

## WSET-TV (ROANOKE, LYNCHBURG, BLACKSBURG, VA)

A state spokesman says - by tracking absences - officials can look for unusual patterns that could serve as early signs of possible clusters of swine flu illnesses. Schools are asked to submit the date, student enrollment, student absences, faculty and staff employment, and faculty and staff absences. Lynchburg College is making the grade. Over a 4-year period, LC seniors performed 42-percent better than their peers at other four-year institutions. The new stats are based on a Collegiate Learning Assessment by the Council for Aid to Education. It's a relatively new approach that measures academic progress during college. The assessment measures writing and critical thinking. It also tracks the progress of students from freshman to senior year. LC says they're excited with the outcome and hope to do even better in the future. Dr. Kenneth Garren "We're always looking to get better so I would like to see those numbers get even higher and it's hard to image us doing that but we're continually trying to improve our education for our students. Lynchburg College also tells us, in addition to the assessment, they're implementing national reading tests for freshman and seniors. **Meanwhile - a couple of Virginia college cities have earned a place on a list of America's best. The list -released by the American Institute for Economic Research - considers quality of life and professional opportunities. Charlottesville placed 6th among cities under 250-thousand people. Blacksburg ranks 17th. New York City ranks first among Major Metropolitan areas.** It's been through some tough times over the years, but, at least one magaizine sees a better future for Danville. The city is on the cover of the September issue of the Blue Ridge Business Journal. In the article called "A Phoenix on the Rise", writers say the city is "taking a proactive, cooperative approach to recharging its sputtering economy. " It also points to the city as a symbol of renewal with high tech potential. If you'd like to check it out, we'll put a link to the full article on our web site: WSET. com. More budget cuts are on the way for the state. Under Governor Kaine's spending plan for the next fiscal year, nearly 600 state employees would be laid off. State funding for state-supported colleges and universities will be cut up to 15 percent. And there will be a one-day furlough for state employees on the Friday before Memorial Day next year. Virginia faces a 1.35 billion dollar budget shortfall. Governor Kaine says a priority under his plan was protecting K through 12 education. The budget cuts also include the closing of two state prisons, including one in our area. The Botetourt Correctional Center, also known as Camp 25, will shut down. It's a medium security prison, located just outside Troutville. The closure will affect 121 jobs -and they estimate 61 of those will be lost. Plans are underway to begin moving the 352 inmates by the expected closure date of November 10. Meanwhile, Lynchburg City Manager Kimball Payne says it's still too early to say if the budget cuts will mean layoffs or paycuts in the Hill City. What he does know is that overall, the city is going to see about a 7-percent cut in local law enforcement funding. The Sheriff's Office with lose 4.7-percent. Payne adds that constitutional officers, like the Commissioner of the Revenue and Clerk of Court will see a 15-percent cut in state money. But he says the city expected these cuts, and set aside money to soften the blow. Kimball Payne, Lynchburg City Manager - "We set aside 500-thousand dollars to offset what we thought the governor might do. So we've got 500-thousand set aside. It appears to me, at least initially, that we're going to be OK with that. " As for Payne's job review. City Council gave him his annual

performance evaluation in a closed session last night. It comes in the midst of the civil suit we've told you about that alleges Payne violated a city detective's first amendment rights. City Council would not comment on the lawsuit but affirmed their confidence in Payne. Mayor Joan Foster, City of Lynchburg -"We are convinced that Mr. Payne will continue his commitment to ongoing quality improvement efforts both in his own performance and in that of all our city employees, and we believe that he will continue to lead the city staff in a professional manner. " In other business, council approved a pedestrian and bicycle safety plan for Wards Road. The multi-phase project would provide a crosswalk between the Vitamin Shoppe and Sam's Club, where Liberty University plans to build two tunnels.