new personal attractions and light social encoun-

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) - Sagittarians this is a time of meaning and purpose. Use this time to settle long-standing disputes, introduce fresh activities and clearly outline future goals. After Thursday a powerful wave of romantic and spiritual interest arrives. People may have issues with family traditions, home expectations or vital promises. Express your thoughts: loved ones will respond with compassion.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) - Honest group pressure is now encouraging emotional resilience. Monday expect a close friend or lover to reveal their past history or offer a rare glimpse into their private world. Take all as a compliment and watch for powerful romantic overrides: others may now wish to witness your dedication, insight and loyalty. Later this week some Pisceans will be asked to correct the mistakes of a past colleague. Go slow; vital facts and figures may be at issue.

If your birthday is this week...workplace dynamics may be unnecessarily complicated before mid-January. Watch for key officials to request detailed descriptions of past projects. Avoid disclosing key facts, figures or amounts. Over the next few days practical information may be easily misunderstood. Go slow and remain true to original values. After Wednesday respond quickly and honestly to last minute romantic or social invitations. Someone close may this week need assistance with their long-standing relationships or long-term expectations. Take time for reflection.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) - Social relationships or family triangles may now be complicated by workplace politics and private power struggles. Ignore all emotion-

LPW (Sept. 23-Oct. 21) - As work actuates the medium this week, it may be possible. Colleagues or new officials may now disavow trusted policies. Some Librans may also experience a brief financial disagreement between loved ones. Plan revised budgets and fresh family activities. Change is needed. After Wednesday Librans will experience a powerful wave of motivation. Sentimental reflection is healthy: pay close attention to insights and wisdoms concerning past friendships and abandoned promises.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 22) Early this week expect your mood to be affected by past door plans. Before mid-week times, dates and revised schedules will be confusing. Use this time to settle long-standing disputes, introduce fresh activities and clearly outline future goals. After Thursday a powerful wave of romantic and spiritual interest arrives. People may have issues with family traditions, home expectations or vital promises. Express your thoughts: loved ones will respond with compassion.

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The Trouble with Avery

Sean Avery’s days in Dallas have come to an end

BY CHRISTIAN STONE
Sports Editor

As we’ve seen from a few of our beloved athletes in the past, asking these people to shut their mouths and play the game that they love, the only game that we love to watch them play, is just too much to ask. Some people tend to have a comment for everything, regardless of your platform or who you are. If you speak your mind, you’d do it. It doesn’t matter your profession, actors are always offering their political opinions to the public. It’s all opinionated and none of it is relevant to the profession. But sometimes your opinion can come back to get the best of you, as in the case of Sean Avery of the Dallas Stars and his career in the NHL.

Although Avery has been one of the most controversial players in the NHL since 2005, it’s comments have earned him a lot more than just the spotlight. Avery has been silenced from the game indefinitely. Maybe not so much a personality defect, but for some reason, certain actions are like Avery and threaten the multi-million dollar careers away all the time needed to do so was silence their voices.

Before getting into the specifics of the travesty that is Avery’s 2008 season, look at what he’s been doing to the reputation of the league since 2005. The first recorded incident in the professional life of Avery came at the expense of French Canadian hockey players, specifically Phoenix’s Denis Gauthier after lay-in from Avery. “I think it was typical of most French guys in our league with a very small mouth around playing tough and not back anything up,” he said, commenting on the idle play and pretend toughness of Gauthier.

Instead of personally attacking Gauthier himself, he chose to take the ignorable role of bringing forth the player’s nationality in his comments. Again in 2005, Avery made headlines in the worst kind of way when he accused fellow puck handler Georges Larague of using the racial epithet “monkey”, which ultimately turned into a battle of hearsay which led to a suspension on the ice, but do not embarrass the organization.”

On Tuesday, Dec. 2, during a morning skating practice, Avery, gathered in front of the media, decided to once again exercise his lips instead of his legs; this time calling out Calgary Flames’ defensemen Dion Phaneuf, who is dating Avery’s old girlfriend, actress Eliza Cuthbert.

“I am really happy to be back in Calgary. I love Canada...I just want to comment on how it’s become like a common thing in the NHL for guys to fall in love with my sloppy seconds. I don’t know what that’s about. Enjoy the game tonight,” Avery said.

The league responded to his comments quickly, they were deemed “detrimental” to both the Dallas Stars and the NHL itself. Within hours he had been suspended indefinitely until further notice, including being suspended for the game that night. Stars owner Tom Hicks released a statement shortly thereafter in obvious full support of the league’s decision.

“The league has said that the comments made by Avery were in violation of NHL by-law 17 and Article 6 of the NHL Constitution for conduct ‘detrimental to the League and the game of hockey’. In other words, Sean Avery has become an embarrassment to the league and the game of hockey. Avery is a prime example of someone with a poor poor attitude being put in the spotlight, the worst case of which I’ve seen in sports, said John Rocker. ‘I’m not sure if anyone out there can still remember the former Atlanta Braves closer pitcher who made numerous racist comments throughout his career, but at least he made up for it by, one, receding from the game of baseball and two, publicly stating that he would ride the New York subway prior to a game in New York, specifically the 6 train, so if you had a problem with him, you’d know where to find him.’ At least he gave the people he offended their fair shot at redemp­tion, don’t expect as much from Avery.”

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Avery’s coach and teammates have had it with his unnecessary antics. Coach Dave Tippett said it was “crossing the line” to disrespect an opponent the way that he did. Tippett also said it would be hard to bring Avery back to a locker room where he ruined all continuity.

The league ultimately deemed his actions alone prompted a rule change in the league itself. Earlier in the season he was screening New Jersey goalie Martin Brodeur with his hands and stick dur­ing a power play, posing as a distraction. The league ultimately deemed this particular move, even though bountiful, as unsportsman-like conduct. Maybe if they caught Mario Lemieux doing it back in the day they would have let it slide, but

Weekly SportsTrivia
QUESTIONS:

1. Who holds baseball’s career best batting average of .367?

2. Who was the first NBA scoring champ to become a head coach in the league?

3. What city hosted the first ever nation­ally televised boxing match in 1951?

4. In what year did the NBA start the 2nd second shot clock?

5. Who was the first Heisman winner to play professional football?
Gold Medal Bakery, a commercial bakery in Fall River, MA is hiring for year-round work! Work as a **Part-Time Bakery Products Representative** servicing 2 supermarkets in the Amesbury, MA/Exeter, NH territory.

A state-of-the-art, family-owned commercial bakery in business for almost 100 years, Gold Medal provides private label bakery offerings of bread, rolls and English muffins to major supermarkets.

**Duties include:** Merchandising product, Maintaining inventory, Managing orders via handheld computer  
**Job work week:** Mon/Tues/Thur/Sat mornings 8-11am. *Must be able to work Saturdays.*  
**Minimum qualifications:** Basic computer experience required.  
**Compensation:** $140 per week

Don’t miss out – Apply now!  
Request an application at [gmbhr@goldmedalbakery.com](mailto:gmbhr@goldmedalbakery.com)