

## ADMISSIONS

# UNC sees steady increase in applications

Acceptance rate has declined by 7 percentage points

By Adele Morris  
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In the past five years, UNC has experienced a consistent rise in the number of applicants seeking admission to the University.

During the 2019 college application cycle, UNC received just under 42,500 applications and during the 2024 application cycle, it received over 66,000, according to the University's common data set. As a result of this rise in applications, UNC's acceptance rate declined from 22.6 percent to 15.6 percent during that period.

Vice Provost of Enrollment Rachelle Feldman said she attributes this increase in applications to UNC's institutional reputation.

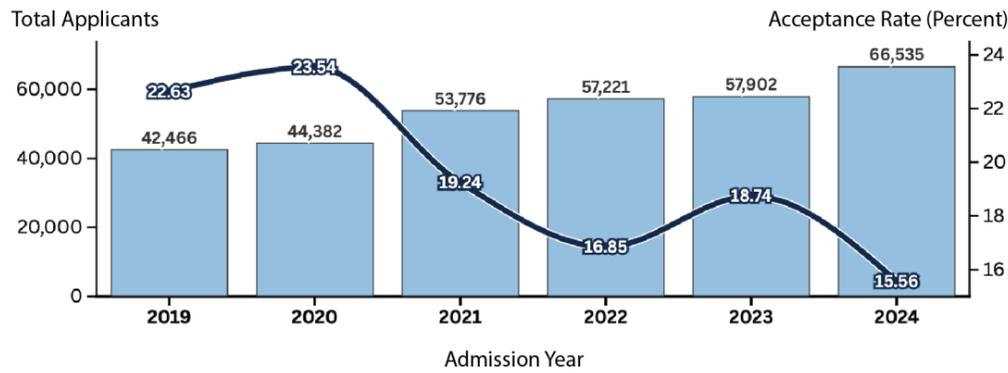
"The atmosphere and school spirit, the way our students are very collaborative, the fact that we focus on developing leaders and giving people broad opportunities, that the faculty are of quality and care about teaching — I think for all of those reasons, we have seen a continual increase in interest in North Carolina," she said.

She also noted the appeal of the

## UNC sees drop in acceptance rate as the number of first-year applicants increase

From fall 2019 to fall 2024, the number of first-year applicants to UNC rose by approximately 57 percent. During the same period, first-year acceptance rates declined from around 23 percent in 2019 to 16 percent in 2024.

■ Acceptance Rate ■ Total Applicants



Source: UNC Office of Institutional Research & Assessment

DTH DATA/JIYOON MOON

University's affordability, saying that UNC is one of the few top-five-ranked public universities that meet the full financial needs of students.

Private College Admissions Coach Camy Sorge cited alternative reasons for the increase in applications. She said in the face of rising concerns

over job security and artificial intelligence, more applicants are seeking admission to colleges with higher rankings.

"They want to feel like, 'If I go to school, it's going to make a difference,'" she said. "And so I think that makes people concentrate: 'Well, I'll choose a school that has a really strong reputation, has a really

high ranking, and that will make it more likely that it'll be worth it."

Independent Educational Consultant Neisha Frank said as top universities receive more applications each year, their acceptance rates drop. In turn their U.S. News and World Report

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## HISTORY

# Nonprofit maintains burial sites

Indigenous Memories honors legacy of Native, Black perspectives

By Marion Rambler  
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It was 2007, and Beverly Scarlett was hiking in the woods with a member of the Trading Path Association. Their goal was to find graves of Indigenous people who had travelled on The Great Trading Path, which travels from Petersburg, Va. all the way to Augusta, Ga. The two stumbled upon a pile of stones leveled at Scarlett's height, about 5 feet 7.5 inches tall.

"I asked, 'What is this?'" Scarlett said. "I was told it was a farmer's rock pile. I knew that couldn't be the case, because we grew up farming right here on the land in this area, and it takes a lot of time to construct something with permanence that takes time away from your farm work."

Scarlett said that she knew she needed to do something when she saw that the stone pile was her height. While it took time to research and

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## MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Jalen Washington makes game-winning block



DTH/VIYADA SOUKTHAVONE

UNC junior center Jalen Washington (13) blocks the ball during a game against N.C. State at the Lenovo Center on Saturday, Jan. 11. UNC won 63-61.

## Junior center records first double-double in win over N.C. State

By Emma Moon  
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RALEIGH — Jalen Washington has waited.

The junior center spent two seasons behind former UNC center Armando Bacot before earning the starting role. He's worked to adjust while experiencing a silent season. He's made countless tweaks. He's waited to show what he can do. He's waited for a moment like this.

With five seconds left to play and a chance for N.C. State to send the game into overtime, Washington readied himself low in the post and surveyed the court. Jayden Taylor drove to the basket and attempted the game-altering layup.

Washington anticipated the shot. He jumped, and his hand met the ball. Rejected. Game over.

He flexed. Washington jogged past the N.C. State bench flashing the "Wolfpack down" symbol with his hands. RJ Davis ran alongside him, grabbing Washington's jersey and celebrating. Elliot Cadeau joined in, too, and put up the same symbol. Washington's moment finally arrived.

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## INNOVATION

# UNC Hospitals works to integrate new AI technology in health care

## System leaders share benefits and potential drawbacks of use

By Sarah Clements  
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As the use of artificial intelligence becomes more widespread, the UNC Health system has increasingly developed and utilized AI technology that

researchers, professors and medical professionals alike say could change the future of health care.

According to UNC Health Chief Information Officer Brent Lamm, UNC Health is an early adopter and pilot site for a variety of AI technologies.

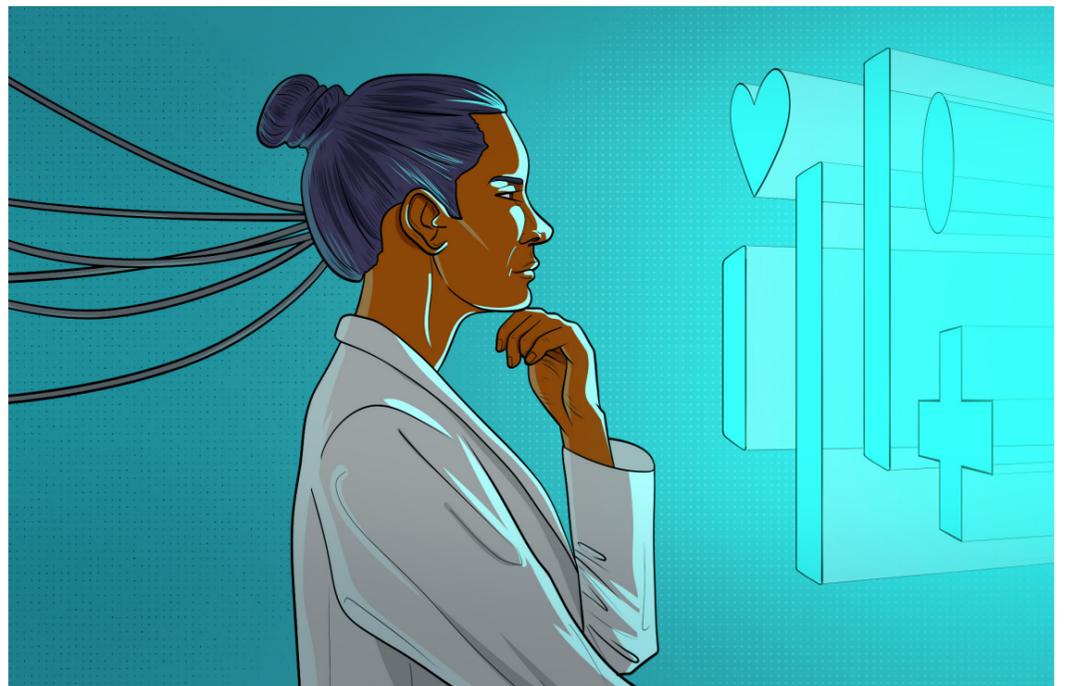
Lamm said many of the tools UNC Hospitals uses primarily focus on increasing efficiency by recording and analyzing patient interaction, better scheduling patient visits, drafting end-of-shift documentation

for nurses and handling other administrative tasks.

"We're being aggressive in our exploration of these capabilities," Lamm said. "We're trying things and piloting and we want to do that, but we're doing it in a very safe and thoughtful way."

Jessica Zègre-Hemsey, a nurse scientist and UNC School of Nursing professor with current research in emergency cardiac care, has been working with AI to develop

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“If everything was perfect, you would never learn and you would never grow.”

BEYONCE

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## WINTER WEATHER

## Students and alumni recount snow days



DTH/GRACE RICHARDS

Juniors Daaniya Rana and Aliha Younus build a mini-snowman by the Old Well on Jan. 11.

## Tar Heels celebrate rare snowfall with traditions new and old

By Emmy Benton

Staff Writer

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The snowfall that blanketed UNC's campus on Friday and Saturday was a rare sight. Students took to all parts of campus including the Pit, Old Well and Kenan Stadium field to make snow angels, throw snowballs and get a taste of the wintertime magic.

Charles Konrad, a professor in the Department of Geography and Environment and director of the Southeast Regional Climate Center, said the last measurable snowfall at UNC was three years ago, in January 2022.

Sarah McElroy was a first-year in 2022, and she said she remembers it being somewhat similar to the recent snow showers. She said it was early in the semester and very icy, with higher amounts of snowfall and lower temperatures.

McElroy said she also remembers trudging — and sometimes sliding — through the snow and ice to get to the dining hall. She said a lot of people were outside playing in the snow on South Campus.

"I remember people were trying to figure out how to sled down that big hill that goes down toward the Dean Dome," McElroy said.

McElroy said her mother also attended UNC and would tell stories about students taking trays from Lenoir Dining Hall to sled on when it snowed.

In other years, there have been snowball fights, snowman-building and sculpture contests for students to take part in. The sculptures have included

rams, dragons, caterpillars and geometric snowmen.

Anna Curtis, a chemistry professor who went to UNC as an undergraduate student, has fond memories of snow on campus.

Curtis said she remembers a snowstorm in 2009 that students called "snObama" because it occurred around the time that former President Barack Obama was inaugurated.

She said everyone was excited about the wintry scene, building small snowmen all around



DTH/GRACE RICHARDS

campus and having snowball fights with friends.

"There wasn't that much snow, it was really small, but it was big for here," Curtis said.

While students have enjoyed this year's snow, major winter weather events have been sparse in the Triangle in recent years. Konrad said that the region usually doesn't see large amounts of snow, and any snow showers since 2022 haven't been large enough to accumulate on the ground.

Konrad said this is due to a high degree of temperature and precipitation variability in the area. He said that the past few winters in the Triangle have been relatively mild, with temperatures not dipping low enough to snow. All of this, he said, is dependent on the position of the jet stream.

"The storm track has largely been north of our area, and so we've kind of been, in a lot of cases, on the relatively warm side of systems because systems storms thrive on temperature differences," Konrad said.

He said when we have been on the cold side, the temperatures haven't been low enough to produce snow. Climate change impacts this as well, with our winters not being as cold as they were in the past.

"We still have a lot of variability from one winter to the next, but averaged out, it's definitely warmer now than it was 30 years ago," Konrad said.

However, Konrad said there's still hope for students holding out for more snow. He said climatologically, February is a big month for snow.

"Even though temperatures are getting warmer, the track that these low pressures take, on average, tends to be a little farther south," Konrad said. "It'll still be maybe cold enough to snow."

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# University

## The Daily Tar Heel

### Acceptance rate drops 7 percent in five years

Continued from Page 1

ranking, and therefore their desirability for prospective students, goes up.

Out-of-state students face an even greater challenge when seeking admission. Due to state law, only 18 percent of admitted students can come from outside North Carolina, while 82 percent must be in-state residents.

Vice Provost Feldman said, “North Carolinians have a much greater percentage chance of getting admitted to the University, which makes a lot of sense, because we’re here to serve the people of North Carolina.”

Feldman also said that she and Chancellor Lee Roberts are discussing plans to expand University enrollment in the future.

“Our hope is to grow smartly, but somewhat gradually, over the next 10 years to be able to accommodate more people, especially from North Carolina, so that we don’t see our acceptance rates continue to fall,” she said.

In the meantime, Sorge and Frank said they encourage their students who want to attend highly-

ranked universities to take the most rigorous course load available to them and make the highest grades they can.

Sorge stressed the idea that while competition at top universities is fierce, there are thousands of other institutions for prospective students. She said there are over 2,000 accredited four-year universities in the U.S., and only around 300 of them have an admissions rate of lower than 50 percent.

Additionally, Frank said that the number of prospective students who are of typical college-going age is decreasing due to the declining in birth rates following the 2008 recession. She said this decrease may cause small liberal arts colleges to close.

“We are going to see, overall, less students trying to get into college, which means more and more small colleges are probably going to fold,” she said. “But these schools — like UNC, UT-Austin — they’re just going to become more and more competitive, because everyone still wants to go there, despite the fact there are less people.”

X: @adelepmorris17



DTH/MASON MILLER

Students walk in front of Wilson Library on the second day of classes on Thursday, Jan. 9.

GRANT

### Researchers receive \$10 million to improve cancer center

CIPOC plans to develop methods to increase care quality

By Sajni Patel

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A team of UNC-Chapel Hill researchers were recently awarded a \$10 million grant from the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health to further develop the Cancer Identification and Precision Oncology Center at UNC.

According to a release published by the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, the CIPOC plans to develop a health learning system to improve cancer care quality.

Using artificial intelligence from electronic health and medical records to identify new cancer cases, the CIPOC plans to create an “accessible, adaptable system for health providers across diverse locations and resources,” the release said.

Caroline Thompson, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Gillings School of Global Public Health, said the grant is for developing methods to better utilize clinical data from electronic records to determine when cancer is diagnosed, who is affected and how they’re being treated. These methods will also help detect patterns of healthcare treatment in the UNC System and extract meaningful clinical details about cancer patients. This data will support applications like clinical trial recruitment, quality improvement and research.

“\$10 million for two to three years of work is a really exciting, big milestone for the University to be able to have that level of resources at their disposal to support sort of inter-institutional initiatives,” she said.

“The research will be conducted by faculty from across UNC, not just



DTH FILE/CASSIDY TOY REYNOLDS

Graduate student Kayla Maue demonstrates how to set up a hydrogel, commonly used in research projects for various cancer drug deliveries.

at UNC Health. Also, the proposed benefits could improve how cancer care is delivered across North Carolina and the country — and not just UNC Health,” University Health Media Relations wrote in an email statement to The Daily Tar Heel.

Thompson said that the motivation behind this grant is surveillance — a way that cancer patients are tracked, both at the hospital level and the state level. She explained that cancer is classified as a reportable disease, meaning that when someone is diagnosed their information is typically entered into a database.

“CIPOC will utilize AI tools, including large language modeling, to quickly standardize, harmonize and link structured and unstructured data from multiple sources, enabling more precise tracking and treatment for different cancer types,” the Cancer Center release said.

Thompson said the data is often used for clinical trial recruitment

and research purposes, however, accessing this data can be a slow process and the goal is to find ways to use the available data more quickly.

She also said it is really exciting how this project has brought together so many different groups of people across the University, including the involvement of various institutions such as NCTracks, UNC Hospitals and the Office of Research Development.

“I’d just like to mention how big of a cross-institutional initiative this was,” she said. “There are members of our team from Lineberger Cancer Center, the Gillings School [and] the Renzi Institute.”

Thompson said the grant is a great example of people across the University working together to sell a good idea and win an award.

“It really highlights what we can do when we work together,” she said.

X: @sajniupatel

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

## University plans series of ConnectCarolina updates

First stage aims for better mobile navigation experience

By Diana Lopez Zapata

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With the start of the new year, UNC has begun implementing a series of updates to the University’s student portal, ConnectCarolina.

Students received an email from the University Division of Enrollment on Jan. 9 stating that ConnectCarolina is featuring a new mobile-friendly Student Center. The previous version of the Student Center will still be accessible for a few months.

“All the features you rely on now will be accessible through intuitive navigation,” a Dec. 6 email about the project stated. “Once released, we hope you’ll find it easy to use and will share your feedback as we continue to plan and implement future improvements.”

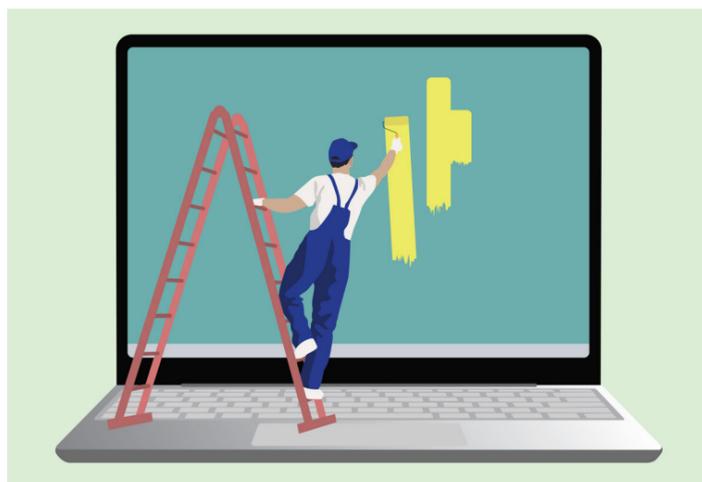
Assistant Provost and University Registrar Lauren DiGrazia said that the updates

are a big change for the institution and will be the first of several updates to the platform over the next few months.

DiGrazia said that the look and feel of ConnectCarolina will be completely different, allowing the interface to be much more intuitive. The first stage of updates, she said, will help students navigate the actual website system.

She said the following stages will include a new scheduling opportunity paired with a degree planner that will allow students to plan out their future at UNC instead of semester-by-semester. The planner will also be integrated with advising systems, creating a “more unified approach” to the ConnectCarolina experience.

Chloe Russell, the Associate Dean of Advising at the College of Arts and Sciences, said that the technology will allow for students to schedule appointments with advisors and give them direct communication to advisors through a message center. She said that this way, students will not have to repeat their stories multiple times and the process of



DTH DESIGN/CARRIE-ANNE ROGERS

assigning advisors to students will be more seamless.

“These changes help all of us use the same interface, so we’re all speaking the same language on a more regular basis, and people are more familiar with the technology, which leads to a seamless experience overall,” Russell said.

Vice Provost of Enrollment Rachele Feldman said that

advanced planning on the project started a little over a year ago, when the University recognized students needed a better interface and an easier way to use the system. Feldman said she and her team went to their leadership and Board of Trustees to ask for funding to implement updates.

The University is putting in a little less than half a million dollars to the project, Feldman

said, explaining that the cost was asked to be a part of the regular budget process and was allocated by UNC Chancellor, Lee Roberts.

“It’s just a very straightforward, ‘this is a priority for the institution’ and they allocated us the funds for the project,” Feldman said.

The updates are part of a huge project, DiGrazia said, with staff from across multiple UNC departments — including the Cashier’s Office, the Graduate School, Office of Financial Aid, University Registrar, Advising, IT, Admissions and the Division of Enrollment — working on the changes.

She said that the team is unsure of how long the entire process will take because it depends on how long it takes to get each module working and when they receive feedback on the changes.

“Everybody really wants it to get better, and is spending a lot of time and effort, hopefully,” Feldman said. “And we will be welcoming student feedback as we go, which we hope will inform the project as well.”

X: @dailytarheel

ADMISSIONS

# High school seniors reflect on UNC application process

Prospective students anticipate decisions by late January

By Auva Vaziri

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and Bella Pires

Staff Writer

UNC is known for its highly competitive admissions, with the 2024-25 Common Data Set showing a roughly 15.6 percent acceptance rate, leaving prospective students reflecting on their high school experiences and resulting resumes.

UNC first-year early action applicants will receive an admissions decision by Jan. 31, while regular decision applicants will hear from the University by March 31.

"I think, obviously, I could have done more, gotten better grades maybe freshman or sophomore year," Janey Charles, a senior at Jordan High School, said.

Despite this concession, Charles said she is pretty confident in her application and proud of how far she's come.

"Overall, I took the best of what I could do and the best of my circumstances and used it to my advantage," she said. "I really liked going to public school. I think it's a great way to meet a lot of different people and expose yourself to a lot of different environments."

Charles said she decided to apply to UNC because her parents are alumni, and she was also drawn to the atmosphere of the campus.



Smith Smith, a Hickory Ridge High School senior, smiles for a photograph.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH SMITH

High school senior Aureli Dominguez also fell in love with UNC's campus and sports culture during several visits with her cousin, a recent UNC graduate. She applied early action and said she hopes to major in journalism and public relations.

As a first-generation college student, she had a unique experience navigating the application.

"I'm the first in my family to fill out these applications, so I didn't have any help," Dominguez said.

Like Dominguez, Harper Daniels also grew up with a connection to

UNC. Raised in Chapel Hill, Daniels frequently visited Franklin Street and the University's campus with her dad, a UNC alumnus. Passionate about journalism, theater and volunteering, she said she is relieved that the college application process is now over.

"I always think that, you know, you could be doing more," she said. "So there are probably some other things that I could have done to make my application stronger, but I'm not unsatisfied with it."

Smith Smith, a lover of art and music at Hickory Ridge High

School, was captivated by the unique academic culture.

"I feel like there's not just academics, but an academic community that I feel like could really push me forward in what I want to do," she said.

Smith said their perspective and skills can differentiate her from UNC's large pool of applicants. She said she approached some service projects in a creative and passionate way.

"We wanted to do something involving the students at our school with bands and bringing

music to them," they said. "So I came up with a unique idea for that, to do performances for the students per request."

In high school, Joshua Mills was part of the track team, volunteered extensively and went on a mission trip to Honduras. Mills said he hopes that his well-rounded experiences will help him stand out in his UNC application.

"I'm like a decathlete with life," he said.

Similar to Mills, Beck Hughes engaged in a variety of activities in high school. This school year Hughes became vice president of his school's National Honor Society chapter and president of the chemistry club. He also started an esports club. Hughes plans to major in music and take his self-taught musical talents to the next level.

"I think being taught in a professional setting will really help me expand my horizons," he said.

Unlike other students, Hughes didn't prioritize the University over his other choices.

"I have heard horror stories from people who really dedicate themselves to a top-choice school and then kind of freaked out when they didn't get in," he said. "So, I try to give myself a couple of options, so I don't worry myself too much if I don't get in."

While many high school seniors offered various reasons to apply to UNC, Mills was interested in a famous basketball star.

"I thought it was cool that Michael Jordan went there," he said.

X: @dailytarheel

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The Daily Tar Heel  
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## REENTRY

# Education program for incarcerated people celebrates anniversary

About 500 individuals participate in general academic courses

By Zora Hollie

Staff Writer

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At the end of 2024, UNC's Correctional Education Program celebrated their 50th anniversary. The program is based in the William and Ida Friday Center and has provided academic courses and other educational resources to thousands of incarcerated individuals in state prisons across North Carolina.

Lisa Kukla, director of the program, said about 500 people participate in the program annually, taking general education courses in subjects including history, English, communications and math. Half of the classes are self-paced courses sent through the mail, while the other half are in-person.

Kukla said the purpose of the courses is to meet the prisoners where they are and equip them with the tools they need to be successful in society.

"Research has shown that anyone who takes courses, from GED to college, the higher the level, the less likely they are to return to prison," Kukla said.

Brooke Wheeler, superintendent for education services with the N.C. Department of Adult Correction, also said these programs aim to prepare people for reentry and the work force. She partners with community colleges, public and private universities to provide education in all state prisons in North Carolina.

According to Wheeler, programs like UNC's can "make or break" somebody's life because individuals can earn various licenses or degrees. Wheeler said this gives prison education the power to not only change the lives of those incarcerated, but also their families and future generations.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA KUKLA

Members of the UNC Correctional Education Program celebrate their 50th anniversary at the William and Ida Friday Center.

"They're important because these students are going to go back out into society," Kukla said. "We want these students to be the best version of themselves. We want to give them hope and opportunity."

Ariannah Kubli, a graduate student and teaching fellow in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, teaches writing and literature classes at several facilities. Kubli said she began teaching with the program because of her belief that anyone who wants a liberal arts education deserves to have access to one.

For Kubli, the experience has been fulfilling and meaningful, largely because of her students' enthusiasm.

"They're the sorts of students who, when I assign a short story out of an anthology, they come back the next class having read not only that short story, but five others in addition to it, and they want to

talk about all of them," Kubli said. "That's the sort of energy, that really eager, positive energy, that they're bringing to the classroom, which for me as an instructor is really, really incredible and a special experience."

This eagerness stems from the attitude students have toward the program, Kubli said. She said they view it as a privilege and approach each class with a desire to ask questions, complete readings and engage in discussions.

In addition, Kubli said the diversity of perspectives in the classroom, from differences in age to life experience and world views, enriches the class discussions and helps to make the program rewarding and unique.

"A lot of these people come from families who don't have a lot of folks in their family or in their community who have gone to a university, especially a flagship university like

UNC," Kubli said. "And so it's a very special experience for them and they really take advantage of it."

Brian Scott, a formerly incarcerated individual, began taking courses through the program while at Nash Correctional Institution. He completed various correspondence courses, in subjects like English, sociology, African American studies and more.

For Scott, the program not only grew his knowledge, but helped him to become a better person.

"I learned about a lot of different cultures, for example, that I had never been exposed to," Scott said. "I learned about why things that we see around us have happened because of things in the past that led up to it. So it increased my empathy, it increased my understanding, and it made me a better person, not just a better student."

Scott said that while he was incarcerated, he took the classes

very seriously, dedicating himself to learning every little thing. He also said that feedback from professors helped him to build the confidence needed to start his nonprofit, OurJourney, which helps other incarcerated individuals make the transition back into society.

"This is one of the things that people lose when they're incarcerated," Scott said. "They lose confidence because they're just a number. They're just part of a system that really tries to take their individuality away from them. So when you come out of prison, if you've had these experiences where your confidence has been uplifted and you as a person have been affirmed, it has broad implications."

Wheeler said that North Carolina is now recognized as a leader in prison education, and that there are not enough education programs in prisons nationally. North Carolina has been able to grow its prison education system partly due to an executive order signed by former Governor Roy Cooper in January 2024. The order, which outlined a coordinated, whole-of-government effort, aims to improve reentry services for formerly incarcerated individuals.

"I love that UNC invests in this because it makes a really huge difference, not only in the lives of the students themselves, but also in the families and in the worlds that they go back to," Kubli said. "They're able to bring a different perspective on their positions, on their lives, on the world and on what they can do in the world."

Wheeler and Kukla both expressed their shared desire to improve UNC's correctional education program by working toward more structured pathways that lead to a credential or degree. Kukla also said she hopes the program can continue to grow and serve more students by collaborating with new departments and improving accessibility.

"Hopefully it'll be around for another 50 years, helping people to better their lives," Kubli said.

X: @dailytarheel

## SECURITY

# Students stuck outside after key fob malfunctions

Residence halls were locked for over an hour

By Tulsi Asokan

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At 12:07 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 10, Carolina Housing received widespread reports of malfunctioning key fobs leading to residence hall access issues.

UNC Media Relations wrote in an email statement to The Daily Tar Heel that the outage was due to a programming error. According to UNC Housing, a majority of residence hall key fobs were disabled over winter break for security reasons. Media Relations wrote that the glitch occurred in the switch back to normal operations following the break.

After staff intervention, the system was restored by 1:18 a.m. However, there was a 71 minute window where students were rendered unable to enter residence halls without assistance from people already in the building.

Joaquin Mestre, a first-year student at UNC, said that he was returning to his suite in Ehringhaus Residence Hall when he realized that he was locked out. He estimated the time to be about 1 a.m.

After trying his key fob at the basement, Mestre said he attempted to enter Ehringhaus from the first and second floors to no avail. He said he assumed his fob got wet outside.

After waiting in the cold for about five minutes, Mestre said he called his resident adviser for help.

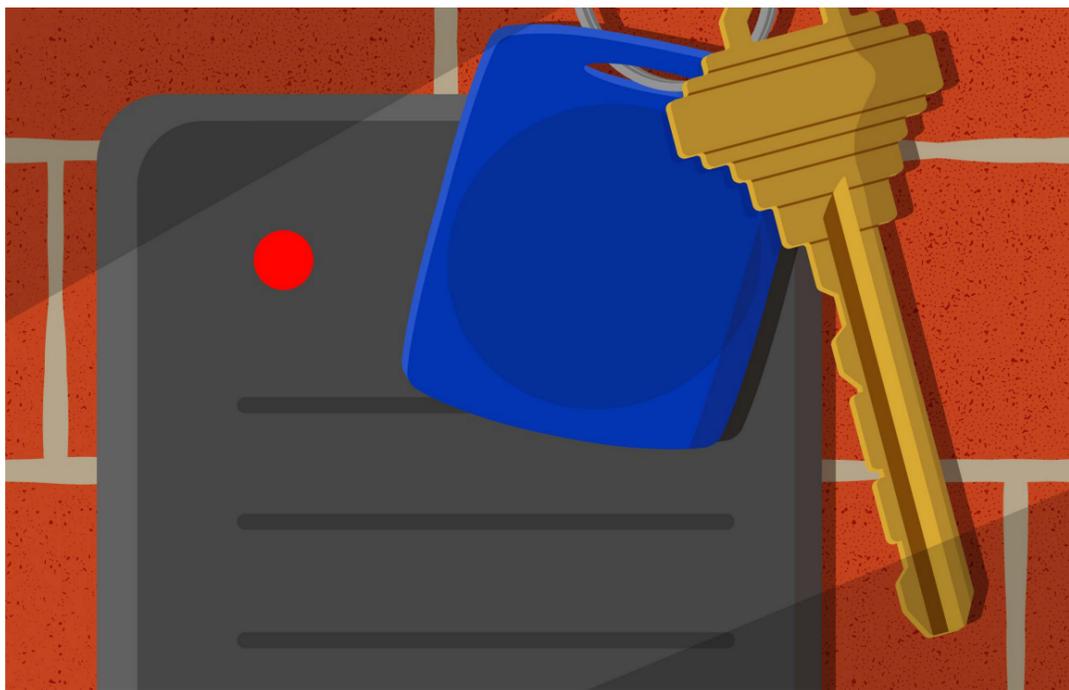
"There was no one outside," he said. "I never run into people."

Mestre's RA let him into the lobby. However, like many others living on the first floor of South Campus residence halls, Mestre's suite itself requires a specifically encrypted key fob for entry. He said that the RA had to find a community director to help acquire a key that would unlock the suite.

Mestre's story was mirrored by residents across campus, as reports of malfunctioning key fobs multiplied across the hour. GroupMe messages from housing communities showed students struggling to enter dorms throughout North Campus as well. UNC Media Relations wrote that the outage impacted all residence halls, with the exception of Ram Village and Baity Hill apartments, as they remained open over winter break.

The temperature at this time remained below freezing at around 27 degrees Fahrenheit. According to the National Weather Service, exposure to frigid temperatures can cause frostbite or hypothermia.

An anonymous resident on the first floor of a South Campus community said they went to grab controller batteries from a neighbor that night. Since all access points to enter suites in their building are outside, the student was trapped on a balcony, underdressed and unaware of the key fob situation.



DTH DESIGN/GRACE DAVIDSON

"No socks, just boxers," they said. "It was just not a comfortable situation to be in. At all."

Without a cellphone on them to call for help, the resident said they banged on the door until a roommate awoke. They estimated being outside in the dark for about 10 minutes before being let back in.

This is not the first time that residence hall key fobs have caused issues for the University. In November 2024, an undergraduate student at UNC was charged with two

felonies — breaking and entering, and possessing burglary tools — for attempting to enter a locked building with a replicated key fob.

The student allegedly used a Radio Frequency Identification device to clone other key fobs, granting him unauthorized access to various residence halls. According to some security experts, such fobs can be susceptible to cloning and other programming errors, including denied access, due to their simple technology.

Carolina Housing reassured students in a Nov. 21 email to on-campus residents.

"While we cannot share specific details about our security measures, please be assured that our residence hall security systems remain robust and effective," the email stated.

Media Relations wrote that the January programming issue has been corrected and that fail-safes were put in place to prevent future occurrences.

X: @dailytarheel

# City & State

## The Daily Tar Heel

### CHAPEL HILL

## Historical Society and Downtown Partnership unveil virtual tour

QR codes used to explain background of local establishments

By Victoria Yang

Staff Writer  
city@dailytarheel.com

The Chapel Hill Historical Society and Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership launched a self-guided tour through the history of Chapel Hill.

QR codes are posted on the windows of various local establishments, including Chapel Hill Tire, Carolina Coffee Shop and Sutton's Drug Store, that can direct people to the Chapel Hill Historical Society's website explaining the history of each establishment.

Chapel Hill Historical Society Vice President Joe Petrizzi said the project was first suggested at one of the society's board meetings three years ago. It then took three years to build the website, write, edit and put the brochures together, he said.

Jeri Lynn Schulke, Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership executive director, said one of the reasons the CHDP wanted to highlight the town's history through the virtual tour was because of their past success with sharing nostalgic content of the town on social media.

Petrizzi said he hopes the QR codes cause an accidental learning of Chapel Hill's history and the people behind the businesses when community members and visitors come across the establishments.

"You could be here for a game," he said. "You could be here for graduation. You could be a student meeting friends, and you happen by one of these, and, before you know it, you scan it and you're learning more about Chapel Hill history, even if you didn't set out to do so that day."

Missy Julian-Fox, a Chapel Hill Historical Society board member, said another goal with the tour was to focus on parts of Chapel Hill's history that are not frequently talked about.



DTH FILE/REBECCA DU

Pedestrians wait at a crosswalk on Franklin Street on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022.

Having previously worked at the Chapel Hill Visitor Center as a tour guide, Julian-Fox said she realized there were a notable amount of stories Black community members knew that the rest of the community did not.

"It felt so important — because, having grown up in this town and thinking you know the history, and then realizing, oh my gosh — there's so much, even someone so interested in knowing doesn't know," Julian-Fox said. "So, how do we make it more accessible? How do we bring it all together? Because it's one town with so many different kinds of stories."

She also said she wants to clear up misconceptions about businesses and business owners through the tour. Owing a business demands a partnership with the community, she said, and the tour provides people with a sense of belonging within the community's history.

"What you hopefully learn in this QR code tour is that the people and the families behind the businesses are just like you and me," Julian-Fox said. "They have certain talents, they have certain skills, they're passionate about certain things and they're using their businesses as that venue just like an artist would use paint."

Chapel Hill is an important town for many historical reasons, Schulke said, including being home to the first public university, and should have its own museum. She said it would be a disservice for people to not have a resource to learn about the town's history.

Schulke also said she would love to see another version of the tour that delves into the history of the people associated with each establishment, showcasing memories including photos of owners sitting outside of their business.

"So you're learning about the building and the history of the building, but also the people and their stories because they also all made up Chapel Hill," Schulke said. "They contributed to, at their time — or maybe even now — to our town, and for people to know all these different stories — what did they contribute? What did they bring to Chapel Hill?"

Petrizzi said he hopes the project continues to expand to feature more locations in Chapel Hill, including every location on Franklin, from the day they were built to modern day.

X: @dthcitystate

## UNC Health uses AI tools to increase efficiency

Continued from Page 1

strategies to supplement clinical decision-making in emergency cardiac care.

Zègre-Hemsey said working with cardiac arrest cases requires quick decision making about diagnoses and interventions. She said AI technologies help medical staff by compiling multiple data points to create predictions of outcomes for patients when they reach the hospital and even after they are discharged.

"In the large landscape of health care, I do think the emergency setting is one of the specific areas that AI machine learning could most benefit, because it is a unique space where we're making really fast decisions with not always a lot of information or time," Zègre-Hemsey said.

However, Research Director for Digital Health at the Duke-Margolis Institute for Health Policy Christina Silcox said privacy concerns, among other risks and hesitations, remain unclear because AI technology is still so new.

"It's [AI] tested with data, and a lot of our health care data is unrepresentative and potentially also includes systemic bias and other types of bias within the data itself," Silcox said.

Jeff Stringer, division director of global women's health at the UNC School of Medicine, created a low-cost, AI-assisted ultrasound device with his team that is able to diagnose gestational age, detect twins, estimate fetal weight and identify breech presentation, all from devices like phones, laptops or iPads.

Stringer said concerns about bias do not affect his work, because the data used to train the AI tools comes from a small, specific data set. Because these models are focused on specific diagnoses, the AI models are

highly accurate. However, he said it is well-known that much more scientific research has been done on men than on women, and developers have to be careful to make sure models don't give answers with a male bias.

Lamm said to address some of these concerns, UNC Health has been careful not to use fully autonomous AI and have made sure that when they use AI as a tool, there is still a human in control.

Lamm added that UNC Health has a professionally diverse governance group and operational leaders that review every AI capability the hospital is considering to ensure that it is safe and ethical.

As the use of AI tools in health care has increased, so have calls for legislative oversight.

Compared to other states, North Carolina has not done much in terms of regulating the use of AI tools in health care.

Stringer said he supports legislation that provides clear guidance on the safe use of AI in health care, as long as it is done with the right intent. He said AI should be regulated in a deliberate and responsible, but also cautious way.

"Given the situation of an aging population and an overburdened and overworked workforce, I think that it's really important that we figure out how to do AI right," Silcox said. "And doing AI right is not obvious, and it's not easy, but I do think it is going to be important and have enormous benefits."

X: @sarahhclements

### ENVIRONMENT

## Carrboro creates new sustainability office

Team to work with the Town's race and equity department

By Victoria Yang

Staff Writer  
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In December, the Town of Carrboro created a new office focused on environmental sustainability. The new office will oversee the Town's climate action goals.

Amy Armbruster, a Carrboro resident and former sustainability manager for the City of Durham, will head the new office as the chief sustainability officer.

Armbruster said she is incredibly grateful to serve her home community.

"Carrboro is an incredibly progressive, innovative town that cares deeply about sustainability, about race, equity," she said. "Working not only in my own community, but in this community that cares so much about these issues — I couldn't pass it up."

Armbruster previously worked at the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) where she was involved in renewable energy work.

She said her passion for sustainability came long before she started her career. Growing up in the Mid-Hudson Valley region of New York next to her uncle's apple orchards, she cultivated a deep care for the environment.

"I spent a lot of my time as a child and a young adult outside exploring the forest and the streams," Armbruster said. "So that's really where my interest in this field was born."

The new office will evaluate how different Town's departments are engaging in sustainability efforts, Town Manager Patrice Toney said.

Armbruster said the Town intends to reduce its carbon footprint. Carrboro is aiming to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent from their 2010 baseline by 2030, she said.

To reach this goal, Armbruster said she and her team have multiple strategies in mind, like introducing more solar and renewable energy sources, making Town buildings more energy efficient and transitioning away from using natural gases.

Before creating the new office, Toney said she wanted to find ways to elevate the Town's approach to sustainability.



DTH/HAILEY PATTERSON

Amy Armbruster poses for a picture in front of the Carrboro Town Hall on Tuesday, Jan. 7.

"Two pillars of the town of Carrboro are race equity and climate action," Toney said. "While climate action is a huge priority for our Town Council, I thought it'd be important that we create an Office of Sustainability."

Toney said the office's founding is unrelated to Carrboro's lawsuit against Duke Energy.

"It does coincide with the effort around climate action and our council's desire to be really progressive and make a dent in the climate action initiatives," Toney said.

The new office will report directly to the Town Manager, but will also work closely with the Race and Equity Department, Toney said.

Chief Race and Equity Officer Anita Jones-McNair said that it makes sense for the two offices to work together.

"It's providing a more sustainable, succinct, fair and equitable town for our community residents," Jones-McNair said. "That's what we're tasked to do."

Toney also said that having these two groups work together was an important way for their efforts to stay true to Carrboro's values.

Toney said because of the departments' partnership, Armbruster's experience working with minority communities in Durham proved valuable.

Armbruster said being able to equitably assess sustainability and climate related issues is something that draws her to this career.

Long term, she said she hopes that her department can address climate burdens by prioritizing certain members of the community.

"Our disadvantaged, low income, minority communities, who are often more impacted by climate change, but the least able, in some ways, to help prepare their homes, their property, for these impacts," Armbruster said.

X: @dthcitystate

TREATMENT INITIATIVES

# Opioid Advisory Committee opens grants to support local programs

Orange County spreads awareness on prevention, recovery

By Brantley Aycock  
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The Orange County Opioid Advisory Committee opened the grant cycle for opioid settlement funds to support programs focused on the prevention, treatment, recovery and awareness of opioid use disorder.

The grant funds come from national opioid settlements led by Josh Stein during his term as attorney general. North Carolina will receive \$1,420,932,713 total from 2022 through 2038, and Orange County will receive \$12,748,445.

Sophie Suberman, co-founder and executive director of community nonprofit Grow Your World, said one in five kids who overdose on opioids overdose on their first use. Grow Your World also received opioid settlement funding, which Suberman said they used to fund projects like opioid overdose reversal training for 57 people who collectively encounter 44,000 youth a month.

The number one cause of death in people under 50 in the U.S. is unintentional injury, the leading cause of which is unintentional poisoning from overdose, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overdose death rates are decreasing in general but increasing in communities of color, North Carolina Formerly Incarcerated Transition Program Director Evan Ashkin said. The program received opioid settlement funding in 2023.

"If you look at data, like who was referred to drug treatment versus who's incarcerated, there's also a disparity among communities of color," Ashkin said. "White people are more often put in treatment programs or offered other avenues to deal with charges."

Suberman said the American Red Cross training highlights how to serve white people by only saying that people who have overdosed



DTH DESIGN/SARAH FENWICK

turn blue, while people of color often turn purple or gray and ashy.

Ashkin said 70 percent of people in U.S. prisons identify as having a substance use disorder. He said he encourages local law enforcement to send people who commit low level drug offenses to diversion programs. These programs provide treatment and have shown positive outcomes in multiple studies, he said.

At NC FIT, people who have been recently released from incarceration are provided with primary care and can develop a reentry plan that includes housing, employment and family reunification, Ashkin said.

Ashkin said NC FIT used their opioid settlement funding to assist people who have substance use disorder.

"We were able to hire a second community health worker to focus on people in our community who are coming out of the criminal legal system with substance use disorder issues," Ashkin said.

Suberman said Grow Your World applied for multi-year community programming and received \$20,000. She said there was a lot of ambivalence surrounding the process of the funding.

"We just want more transparency in the organizations that are holding on to the funding," Shepperson said.

Orange County Opioid Advisory Committee Member

Jay Miller said the committee wanted to get some money out right away.

"We really didn't have a formal process, and it was a little confusing, and I think some of the smaller local groups were kind of discouraged," Miller said. "We definitely hope that they will come back for this round that we're working on right now because we now have a formal process that's been developed, and we have a system for grading the priorities."

The Orange County Health Department will hold application workshops on Tuesday afternoon in Chapel Hill and Wednesday evening in Hillsborough. Two workshops were held last week.

Applications are due Feb. 21. The Opioid Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners for final approval in April, and contracts will begin on July 1.

"We definitely want to encourage people to come to the workshops, find out more and see the process, and we hope that it'll go a little smoother this next time around," Miller said.

X: @dthcitystate

COMMUNITY

# Town begins planning a new flexible downtown space

Initial setup for the public area expected by summertime

By Lauren Zola  
Staff Writer  
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A new public space will replace the parking lot behind Raising Cane's, at the corner of Rosemary and Columbia streets in Chapel Hill.

Chapel Hill Mayor Jess Anderson said she thinks most town residents want a gathering space in downtown Chapel Hill where people can get together and be in a community.

While there's no official design plan for the space right now, Anderson said the space will capture the ideas from the community before the Town commits to a permanent setup. She said the project's design will be flexible.

Brian Peterson, an urban designer with the Town, said he is leading a group working to draw up initial plans for the lot, officially called the Tactical Urbanism Pilot Project. He said there are not any design plans yet, but the group will attempt to create a gathering space for residents, students and visitors to Chapel Hill.

"This is kind of like a learning by doing exercise and it should be a lot of fun for folks," Peterson said. "Some ideas might work, some might not. That's kind of the purpose to figure that out."

When the space first opens, community members will be able to

provide feedback on elements they like and what they think should change, Anderson said.

She said the Town is trying to have an initial setup for the public space by summertime.

Susana Dancy, a Chapel Hill resident and a managing partner for a firm called Rockwood Development Group, first approached Anderson with the idea for converting the parking lot into a new downtown space in late October.

"What I have suggested and what the mayor has assembled the political will to do, is experiment with it [the downtown space] in a methodical way that informs the long-term outcomes," Dancy said.

Anderson said she does not think the downtown project will negatively affect parking because of the 125 East Rosemary Street parking deck — which opened in August 2024 and has over 1,000 parking spots.

"Now that we have a new parking deck on Rosemary Street, it opens up this exciting opportunity to transform surface parking into this thing that I think a lot of us have felt for a long time is needed downtown, which is a public gathering space," Anderson said.

Dancy said the space could potentially become a central square for Chapel Hill residents, and wants the project to get started soon.

"From a social standpoint, when people are given a place to gather, it builds community identity and cohesion," Dancy said.

X: @lauren\_zola



DTH DESIGN/CARLY EVANS

## JANUARY stay in the know about local government

**13** Orange County Board of Education meeting  
Whitted Building and livestream  
7 p.m.

**14** Carrboro Town Council work session  
Carrboro Town Hall and livestream  
6 p.m.

**15** Chapel Hill Town Council meeting  
Chapel Hill Town Hall and livestream  
6 p.m.

**16** CHCCS Board of Education meeting  
Lincoln Center and livestream  
7 p.m.

**21** Carrboro Town Council meeting  
Carrboro Town Hall and livestream  
6 p.m.

**22** Chapel Hill Town Council work session  
Chapel Hill Public Library and livestream  
6 p.m.

**27** Orange County Board of Education meeting  
Whitted Building and livestream  
7 p.m.

**29** Chapel Hill Town Council meeting  
Chapel Hill Town Hall and livestream  
6 p.m.

Check organizer websites for more information before attending.

# Lifestyle

## The Daily Tar Heel

### OPEN MIC

# Flyleaf Books hosts Second Sunday Poetry event

This month featured poets Ashley Lumpkin and Colin Dekeersgieter

By Marisa Rosa

Staff Writer

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On Sunday, Flyleaf Books hosted their first Second Sunday Poetry Series event of the year. Each month, the event features two published poets, a book signing and an open mic where community members can share poetry of their own.

The series began in 2010 and ran until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In January 2023, local poets Ralph Earle and Janis Harrington, who co-hosted Sunday's event, revived the program.

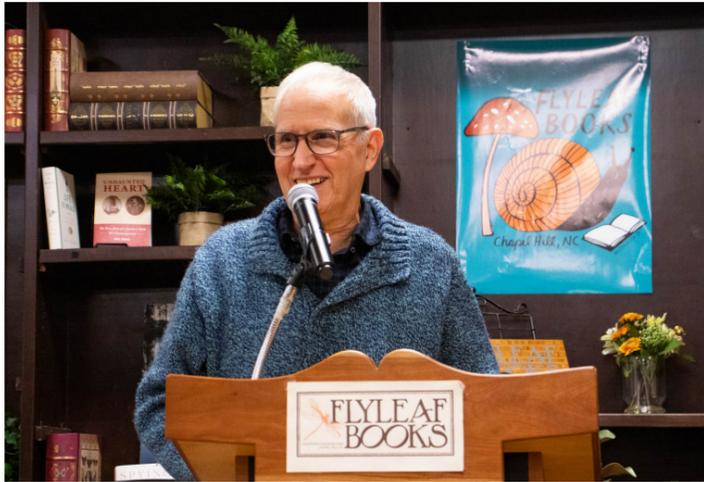
Earle said that the only requirement for featured poets is that they had a book published by a publishing company within the past year. Additionally, while it is not a requirement, many of the featured poets have ties to North Carolina or the Chapel Hill area.

"North Carolina is very rich in poetry and writing in general, but we've had big name poets from the most prestigious presses, John Hoppenthaler, John Balaban," Harrington said.

Earle said that the Second Sunday events have open-mic participants with ages ranging between 16-80, some of whom have never shared their poetry before. He said that one of the greatest things about the poetry community at Flyleaf is its appreciative and encouraging nature.

This month, Flyleaf hosted poets Ashley Lumpkin and Colin Dekeersgieter, both of whom are local to North Carolina.

Lumpkin opened the reading with excerpts from her book, "I Hate You All Equally," which recounted her experiences during her time as a high school math



DTH/KATE MCCULLOUGH

Ralph Earle, co-host of Second Sunday Poetry Series, introduces poet Colin Dekeersgieter at Flyleaf Books on Sunday, Jan. 12.

teacher, as well as from her more recent publication, a genre-fluid memoir entitled "The Sad Stays."

"I fully believe in the power of storytelling to change the world, particularly through poetry, because I think it gives us a new lens at looking at some older things," she said.

After Lumpkin's reading, which highlighted themes of grief, mental illness and social justice, Dekeersgieter read an excerpt from his collection, "Opium and Ambergris," speaking to themes of family and love.

Both poets encouraged community members to attend the Flyleaf Second Sunday Poetry Series and similar events in the triangle.

"Language is the way that you operate in the world," Dekeersgieter said. "It's the one thing that we all share, really. And if you give yourself access to different types of language and different types of people, you'll become a more empathetic person, probably a better student, open to different creative ideas."

He also encouraged those interested in writing and performing poetry to attend and

participate in similar open-mic opportunities in the latter half of the Second Sunday events. Dekeersgieter said that poetry is often written in solitude, but it is ultimately all about community.

"Whatever avenue you can find to find your people, people who share love for the real world, share love for storytelling, anything, any opportunity you have, I highly recommend that you take it," he said.

Lumpkin shared this sentiment, stressing the importance of forming relationships within the poetry community as an aspiring poet.

"The way to get better at this craft is by reading, is by writing, is by getting in front of the microphone and sharing and hearing other people and letting those people pour into you," she said.

### PERFORMANCE

# Through rain, shine or snow, the Queer Cabaret must go on

Speakeasy Carrboro hosted event despite winter weather

By Zahra Alqudaihi

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On Saturday, performers and audience members alike gathered 'round for the Queer Cabaret, settling into the intimate showroom of Speakeasy Carrboro, purple lights dancing around the room and a layer of ice covering the window panes.

The event rolls around every second Saturday of the month and is always hosted by Victor Dronzek — also known as AmanDuh Barron. She is a beloved drag queen with a clever name who is an integral part of the show.

"I was like 'something super simple' — a man, duh — and then my last name is Barron, which means strength and resilience, I believe in German, but it's also a whole play on words," Dronzek said, when explaining the origins of his drag name. "So, it's AmanDuh Barron, but as in barren, as in she can't have kids."

The night began with a performance by local band Coyote vs. Acme, fronted by Marty Smith, who described his genre to the crowd as queer country cabaret.

"I do queer-themed country music, so I thought this [event] might be a good fit," Smith said. "I thought we'd give it a try and see if it worked."

Despite the cold weather outside, the people inside Speakeasy created a warm and welcoming environment. Throughout the night, the number of people fluctuated between a small group and a full room, but the energy remained the same.

Nona Poulton is the owner of Speakeasy, and she said the monthly cabaret started out as "Big Gay Wednesdays" before she and her friend Alex Stalling teamed up with Russell Davis, the owner of Lavender Social Collective, and AmanDuh, to expand the event. Specifically, Davis brought bands to

the speakeasy scene and AmanDuh brought her performances.

After Coyote vs. Acme left the stage, there was a brief intermission followed by AmanDuh's initial introduction. She got the crowd ready and engaged by asking newcomers, those new to drag and regulars to cheer. AmanDuh then gave a lip-synching performance of Adele while moving through the crowd.

Poulton praised AmanDuh for her ability to uplift, mentioning specifically the cabaret after the election results were announced.

After this, AmanDuh introduced one of her co-hosts, Aris Valentine, with a heartfelt speech about their support for one another filled with humor and sincerity.

"She is my good Judy, she is my sister, she is the warm bitch that puts up with me more than anybody on this planet," AmanDuh said to the audience. "Welcoming back to the stage, you know her, you love her: Aris Valentine!"

Valentine gave the crowd a performance of "Defying Gravity" from the new movie musical "Wicked" in which she got on a table and lip-synched. Everyone looked up at her, enthralled.

Another drag queen took the stage, Aris's drag daughter, Wynter C. Valentine, dancing and lip-synching along to Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather." She pirouetted like a graceful ballerina, maintaining the energy of the crowd and encouraging them to clap with her.

The monthly Queer Cabaret at Speakeasy has become a space where people can come together under any circumstances. All the performers came out despite the weather and the winter storm, and so did the people there to support them.

"[There's] not just the opportunity to be together, but also [have] the opportunity to celebrate gender and sexual identity differences and feel supported in that and truly celebrated, not just seen," Poulton said.

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# Nonprofit preserves, shares Indigenous history

Continued from Page 1

organize, her discovery in the woods would act as a catalyst for Indigenous Memories, a nonprofit organization aiming to honor and teach the lives of numerous Indigenous, Maroon, Slave and Free People of Color who occupied land in Orange County, N.C.

Since 2020, Indigenous Memories has accumulated two sacred burial grounds. One is Indigenous burial mounds that date back before European contact. Indigenous Memories also owns an enslaved cemetery which was a part of the Hardscrabble Plantation.

In conjunction with N.C. State University, the organization is working to test soil at the Hardscrabble Plantation to see how many people are buried, what they ate, how they died and types of diseases they may have endured.

"[Testing] is going to give us a lot of information on what slavery looked like in North Carolina based on this one plantation," Executive Director Annie Newton said.

Along with the genetic testing, Indigenous Memories recently received a grant from the state of



DTH/EMMA DENMAN

Beverly A. Scarlett holds a ceremonial feather bundle while seated near an Indigenous burial mound in Hillsborough, N.C. on Jan. 9.

North Carolina with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as a part of the America 250 NC project. This project urges Americans to remember the past and celebrate the present in commemoration of 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Finally, Indigenous Memories has provided an outlet for Scarlett

to continue to research and disprove the theory of "farmer's piles," and to preserve the historical sites.

The stone piles had been discovered around the country, including around the Hillsborough area, but had been assumed to be the creation of farmers.

"They're plowing their fields, and they find a rock, and they just throw it in a pile," Newton said.

However, connections began to be made between the different mounds.

"They're very intentional," Newton said. "They clearly are stacked in almost a methodical way."

Scarlett had done research on mounds out West, which mostly ended up being dirt mounds or urban mounds. However, upon finding the journal, "The Travels of Richard Traunter," Scarlett found her answers.

Traunter travelled along the Petersburg path as he came looking for silver in the Carolinas. Specifically, he wrote on the area near Scarlett's home being the agriculture site of the Eno people. Traunter understood from natives at the time that the mounds lining the path were in fact ceremonial or burial sites.

Currently, the organization is in the process of documenting the area where Scarlett lives. Along with N.C. State, testing these mounds would help to prove that there are people buried in them. This would provide a clearer picture of Indigenous history and culture, as well as what needs to be preserved.

Yolanda Scarlett is Beverly Scarlett's sister and the administrative guide to Indigenous Memories. She works

to make sure that the organization remains nonprofit.

"We are not an entity to make money," Yolanda Scarlett said.

She called the organization Beverly Scarlett's "brainchild" and said that education and preservation were the main goals.

Beverly Scarlett continues to work toward recognizing the depth of Indigenous culture in North Carolina. She said she has two inspirations in mind when working with the organization.

"My greatest desire is to, number one, honor my Indigenous great grandmother, Sally Ray Harris, who lived and walked this land here in North Carolina — as well as Mecklenburg County, Virginia — to walk back and forth between the states to keep her family alive and to not be run off her homeland or killed, but for her I wouldn't be here, that's thing number one," Scarlett said. "Thing number two is to make sure that I constantly do everything I can to preserve and maintain my indigenous culture as well as my Black culture."

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ACTIVITIES

# Recess Yoga hosts free meditation club

Founder welcomes community members into a space of mindfulness

By **Jaya Nadella**

Staff Writer  
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On Sunday, a faint herbal smell wafted through the Recess Yoga studio in which attendees of the weekly Carrboro Meditation Club sat. As they prepared for the meditation, soft ambient noise filled the space.

More high-energy, movement-based yoga classes usually occur within the quaint, local studio, however weekly on Sundays at 6 p.m., it is used to practice mindfulness and slow personal reflection among the chaos daily life often brings.

Tom Sowders opened Recess Yoga in October 2023, and the club began meeting shortly thereafter. The club was co-founded by Sowders and Juliet Magoon, a friend of his who is equally passionate about meditation. At this past Sunday's session, which lasted 30 minutes, there were approximately 15 participants.

The sessions often vary in structure, sometimes being guided or silent. Regardless,

the sessions encourage attendees to lead their own meditation, doing what is best for them mentally and physically. A singing bowl

is chimed at five-minute increments to keep everyone grounded and let them know how much time is remaining, so that they can continue meditating or stop if they see fit.

The sessions are free to attend, which was something Sowders thought was extremely important to implement.

"This journey that I'm on is about providing a service to the community," he said. "My meditation has really helped me live my life. It's made me a happier person; it's helped me in so many different ways. I wanted to share that, but without any kind of money being involved."

There is a plethora of proven benefits that come from routine meditation, including mental, interpersonal and physical health benefits. These include enhanced emotional regulation, better sleep quality and improved self awareness, among many others.

For Katie Crisp, an attendee, the club's community-building aspect is the highlight of her experience. She first took a class with Sowders on Election Day this past year, which prompted her to become a regular participant.

"It has really helped me a lot [to] regulate my thoughts," she said. "And

then also, I've just enjoyed it, coming specifically on Sundays, because I get to see the same faces."

While many people have heard of meditation, they might not know what it entails as a practice.

"It can be kind of a mysterious thing," Sowders said.

As a result of this obscurity, there are some common misconceptions around what meditation actually is, and individuals might feel too scared or uncomfortable to even give it a chance.

"I always kind of joke, it's this club where you come in, sit down and leave," Sowders said. "That's funny to me."

The point is not to be doing something in particular, but rather to create a meaningful mind-body experience through internal awareness. Specifically, meditation often involves implementing breathing practices, trying to clear the mind of harmful thoughts and relieve physical tension.

Sowders's hope is that the Carrboro Meditation Club can help to reduce stigma, and potentially even uneasiness, around getting into meditation by making it inviting for all.

Robbie Medley, who was also at Sunday's session, said that the meditation sessions being in-person and involving multiple participants

might give people more motivation to get started.

"Sometimes you don't do it when it's just you, right?" he said. "Because there's no other structure around doing it."

The club is constantly growing in membership. Sowders ultimately wants people to come as they are and to know that meditation is a practice for everyone, regardless of background or prior experience. He welcomes any and all community members in the Carrboro area to try it out for themselves, as meditation is something that is unique to the individual. There is no registration necessary to join.

"If you've ever been told or thought maybe meditation might be good for you just to find some more inner peace in life and get a little more control over the racing mind, then I highly recommend coming and joining us and checking it out," Sowders said.

"My meditation has really helped me live my life. It's made me a happier person; it's helped me in so many different ways. I wanted to share that."

**Tom Sowders**

Recess Yoga and Carrboro Meditation Club founder

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DTH/TAYLOR NOCK

Tom Sowders, 43, and Juliet Magoon, 31, both residents of Carrboro, led the Carrboro Meditation Club on Sunday, Jan. 13.

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## ADVICE

# How to make New Year's resolutions stick

UNC faculty members offer expertise on keeping goals

By Caroline King

Staff Writer  
lifestyle@dailytarheel.com

Jan. 10 was national "Quitter's Day," named because many have already given up their New Year's resolutions by the second week of the year.

Three UNC faculty members, who are knowledgeable in psychology, self-compassion and well-being, advised on how to keep resolutions until December and beyond.

Steven Buzinski, a professor and associate director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, said that people feel motivated at the start of the year due to the "Fresh Start Effect."

"If you are going to reset a goal, or even set it for the first time, if there is some kind of demarcation — the first of a month, the Sunday to start a week, the new year — then there is a little bit of a boost in motivation because you kind of feel like you have this fresh start," he said.

The problem is, he said, this motivation does not last.

"One of the worst ways you can go about changing your behavior is relying simply on willpower," Buzinski said. "Willpower is a little bit of a myth."

He said that although people can use their willpower for short bursts of motivation, this is not sustainable in the long term. Instead, those trying to keep their resolutions should make small changes to



DTH DESIGN/VIRGINIA VAN DE RIET

their living space that encourage developing healthier habits.

Recently, he instructed a small group of students who wanted to jog more regularly to set their workout clothes and shoes near their beds.

Having the clothes in eyesight helped them remember to put them on each morning, even if they did not feel like running. They reported that just putting the clothes on made it more likely that they would go out and jog.

"It was really changing the environment that helped them

renew that motivation, rather than just that force of will or the decision at that moment," Buzinski said. "So, people could think about how I can change my room, my apartment and the structures around me to help

**"One of the worst ways you can go about changing your behavior is relying simply on willpower."**

Steven Buzinski

Psychology and neuroscience professor, associate director

facilitate the kind of new behavior that I want to have."

While it is important to know how to implement resolutions once made, the mindset of setting goals

for the year is also important to how sustainable that resolution will be.

Ani Bryce is the UNC Associate Clinical Research Coordinator for the Pathways to Adolescent Success Study and also studies self-compassion. She gave advice on how to combat the self-criticism that often comes with New Year's resolutions.

She said that an easy way to practice self-compassion is to talk to oneself as if talking to a friend.

"Let's say, for example, a friend came to you and said, 'This year, I want to exercise more,'" Bryce said.

"Your response to them wouldn't be like, 'Duh, you're so lazy.' It would be, 'That's awesome. I'm so proud of you for setting that goal.'"

She said self-compassion can help people approach their goals rather than focusing on the negative.

"I think what self-compassion can offer is almost kind of this radical reframe of a New Year's resolution," she said.

While many look at resolutions through the lens of their perceived flaws, she said it is more helpful for people to have a positive mindset. Resolution-makers should frame their goals and the associated benefits as something they deserve to achieve, which will help them take more helpful steps toward doing so.

Melinda Manning is the director of UNC Hospitals' Child and Family Program and an adjunct instructor in UNC's School of Social Work. She has experience with a well-being perspective, which she defines as encompassing mental, physical and spiritual health.

"When I think about well-being, I think it's very individualized," Manning said. "So what is well-being for person A may be very different than for person B."

She recommended that people make their resolutions just as personalized. Specifically, she said that people should choose resolutions they resonate with rather than ones that sound good, or might impress others.

"I think it's also important to make some resolutions about bringing joy to your life in some way, whatever that looks like for you," she said.

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## ANNIVERSARY

## Local radio station WCOM celebrates 20 years on air

Various artists performed at fundraiser on Sunday for volunteer-staffed nonprofit

By Mollie Ray

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On Sunday, musician Andrew Kasab, and bands Sound of Scarlet and The Will McBride Group performed at WCOM's 20th anniversary fundraiser, hosted in the back room of Cat's Cradle.

The fundraiser was filled with people of all ages, many of whom are DJs at WCOM. The radio station is run completely by volunteers, and anyone in the Chapel Hill and Carrboro community can apply to be one.

WCOM is preparing to move into a new building, the Drakeford Library Complex, with some other nonprofits. Currently, the station resides a few doors down from Cat's Cradle.

The station, though tiny, has a large impact through the community.

Kasab, a Raleigh-based musician, has been performing on air with WCOM since 2006, and said that the station's community outreach has been outstanding.

After a brief introduction by DJ Aurora, Kasab took the stage with his harp guitar, a rare instrument that combines an acoustic guitar with a harp.

"I'm one of a very, very few artists in the U.S. that's a harp guitarist," Kasab said. "There's probably about four or five, including myself, in the country."

Throughout his set, Kasab paused to thank WCOM and Cat's Cradle for the event, urging audience members to volunteer at the station and donate to the fundraiser.

After Kasab's harmonic folk performance, new local band Sound of Scarlet took the stage, playing a lively mix of classic and reinvented punk rock.

This was Sound of Scarlet's debut performance. The band was invited to play

at the event by The Will McBride Group, a longtime friend of Sound of Scarlet that has been involved with the station for many years.

The Will McBride Group is a funk rock band from Raleigh, and a band WCOM features occasionally on its radio shows. After participating in another fundraiser with the station in the fall, Will McBride, the frontman, said the band was invited back for Sunday's event.

"WCOM has been really instrumental in the local music scene, and we need that," McBride said. "Local creators don't get any kind of love on the commercial stations, so we need those kinds of stations to give us airplay."

McBride's set featured mainly original tunes but also included a few Steely Dan Covers. The funky grooves the band played ignited the audience, and many people were dancing and singing along.

In the future, WCOM is looking to start recording live shows like these throughout the Chapel Hill and Carrboro community to help boost local talent.

"It gives artists an additional way to get their music out, and it helps people that can't get to the shows to be able to participate," Cottingham said.

WCOM brings together the local music scene and community, making independent artists' voices heard. They plan on extending their reach as they head into their 20th year, with both musicians and listeners.

"We're actively looking for people who have something to say and want to be out there," station manager Dave Cottingham said.

For more information on how to get involved and volunteer at WCOM, check out their website.

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## (Update) Public Hearing: Preliminary Determination of Air Quality Permit Application for The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This public notice, originally published in the December 4, 2024, print edition, has been updated to change the location and start date of the public hearing, and the deadline to submit public comments. The hearing will now be held at 6 p.m. on January 16, 2025, at the Chapel Hill Town Hall, 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Chapel Hill, NC. Public comments will now be accepted via email, mail and voicemail until Jan. 23, 2025.

# Opinion

## The Daily Tar Heel

COLUMN

### Carrboro v. Duke Energy sets precedent in climate battle

By Maggie Mead

Editorial Board Member  
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On Dec. 4, the Town of Carrboro filed a lawsuit against Duke Energy, alleging that the energy utility has participated in an ongoing “campaign of deception” to conceal the dangerous effects of fossil fuel use on the environment from the public. This has resulted in the acceleration of anthropogenic climate change and long-lasting economic damages to Carrboro and its residents.

This lawsuit over Duke Energy’s alleged climate deception is the first instance of a town suing an energy utility for harm caused by greenwashing practices. While this lawsuit is unique, the situation isn’t — there are thousands of energy utilities like Duke Energy across the country. Of the energy that these utilities produce and distribute, 60 percent comes from fossil fuel combustion. This lawsuit is important in establishing a framework for legal action against the biggest perpetrators of climate change, placing North Carolina on the frontlines of the fight for climate justice.

The suit alleges that Duke Energy intentionally obfuscated the reality of climate change, exemplified through the following ads from local newspapers distributed across America in the summer of 1991:

“If the Earth is getting warmer, why is Kentucky getting colder?”

“The most serious problem with catastrophic global warming is — it may not be true.”

“How much are you willing to pay to solve a problem that may not exist?”

These ads were part of a marketing campaign intended to present climate change as not only up for debate, but a threat to public interest — and common sense. The campaign aimed to “reposition global warming as theory (not fact)” and was backed by a coalition of major energy utilities, including Duke Energy.

Similar cases seeking compensation for the economic impacts of climate change have been filed by states against major oil companies, such as Maine’s ongoing prosecution of energy giants like Exxon and BP. The lawsuit similarly alleges that these companies deceived the public about the dangerous consequences of fossil fuel use. However, while there exists legal precedent for action against oil and gas companies, Carrboro remains the first to seek justice from an energy utility.

Duke Energy has been North Carolina’s state energy utility since 1911. Like many companies that provide public utilities, such as water, railroads and communication services, Duke Energy is a natural monopoly — it’s a private company with control over huge swaths of North Carolina’s energy distribution infrastructure.

While the North Carolina Utilities Commission is responsible for regulating Duke’s rates, generation plans and energy efficiency, the company’s operations are ultimately controlled by private shareholders, whose interests fundamentally lie in maximizing company profits. This monopolistic structure incentivizes short-run profitability rather than long-run sustainability, made apparent by Duke Energy’s



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN D. SIMMONS/CHARLOTTE OBSERVER/MCT  
Mark Bishopric paddles past the Duke Energy Dan River Steam Station in 2014. Coal ash was leaked into the river below the steam station.

continued investment into non-renewable energy.

From devastating California wildfires to destructive hurricanes in North Carolina, our communities across the country face natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. The transition away from non-renewable energy sources is an enormous and expensive endeavor, but so is rebuilding cities ravaged by the climate crisis.

The fight for climate justice is not merely a moral choice but a logistical necessity; we must hold the fossil fuel industry responsible for decades of climate deception to mitigate future environmental disasters.

Carrboro v. Duke Energy presents a solution to this systemic issue by focusing the responsibility of climate change away from fossil fuel producers onto utilities, who are responsible

for burning those fossil fuels. By targeting the utility directly responsible for perpetuating these unsustainable practices in Carrboro, the town seeks tangible economic reparations from those responsible for creating — and lying to maintain — a fossil-fuel reliant energy infrastructure.

Duke Energy is far from the only energy utility that has knowingly downplayed the fossil fuel industry’s contributions to climate change for the sake of profit. Carrboro v. Duke Energy is an ambitious case, seeking to prosecute a company with decades of accumulated economic and political power. Despite these barriers to success, this case paves the way for future fights against corporations that have engaged in climate deception.

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EDITORIAL

### Jefferson Griffin proves unfit for judicial seat

By The Editorial Board

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After two recounts — one by machine and one by hand — incumbent N.C. Supreme Court justice Allison Riggs has confirmed her victory over GOP candidate and UNC alumnus Jefferson Griffin by 734 votes. Since the election, Griffin has exhausted numerous avenues to challenge these electoral results — from asking for a partial hand-to-eye recount to going to the N.C. Board of Elections.

His latest gambit? Asking the N.C. Supreme Court to nullify the votes of some 60,000 North Carolinians, largely on the basis that their driver license or partial Social Security number are not in the voter registration database. Note that in North Carolina, voters must provide photo ID to cast their ballots on Election Day, and those voting from overseas must provide driver’s licenses or Social Security numbers to request mail-in ballots.

Judge Griffin’s flagrant attempt to undermine votes would, if it succeeds, void thousands of ballots, including those of Allison Riggs’ parents and even a number of elected officials. While the list includes votes across party lines, the N&O found that Black voters were twice as likely to have their ballots challenged.

Griffin and his attorney have been unable to provide evidence of any illegitimate votes. Last month,



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the state Board of Elections dismissed Griffin’s claims, citing lack of evidence and inadequate notice provided to voters. The N.C. Supreme Court, conversely, blocked certification of the election results and decided to hear Griffin’s case. They will do so later this month, as will the federal Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Those elected to the highest court in North Carolina must display the highest understanding of honor, integrity and respect for the law. This is about more than just Griffin’s lack of respect and honor — it’s about the state of politicking that threatens the electoral, political process itself and normalization, over 20 years, of subverting results that we don’t like.

Griffin’s refusal to concede the results of the election is yet another addition to the growing list of attempts to undermine our democratic processes under the guise of “election security.” This argument was used by the George Bush campaign to halt Florida’s recount during the 2000 election, resulting in an electoral victory for Bush over opponent Al Gore. Donald Trump similarly attempted to leverage state courts in order to overturn the 2020 presidential election results and it has been little more than four years since that unfounded rhetoric resulted in an insurrection.

It’s alarming that unsubstantiated claims of election interference are infiltrating the

state level, further platforming those who seek to undermine the integrity of our democracy.

This betrays both the trust of the people and the law of the state Griffin seeks to preside over. Someone who truly has regard for the law and the integrity of our elections would not subvert that for personal gain, and Griffin’s failure to uphold these standards more than prove that he is unfit to hold such an important position.

As incumbent, Riggs’ victory would not change the 5-2 makeup of the conservative majority court, but it would give Democrats a chance at flipping the court in their favor in 2028. Importantly, that would give North Carolina, a state with one of the worst partisan gerrymandering in the country, a chance to return to a map reflecting the true political inclinations of the populace.

It is deplorable that a former Tar Heel would so egregiously seek to subvert election results and undermine the votes of thousands of North Carolinians. It is a perversion of our justice system, perpetuated by a man who ran his campaign on protecting our Constitution, perpetuating integrity in the courtroom and defending the rule of law. The blankly partisan nature of the N.C. Supreme Court has allowed Griffin to taint our system of elections.

X: @dthopinion

OP-ED

### Belichick hire could redefine academics

No story about UNC sports has sparked more hot takes than the hiring of football coach Bill Belichick. Most point toward yet another tectonic shift for college sports away from amateurism and toward professionalization, along with the transfer portal, NIL deals and more.

But this big-time athletics hire might also be an opportunity to redefine academics, at least in one way. How? By treating Belichick and his staff not just as coaches, but also teachers. And by treating the sports they coach as academic subjects.

Belichick doesn’t seem to disagree. In his introductory press conference, the consummate pro coach referred to his new role as teacher. Still, coaches are paid to win games, not teach. Plus, academics and athletics have and always should remain separate, right?

Wrong. It’s time we move past this old line of thinking and see participation in college sports not as extracurricular, but as an invaluable part of a UNC education.

We already accept this to be true for the many students who will use their degrees to pursue careers in the lucrative sports industry. Why do we still view the athletes as living outside the norm of academic pursuits? Aren’t these future pros among the next generation of leaders to come out of UNC?

Belichick can change this. He’s already talked about his holistic approach to player development as a pipeline to the NFL. That’s a great start. But most of his players won’t play in the NFL, and those who do will average about three years of play.

Belichick gets this. He’s one of the most successful people in the sport, yet he never played a single down of pro football. He and his staff can turn playing football at UNC into a pathway for one of the many jobs in football other than running back or linebacker: coaches, analysts, scouts and numerous front office roles.

UNC players will learn many of the skills needed for these jobs through the 40 or so hours a week they commit to football. Why not structure and codify their time into actual classes, complete with papers, exams and grades? What if their coursework could all roll up into a professional sports studies major, which they could apply in a variety of professional roles? In fact, why not collaborate with other departments to provide real world learning opportunities for a broader group of students studying law, marketing, journalism, nutrition, physical fitness, sports psychology, business and more?

That all sure sounds like the “fascinating laboratory” that The Wall Street Journal’s Andrew Beaton said UNC will become in the Belichick era. And I bet employers would be very interested in the experiments and graduates that come out of it. To some, this will sound too silly to consider. But don’t innovative ideas usually sound silly at first? Like, say, investing tens of millions of dollars to hire an NFL legend who’s never coached college football.

— Walt Barron,  
sports communication professional

OP-ED

# Does the cogeneration facility help?

I'm a Tar Heel born and bred, but right now I'm a Tar Heel disappointed. As a Chapel Hill resident and Carolina alumna, I am concerned by the University's proposal to add engineered (synthetic) pellets to the list of approved fuel sources used at the UNC Cogeneration Facility on Cameron Ave.

It seems that few are aware that coal is burned in our neighborhood. The stacks have become too familiar, like an unquestioned part of town on an Elaine O'Neil print. Living within a block of the facility, even I have become accustomed to the facility's constant hum. I see and hear the coal train on my morning dog walks. But as I reflect on the physician-advocate I want to be and the type of community in which I hope to live, I cannot turn a blind eye to this proposal.

For background, the University and medical center rely on the cogeneration facility's electricity and steam production. In 2010, the then-Chancellor Holden Thorp declared UNC would stop burning coal at the facility by 2020. However, by my second year at UNC in 2016, the objective changed. Then-Chancellor Carol Folt launched the Three Zeros Initiative, targeting net zero water usage, zero waste to landfills and net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, the University proposes a yearlong trial of burning synthetic pellets that will introduce PFAS, or "forever chemicals," to our community in order to reduce coal burning and divert waste from the landfill. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Air Quality will host a public hearing at the Chapel Hill Town Hall at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 16, to discuss this proposal.

I am no environmental scientist, university administrator or energy expert. I do not claim to know what is fiscally and practically possible for the University. But I warn that this smells like a preventable public health experiment in my own neighborhood.

In medical school, we are taught to ask, "What are the possible harms and unintended consequences that could result from this research?" As UNC proposes to release up to 1.2 lbs of PFAS per year into our community, has the University considered its complicity in injuring the community's health? How does the University put a price on the life of its community when there are known, safer options in clean energies? Possibly reducing coal while poisoning the air, water, land and creatures is a pitiful solution. The Chapel Hill community ought to keep the University accountable by showing up on Jan. 16 and everyday thereafter.

As a student and alumna, I also believe this is a matter of the University's integrity, commitment to justice and leadership in innovation. I hope UNC might live up to its motto Lux Libertas as it considers who this university and medical center serves and whom they harm. I hope the public university is a partner and advocate for its community. And I hope UNC will lead the pack in climate action.

— Hope Gehle, UNC School of Medicine '25

COLUMN

# Don't purge opinions from newspapers

By Sydney Baker  
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Some have described different forms of news as neighborhoods. There's the hard news, the sports, the features and much more. These neighborhoods exist in different sizes with different properties with their own rules and standards, all within the larger city of journalism. Sitting among all of these communities is a slightly different neighborhood — opinion journalism.

I recently saw a LinkedIn post that newspapers should eliminate their opinion sections. It argued that they contribute to perceptions that many newspapers are biased, and opinions risk alienating certain partisan readers. Other discourse tells newspapers to stick to one neutral reporting, allowing readers to form ideas by themselves. Though excellent reporting should always be a newspaper's principal focus, that doesn't mean we should expunge opinion.

The omnipresence of social media and the internet offer separate spaces for people to opine, meaning there's no shortage of opinions to be found on the internet. So why would newspapers bother with opinion sections when we no longer live in an age where people have few options for authoritative viewpoints?

Opinion journalists have extensive experience in certain fields with deep, specific knowledge. Journalists are some of the most well-informed people in the world because that's our

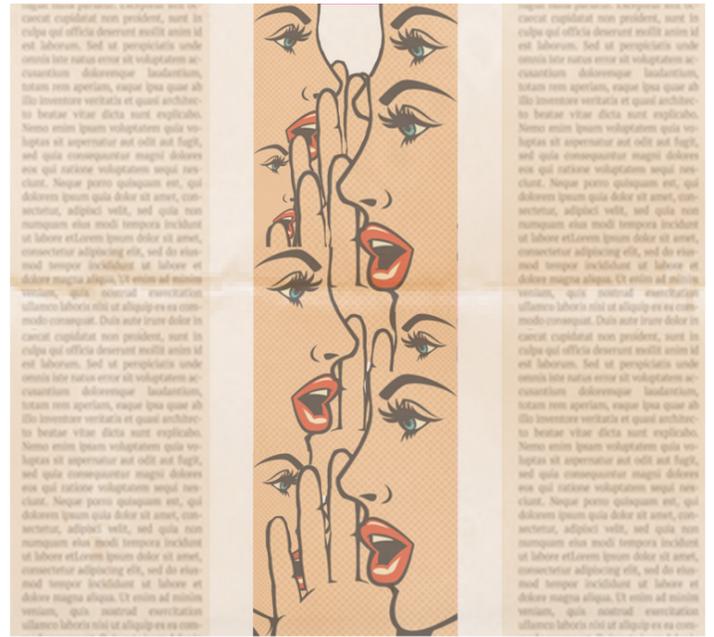
job — getting access to information. People ask why we should listen to The Washington Post Editorial Board's political endorsements, for example, forgetting that those people are incredibly educated and in tune with the happenings of the world around them.

Beyond bringing a unique knowledge to the table, opinion journalists also seek to inform just like news reporters, offering new insights on exhausted topics. Research shows that opinion journalism also enables the democratic process by facilitating civic debate and helping contextualize, analyze and explain the news in a way that traditional reporters don't have time to. Good opinion journalism is not random people spouting off irrelevant and ill-informed viewpoints.

The argument that opinion pieces blur the line of news and opinion ventures into a separate problem of media literacy. Opinion writing is supposed to have bias, and when we encounter articles that aren't clearly labeled, we have to be able to employ critical analysis and skepticism.

There's even virtue of opinion in college journalism. Even though columnists don't hold the same level of expertise as professional columnists, our commentary comes from focused interests and specific education thanks to our majors and concentrations. One of our most important jobs is to serve as a check on our university by having the power to comment on its decisions and actions in a way that our reporting desks cannot.

It's true that there are low-quality opinion pieces. There are articles



DTH DESIGN/SHANNON MCMANUS

Photos courtesy of Adobe Stock.

that are just fluff or regurgitations of opinions we all agree with or have heard before, and there are columns with weak arguments and poor writing. But that doesn't mean that a few bad opinion pieces invalidate opinion journalism as a whole. A Reddit user explained it perfectly — it's like asking what the value of food is and only considering Kraft microwave dinners. There is undeniable value in well-written, thoughtful and informed opinion pieces.

Instead of automatically cutting opinion out of news organizations, we

can demand higher quality columns and hold newspapers accountable for keeping subjectivity out of their reporting. We have to find ways to hold newspapers to a higher standard in an era of misinformation, biased reporting and lazy opinion journalism. And if you're personally against opinion journalism and prefer to read opinions found elsewhere, that's okay too — as autonomous readers, we have the free will to choose which neighborhoods we walk in.

X: @sydneyj\_baker

COLUMN

# Ramaswamy is right. 'Normalcy' doesn't cut it.

By Madelyn Rowley  
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It appears that broken clocks are still right twice a day. In the midst of a recent right-wing altercation about the merits of the H-1B visa program, capitalist extraordinaire Vivek Ramaswamy posted an unusually insightful assertion. "Our American culture has venerated mediocrity over excellence for way too long," he wrote on X, fixating on a lack of societal drive and work ethic at the foundation of American 'normalcy.'

Though the context of his claim, loaded with questionable impressions about the upcoming presidential administration and high-skilled immigrant labor, was worthy of debate, this much holds true: we have lost sight of our own prowess. Our performance on the international stage is faltering — in the technological sphere, yes, but also in regard to health, labor and most importantly, education.

Ironically, American conservatism is largely at fault for this decline of adequacy; even mainstream Republican figureheads in recent years have publicly degraded the value of higher education, launched flailing missions to remove social justice themes from books and school curriculums and belittled the significant value of immigrant labor, high-skilled or otherwise.

Curiously enough, Ramaswamy himself, accompanied by extremist companion Charlie Kirk, visited our campus on their "You're Being Brainwashed" tour last semester, touting the uselessness of a college degree and patronize the merit of time in the classroom. Such anti-intellectualism is, astonishingly, completely antithetical to a cry for American excellence — and preserves the same antagonized mediocrity.

American progressivism is not guiltless in this plight, either, though perhaps more well-intentioned. During my junior year of high school,



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE VIA TNS

Vivek Ramaswamy appears while Donald Trump makes a campaign stop at Racine Festival Park on June 18, 2024.

in an attempt to make the classroom more 'equitable,' my hometown school district implemented grading reforms that, firstly, made it impossible to receive less than a 50% on any test or assignment and, secondly, capped the maximum weighted GPA that could be obtained by any student. In no uncertain terms, these reforms devastated the work ethic of our student body. Not only do these antics sustain mediocrity, they also do a disservice to students and workers everywhere, many of whom pride themselves deeply in their work and are, in fact, motivated by metrics to succeed.

I recognize many threats to the ethical operation of a meritocracy in its current form. But in a better America, such threats are not incorrigible. In a better America, a pure and unbiased form of meritocracy has the potential to open any door for those maltreated by systemic barriers. In a better America, it is such a meritocracy that

encourages a student body and a workforce to hone in on the specialty skills required to catapult us into a rapidly developing future.

Where to begin with fueling a country's capability to achieve unimaginable greatness? I believe, as Ramaswamy claims, that it starts young: "More weekend science competitions, fewer Saturday morning cartoons. More books, less TV. More creating, less 'chillin.'" We have hope to escape our tunnel of mediocrity only if we establish education to be something more than just a means to an end.

Following education, a cultural work ethic must then surely be upheld by allocating resources to the adult American workforce, much of which has been nearly nullified by a lack of engagement and motivation. Low wages, ultra-competitive job markets and brutal work weeks have permeated the ambition and capability of our best and brightest. Almost

counterintuitively, implementing four day work-week policies, like that proposed by Bernie Sanders, would no doubt have an exceptionally stimulating influence for burnt out workers nationwide.

This is not about glorifying a culture of workaholicism, or dismantling the valid concerns of workers and citizens everywhere who do very much deserve rest. This is about admitting, societally, that greatness cannot be accomplished without brutal, repetitive effort. It is not irreconcilable with progressivism to care, vehemently and exorbitantly, about the future and state of our country on an international stage. We owe it to ourselves, to our communities, to the generations that will be forced to suffer the impacts of our mediocrity if we do not wake up.

X: @dthopinion

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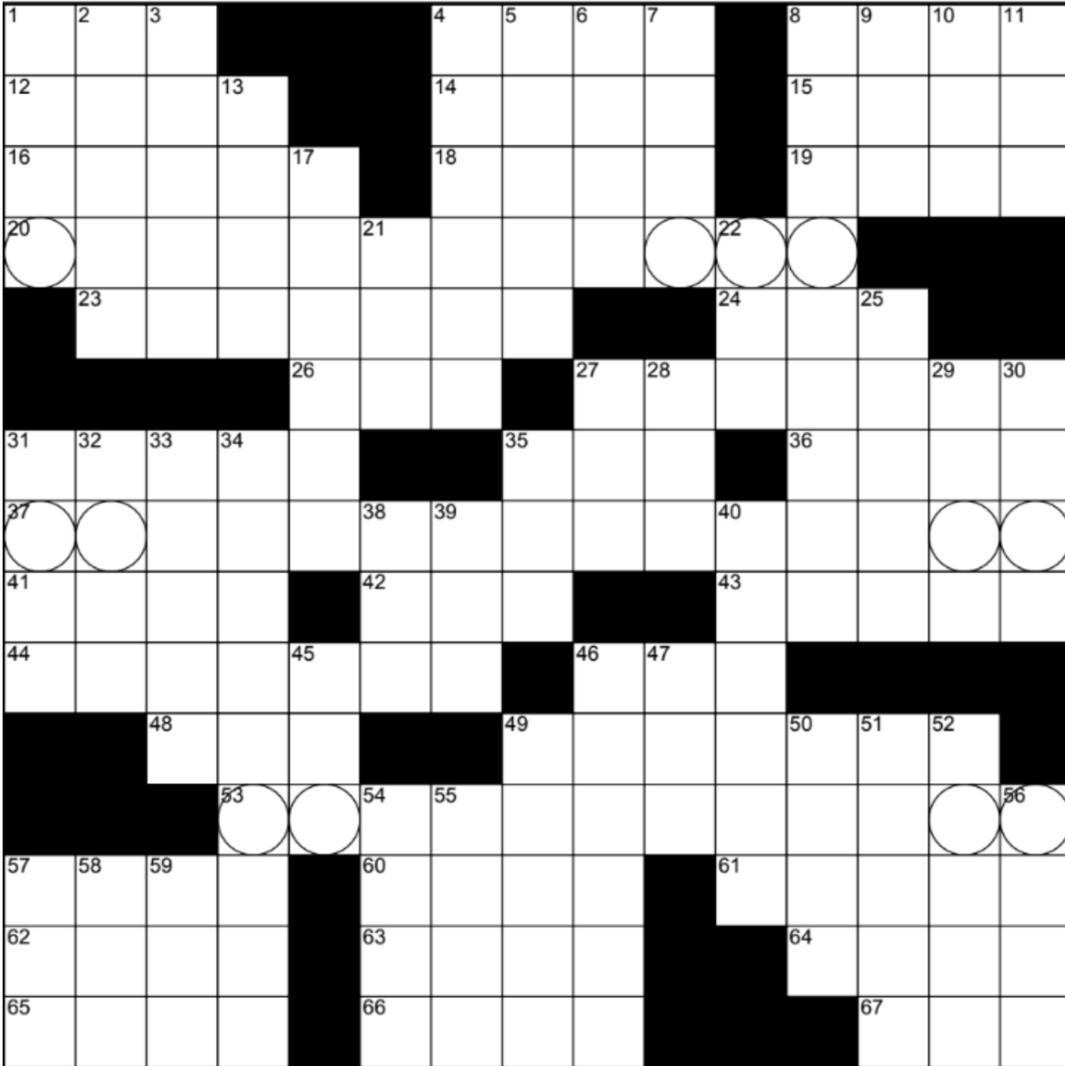
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“Parting the Seas”

This week’s crossword was created by longtime cruciverbalist Liam Furlong and newer creator Brigit Pierce, who is also the lifestyle editor.

Across

- 1 Emeril Lagasse’s catchphrase
- 4 Computer “brains,” abbr.
- 8 John, of the pizza-making family
- 12 At a distance
- 14 Additionally
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_-B (toothpaste brand)
- 16 Shade of blue fit for a king
- 18 Oracle
- 19 Mailed out
- 20 Fields of study
- 23 Those in charge
- 24 Gross, after accounting for costs
- 26 Flubber’s material
- 27 One tired of this puzzle’s theme, perhaps?
- 31 Emerge from sleep
- 35 Understand the punchline, say
- 36 Dress worn by some Indian women

- 37 Devices that are always watching
- 41 Hang onto
- 42 Kid-lit detective Jansen
- 43 Levine and Sandler, together
- 44 Overnight train car
- 46 Heartbeat metric, abbr.
- 48 \_\_\_\_\_ Lanka
- 49 “Look! A Chilean fish!”
- 53 Anonymous holiday gifters
- 57 Part of a joke or a smoke
- 60 Rave passionately
- 61 Took illegally
- 62 Largest continent
- 63 British bum
- 64 Metal associated with Margaret Thatcher
- 65 “Do - a \_\_\_\_\_, a female \_\_\_\_\_”
- 66 Jury member, ideally
- 67 What this clue does to the across clues

Down

- 1 Goodfellows and He’s Not Here
- 2 Way some conflicts can run
- 3 “Yes... no... I don’t know!”
- 4 Cuban revolutionary
- 5 Requests, and homophone to the requesting word
- 6 Operator
- 7 How one feels after hitting 35-down
- 8 Condition requiring an exorcism
- 9 I: am, you: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Greek flute-playing deity
- 11 Ctrl, \_\_\_\_\_, Del
- 13 Indian king who, on “Ru Paul’s,” is a real queen
- 17 Book in need of balancing
- 21 Like Kris Jenner for Jenner Comms.
- 22 Actress de Armas
- 25 Diadem
- 27 1/60 of a min.
- 28 GPS stat
- 29 Pull an all-nighter, perhaps
- 30 Give a peck to Gene Simmons?
- 31 Requests
- 32 Instagram short
- 33 Slushie-like beverages
- 34 Classic Adidas shoe
- 35 Ram’s Head, for one
- 38 Necessary part of 33-down
- 39 “\_\_\_\_\_ HEELS!”
- 40 Dangerous snakes
- 45 March 14th dessert
- 46 Pearl Jam’s “\_\_\_\_\_ Man”
- 47 Dads, in a folksy way
- 49 Perceive that some have a sixth one of these?
- 50 Not in favor of
- 51 Stash
- 52 Beauty parlour
- 54 Waste from 57- and 63-across
- 55 Uncommon
- 56 Deliver
- 57 “Smooth Criminal” album
- 58 Employ
- 59 Mirror the other team’s score

Answers to “Final Exams”



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# Sports

## The Daily Tar Heel

MEN'S BASKETBALL | N.C. STATE

### Jalen Washington seals game with breakout performance

Continued from Page 1

"He's waited his turn," head coach Hubert Davis said. "And he has such a burning desire to please his teammates [and] please his coaches. He really wants to do well."

Not only did the junior come up with the game-winning slam, but he also made the game-clinching block that guided the Tar Heels to a 63-61 victory over rival N.C. State on Saturday afternoon in the Lenovo Center. For the first time in his career, Washington had a double-double, recording 11 points and a career-high 12 rebounds. Washington also tallied a game-high three blocks and has notched 12 blocks over the last three games. It's the most blocks in a three-game stretch at UNC since Brice Johnson did it during the 2016 NCAA tournament.

Although Washington kept his nose to the grindstone, the tweaks and adjustments have been clouded by judgment. Washington tried to ignore anything outside of the court. "[I've done] my due diligence and just control what I can control," Washington said. "And whenever my times comes, [I'm] ready."

But what about the uncontrollable? To junior guard Seth Trimble, it's hard to play at North Carolina. There's expectations as soon as you step on campus from players themselves, fans, coaches and parents. Trimble said the pressure is so intense it's hard to ignore.

"Maybe you don't perform as well as you can right away, like Jalen and I did our freshmen year, and then you hear that hate," Trimble said. "You hear that hate from the team. You hear that hate individually. So it's a lot that interferes with the positive process you want to go through. So just for him to be able to persevere this year. He got a lot of hate this year."

Yes, there's pressure, but what about following in the footsteps of UNC's all-time rebounding and double-double leader Bacot? Or becoming the starting center for a team that won the ACC regular season title and secured the No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament



UNC junior center Jalen Washington (13) shoots a free throw during the men's basketball game against N.C. State at the Lenovo Center on Saturday, Jan. 11.

last year? Or to now be on a team with six early losses?

Prior to N.C. State, Washington averaged 5.9 points per game and 4.8 rebounds. In North Carolina's last outing against SMU, he recorded double-digits twice this season.

Still, he trusted that his time would come.

"[I've just done] a better job defensively on the weak side, coming to get blocks, altering shots, just playing tougher and giving more effort," Washington said.

So, he worked to change the narrative. With nine points and 10 rebounds, Washington re-entered the game with 5 1/2 minutes remaining.

The center sent a pass to first-year guard Ian Jackson, who nailed the 3-pointer to put UNC up by two. On the next possession, N.C. State guard Marcus Hill hit a jumper to tie the game 61-61. When Hill turned the ball over with 41 seconds remaining two possessions later, North Carolina called a timeout.

Hubert Davis made jokes inside the huddle. He tried to keep the situation light even though a seventh loss loomed. He said to be in a situation like this is a privilege.

But coming out of the timeout, UNC's play was broken up.

N.C. State's Michael O'Connell and Ben Middlebrooks trapped sophomore guard Elliot Cadeau on the left side of the court. Cadeau passed to a ready and open Washington in the post for the two-handed slam. 63-61.

They made a play out of nothing. The block came 20 seconds later. Then, the celebrations and taunting the Wolfpack bench.

"For him to be able to step into a bigger role this year, and especially these last few games, I'm very, very happy to see because he means everything to this team," Trimble said.

The Tar Heels cornered Washington in the locker room. They tapped him on the head. They hugged him. The team eventually formed a huddle and all made that same Wolfpack down symbol.

Hubert Davis watched from afar as they embraced Washington, who dreamed of experiencing something like this — to please his teammates, coaches and parents. And more than anything, to please himself.

Davis will never forget it. "To see him being celebrated in the locker room amongst his teammates is something I'll remember for the rest of my life," Davis said.

X: @\_emmahmoon

### UNC takes gritty win over Wolfpack

The team scraped by, 63-61, in a close final few minutes

By Caroline Wills

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RALEIGH — The pieces came together.

Even when it wasn't pretty. Even with their backs against the wall on the verge of a late-game collapse.

North Carolina survived. Again.

UNC defeated N.C. State, 63-61, on Saturday evening at the Lenovo Center to win its third game in a row and seventh of its last nine. Late-game heroics from junior center Jalen Washington headlined the outing — from his game-winning dunk to the final block on the last defensive possession — but it was the under-the-radar instances of toughness that propelled UNC to that decisive moment.

Instances that were made possible by the tough games that preceded Saturday's.

"Down the stretch, [we] had more experience," first-year guard Ian Jackson said. "[We] were making the right play, knocking down open shots."

Junior guard Seth Trimble was sidelined with a concussion for three games. In that time on the bench, Trimble said he noticed changes in the team.

In two previous games — the win over Campbell and the 83-70 loss to Louisville — the Tar Heels were "soft." They weren't establishing an identity.

Then came Notre Dame. That 74-73 win over the Fighting Irish was a turning point.

"[In] that Notre Dame game, especially that first half, we really started to establish some type of defensive identity as a team," Trimble said. "I think it's carried over since."

In an ugly first half, the Tar Heels were getting beat on the boards, allowing the Wolfpack to record 12 offensive rebounds to their six. They struggled to connect from behind

the arc, going 2-9. They turned the ball over seven times.

But N.C. State only scored nine points off turnovers and four second-chance points. The Wolfpack shot 22.5 percent from the field. They were even less successful from 3-point range, shooting 1-12.

North Carolina found a way. The Tar Heels entered the locker room at halftime with a gritty 26-20 lead.

Head coach Hubert Davis still isn't satisfied with the defense. There's more to solidify in UNC's identity.

The Tar Heels gave up a once nine-point lead in the second half. N.C. State out-scored North Carolina, 41-37, in the final 20 minutes, shooting 60 percent from the field. He knows that isn't sustainable.

But it didn't matter. Experience did.

North Carolina has played three games since December that required a last-minute defensive stop or basket on the offensive end. This season as a whole, the Tar Heels have competed in seven games decided by one possession. They lost two of them.

Sophomore guard Elliot Cadeau made the game-clinching stop against then No. 18 UCLA. Then he made a 4-point play in the final five seconds to win it against Notre Dame.

So in the two timeouts within the final minute of regulation, Hubert Davis kept the conversation light. He cracked jokes to put their nerves at ease. Then he boosted their confidence to step up and get it done.

On a "broken play" that trapped Cadeau outside the lane with N.C. State's Ben Middlebrooks reaching for a steal, the UNC sophomore hooked it over his head to a wide-open Washington for the winning dunk.

Even with the game on the line, Cadeau didn't panic. He didn't turn the ball over. He'd been there before.

"We have always been a tough team," graduate guard RJ Davis said. "We always had it in us, but kind of just had to reveal it a little bit. It took a lot. It took a while."

X: @carolinewills03

#### WOMEN'S TENNIS

### Tar Heels begin new era, sweeping JMU and Campbell

A young lineup gives North Carolina a fresh look in 2025

By Alexandra Jones

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Starting from scratch.

The dawn of a new season with fresh faces in Carolina Blue.

After six upperclassmen departed following last season, the team is now mostly made up of new or younger players.

This year's No. 6 North Carolina women's tennis team takes on a youthful look. The program graduated 1,008 singles and doubles victories last year. But despite the lack of veteran presence, the Tar Heels started its new era strong with back-to-back 7-0 sweeps of James Madison and Campbell on Sunday. The team did not drop a single set point against Campbell

on their way to earning the doubles point, recording two 6-0 victories.

Even with the crushing wins, head coach Brian Kalbas described the current team as a "work in progress".

"It's fun to play these matches because I just told them, we're trying to form and figure out that identity right now," Kalbas said. "And I think we know what our culture and our program's identity has been in the past, and they're trying to embrace that."

First-years Claire Hill and Alanis Hamilton each grabbed their first collegiate singles victories against JMU. But the newbies weren't the only ones starting an improved journey on the court.

Along with the five first-years on the roster stands junior Reese Brantmeier — returning to the court for the first time after she was sidelined with an injury last winter.

Brantmeier suffered a torn meniscus in February 2024 while she was a part of the No. 1 doubles team and ranked the No. 2 singles

player in the country. On Sunday, she went from cheering on the newcomers last season to competing alongside them. During her junior season debut, she clinched the doubles point for UNC in both matchups with Hamilton.

Against JMU, Brantmeier stepped onto court one for singles — reserved for the top singles player on the team — and recorded a 6-1, 6-3 victory. She did not play singles in the Campbell match.

"It was so much fun," Brantmeier said. "I've obviously been thinking about getting back on court for a very long time, so it was just so rewarding and so much fun to be back out there representing Carolina."

Kalbas stated that if the Tar Heels are going to go anywhere this season, it's going to be behind Brantmeier's leadership and "shot-in-the-arm" positive energy.

"She's a big reason why our team has been successful off the court because she is very unselfish," Kalbas

said. "She's such a team person, [and] she cares about the program so much. When she lost the opportunity to play, and she's had two surgeries to kind of get back, she never, ever, ever was negative and brought any emotionality down to the program. So give her so much credit."

Despite the abundance of newcomers, players are already ranked high in both singles and doubles. Sophomores Thea Rabman and Tatum Evans checked in at No. 20 in the nation in doubles. Meanwhile, first-year Susanna Maltby and senior Carson Tanguilig hold the No. 1 doubles ranking, but suffered a troubling 6-1 defeat to JMU's Ines Oliveira and Sophie Williams.

Kalbas attributed the upset to Maltby suffering from an illness. She wasn't at full strength to start the season.

Despite this, the duo bounced back against Campbell, smashing their opponents 6-0 in response to the earlier near sweep.

Tanguilig also ranks No. 20 in singles, accompanied by No. 9 Rabman and No. 23 Evans.

"We're a majority underclassmen, which has never been my experience so far at Carolina," Brantmeier said. "So it's definitely a different vibe, but they bring an awesome energy, and I'm so excited to see what all of them do."

As this young UNC team continues to settle in, it will be able to fall back on this weekend as an early showcase of their new makeup and ability to battle back in spite of adversity.

"Each match they play gives them an opportunity to kind of form their own team identity," Kalbas said. "I hope that it's going to be one that's going to be really tenacious and very resilient and tough in the big moments and just bring a lot of enjoyment to the court every day."

X: @alexjdjones

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL | ACC VICTORIES

# North Carolina overcomes 25 turnovers in win against Duke

No. 19 Tar Heels best No. 14 Blue Devils in overtime thriller

By Beckett Brantley  
Senior Writer  
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Bananas.

That's how head coach Courtney Banghart described UNC's women's basketball's overtime rivalry win over Duke on Thursday night.

And at some points in the first half, it did appear as though the Tar Heels were slipping on banana peels as they stumbled and traveled with the ball, struggling to gain momentum on the offensive end of the floor.

But despite allowing No. 14 Duke to score 11 points off turnovers in a half where both teams scored only 16 points, No. 19 North Carolina righted the ship in the third quarter, dominating the defensive boards to secure the top-20 win. After jumping out to a 16-0 run to start the second half, the Tar Heels held on in overtime to prevail, 53-46, over the Blue Devils.

Just two games ago at Miami, UNC committed a season-low four

turnovers. In Thursday's game, it recorded a season-high 26.

The turnovers kept Duke — which averages over 22 points off turnovers per game — in the game, despite shooting 22 percent from the field in the first half. The Blue Devils had 10 turnovers of their own in the first half, but UNC couldn't capitalize.

"I didn't like that our turnovers turned into points for them in the first half," Banghart said. "Their turnovers did not turn into points for us. That wasn't ideal."

But the third quarter turned the game on its head.

The Tar Heels didn't stop turning the ball over. But the defense stepped up to minimize the impact of the fumbled balls.

Duke head coach Kara Lawson stressed the impact of UNC's defense on the Blue Devils.

"We did not get off to a great start," Lawson said. "And we had some turnovers there, they got some runouts and some loose [balls]— it says they only have two fast break points, but I don't know how they calculate that stuff, it seemed like more."

This ability to get a jump on Duke's defense was a key element in North Carolina's success in the



UNC junior guard Indya Nivar (24) dribbles the ball down the court during the women's basketball game against Duke at Carmichael Arena on Thursday, Jan. 9.

DTH/OLIVIA PAUL

second half. It's something UNC had worked on during its game day preparation: identifying how to exploit the Blue Devils.

And according to Banghart, junior guard Indya Nivar was the first to recognize set actions. In shoot around on Thursday, Nivar immediately identified what sets the team's practice players were

replicating, running through it before the full play was executed.

This defensive presence resulted in several missed layups for Duke, especially in the third quarter, giving North Carolina the opportunity to grab the rebound and push the ball up the floor.

In the third frame, a defensive rebound by first-year center Blanca

Thomas off of a missed layup eventually made its way into the hands of Nivar in the corner for the first 3-pointer of the game.

"Our big thing for the guards was for us to crash the boards and help the bigs rebound," Nivar said. "Because that was our big thing against Notre Dame, we weren't rebounding enough."

Nivar led the Tar Heels with six rebounds in the second half. As a team, UNC grabbed 16 defensive rebounds to Duke's eight in the final half of regulation, while holding the Blue Devils to just six points in the paint.

It wasn't pretty, but it was enough to counteract a sloppy first half — two quarters in which North Carolina shot 21 percent from the field and went 0-4 from three.

Still, Banghart suggested that the rivalry film might be best reserved for preparing for UNC's away game at Duke, rather than their next game against Boston College.

"I'm definitely not watching it tonight," Banghart said. "I need to breathe through that one."

X: @beckettbrant

## Tar Heels use third quarter surge to defeat Boston College

After halftime deficit, UNC outpaces the Golden Eagles

By Megan Smith  
Senior Writer  
sports@dailytarheel.com

Alyssa Ustby was running.

After UNC took a three-point lead midway through the third quarter, Ustby hustled up the court in transition. She sped past two Boston College defenders on her way to the basket. First-year guard Lanie Grant found the fifth-year forward for an and-1 opportunity.

On the next possession, Grant rebounded a missed BC shot. Again, it was Ustby, 10 seconds later, ahead of the pack for another two points.

Then it was junior guard Indya Nivar with the board. There was Ustby for her third fast break layup in 33 seconds.

In No. 19 North Carolina women's basketball's 80-67 victory over Boston College in Carmichael Arena on Sunday afternoon, it was plays like these in the third quarter that increased the pace to a speed too fast for the Golden Eagles. The Tar Heels outscored Boston College, 43-27, in the second half, thanks to continued defensive prowess and transition buckets.

UNC found itself down 40-37 going into the half. This was only the fourth time this season the Tar Heels faced a halftime deficit, and those three other games are North Carolina's only three losses of the season.

The Tar Heels came out flat in the first half, according to head coach Courtney Banghart. They had 10 turnovers. They had about half as many rebounds as the Eagles. They made lackadaisical passes and gave Boston College lanes to the basket.

Something had to change before UNC allowed the then 10-7 Eagles to entirely take over. And North Carolina answered the call from Banghart.

"At halftime I really challenged them to remember what they're about and how they want to perform in the second half," Banghart said.

The Tar Heels remembered. Starting with sophomore guard Reniya Kelly's two-point jumper at the tail end of the first half, the pace changed. UNC amassed a 18-4

run, including Ustby's six-point fast break streak.

And by the end of the third quarter, North Carolina nearly doubled Boston College in scoring, 23-12.

Variables like defense and rebounding that hurt North Carolina in the first half became its firepower in the third frame. The Tar Heels forced nine Eagles turnovers and converted those into 10 points off turnovers.

UNC held Boston College to just under 31 percent from the field — after shooting 60 percent in the second quarter — and 1-4 from three-point range. It was also the first frame UNC out-rebounded the Eagles.

"That's just team defense," Ustby said, who recorded a team-high 17 points along with four rebounds, four assists and two blocks. "Like getting a defensive board and looking up the court and passing ahead."

Ustby, Kelly and senior center Maria Gakdeng stayed on the hardwood for all 10 minutes of the quarter. The trio combined for 16 points in the frame and didn't commit a turnover.

Having the advantage of controlling the glass and shutting down the Eagles created space and open shots for the Tar Heels, who shot nearly 59 percent from the field in the third frame.

"I think we're really hard to guard in transition, especially because Maria, I and the rest of our post can run the floor," Ustby said. "But we also have a lot of great passers and girls that can space the floor by just fading out to the three-point line. So they have to pick their poison."

Kelly and Banghart praised Ustby for running to the rim in search of an easy layup, along with other guards like Nivar and graduate guard Lexi Donarski.

It may not always look like six points in half a minute from a single player, but North Carolina knows when it's at its best: on the fast break.

"We all want to push the ball," Kelly said. "And it's just the best opportunity to push when we get an offensive rebound or a defensive rebound. We can go."

X: @meganosmithh



UNC graduate forward Alyssa Ustby (1) shoots the ball during the women's basketball game against Boston College on Sunday, Jan. 12.

DTH/EMMA PLUMLY

## Reniya Kelly steps into larger role in second season

The sophomore guard scored 14 points against Boston College

By Anna Page Lancaster  
Staff Writer  
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Reniya Kelly was taken off guard when graduate forward Alyssa Ustby tried to sing her praises.

"She's been able to develop so fast throughout practices to be able to command the team on the court," Ustby said. "Having a point guard that can, first of all, score, can get her own [shots and] can facilitate for other people and keep the temperature of the court steady, that's very, very hard to find."

The sophomore guard covered her face with her hands, turned away and blushed.

"It takes a lot to be a point [guard] and have to run the team with so many different personalities, and [hearing that is] big for me," Kelly said.

Starting at point guard is something that Kelly has taken in stride, especially in UNC women's basketball's 80-67 victory over Boston College on Sunday afternoon in Carmichael Arena. Kelly provided the spark that North Carolina needed after trailing 40-37 at the half, recording 14 points, three rebounds and two assists in 30 minutes of playing time.

Kelly knew someone needed to step up at halftime. She answered the call.

The sophomore played the entire third quarter, helping the Tar Heels outscore the Eagles 23-12 during that 10 minute period. Kelly pushed the pace and acted as the catalyst, scoring six points.

The guard has taken a big step compared to her first season at North Carolina. Through 18 games, she has surpassed her playing minutes from last year, accumulating a total of 450 this season as compared to last season's 387.

Head coach Courtney Banghart said when she coaches Kelly, she knows what she's going to get. She sees her as a consistent force on the team who commands every possession.

"She celebrates others, she challenges others, she leads by example," Banghart said. "Her effort is never in question."



UNC sophomore guard Reniya Kelly (10) dribbles during the game against Boston College on Jan. 12 in Carmichael Arena.

DTH/AVA SHARON

When the team needed more effort against Boston College, Kelly answered the call. She pushed the ball with more intensity, grabbing steals and initiating plays for her team.

Ustby said she admires how Kelly finds that same opportunity for the rest of the team. Ustby sees her and Kelly's ability to have in-game dialogue especially helpful, as they both remain even-keeled. The two players can easily recognize when something works or doesn't.

In the opening 30 seconds of the third quarter, Kelly sent a timely pass to Ustby as she drove to the lane. The forward spun around her defender to create space and hooked a layup with her back to the basket.

"As a fifth-year senior, that's something that I'm like, 'Oh, wow, I got really lucky and blessed with Reniya's ability to step into that role,'" Ustby said.

Ustby also said she admires the kind of development she has been able to witness in Kelly over the past two seasons. She recognizes that this kind of leadership is not easy, and she was once in a similar position.

Banghart said that the kind of ovation Kelly receives at the beginning of games is similar to the kind that Ustby received in her first years. The ovation is building, and Kelly is living up to it.

Still, Kelly doesn't always find that praise easy to hear, but she's happy she is able to contribute in the way that she does.

"I just love this team," Kelly said. "I'm just blessed to be here."

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# Special Projects *The Daily Tar Heel*

## ACADEMICS

# University discontinues postdoctoral program for faculty diversity

## CPPFD created pathway for tenure track positions

By Twumasi Duah-Mensah  
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In 2020, UNC reported that 79 percent of their tenured faculty identified as white. The Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity aimed to combat that lack of diversity. Each year, the program chose postdoctoral scholars from underrepresented backgrounds to support for a two-year term in an effort to create a pathway to tenure track faculty positions.

Of the 204 graduates of the program, which has run since 1983, 76 became faculty members at UNC.

According to CPPFD's website, their last application cycle closed in November 2022, and they are working with the University to reimagine the program. Unlike a number of diversity-related initiatives and programs at the University, CPPFD was not listed as one of the programs or positions eliminated due to the repeal of the UNC Systems DEI Policy last fall.

In a 2021 report, former CPPFD director Sibby Anderson-Thompkins highlighted the impact the program's cohorts had on UNC's curriculum, including the creation of a Latina/o studies minor, an Asian-American studies curriculum and courses on spoken Cherokee language. The report also said that the cohort model creates community for scholars who may have lacked inclusive support systems at their previous institution, noting how active CPPFD alumni were in support of following cohorts and how the program "provided an opportunity to demystify the hidden culture of academia, identity politics, and 'real talk.'"

According to a statement from UNC Media Relations, CPPFD benefited approximately 1,000 postdoctoral scholars with its resources, but the University is now focusing on new programs. The University has otherwise not publicly acknowledged the end of the program.

"As this program comes to a close, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research is shifting its continued commitment to attracting exceptional early-career faculty," the statement read.

### Intense hiring process

The program was "a nationwide search in itself," Danielle Purifoy, assistant professor of geography and CPPFD alumna, said.

She said CPPFD's selection process was two-tiered. First, departments

reviewed the applications of candidates who indicated interest in working for them and selected candidates to recommend to a University-wide committee.

The committee then selected who would make up the coming year's cohort, usually no more than eight fellows. That meant not every department would get its request. CPPFD applicants effectively competed with people who weren't in the department they intended to work in.

Cohorts consisted of an average of five to six fellows each year, yet the CPPFD garnered anywhere from 150 to 250 applicants, Kurt Ribisl, chair of the Department of Health Behavior, said.

department more," he said. "But the way that you're vetted over that year is much more intense than any other faculty position."

Still, the CPPFD hiring process had its benefits compared to a standard national search, which is how departments usually hire faculty members.

### Advantages for fellows

Anderson-Thompkins, who directed the CPPFD from 2007 to 2020, said in traditional national searches, there is a lot of bias — from the perception of scholars of color, to the perceived pedigree of the schools they come from, to even if the name of the candidate

were able to speak with candidates they wished to recommend to the University-wide committee to get enough information for a strong nomination letter, as Purifoy said was the case for her.

While participating in the program, fellows received protected research time in which they were not required to teach. Unlike other postdoctoral programs, fellows conduct their own — not their mentor's — research, Julia Yi, a CPPFD alum and assistant professor at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, said.

Yi completed a couple of research projects during her fellowship. Some of her work focused on the language and literacy skills of

universities like Yale, Stanford or Duke. So Anderson-Thompkins encouraged deans and department chairs to think ahead about their hiring priorities, aligning selection of fellows to those priorities.

Between 2010 and 2021, the University hired fellows as tenure-track faculty at UNC at around an 80 to 90 percent rate, Anderson-Thompkins said. Some years, the University hired a full CPPFD cohort.

"I really shifted the focus from the idea that there was something lacking in the scholars, that they needed remedial work or additional work on themselves," Anderson-Thompkins said. "But [I] focused more on what the people who were doing the hiring and tenure needed to do to better understand the barriers and challenges, obstacles that faculty of color faced in the academy."

The CPPFD helped departments hire experts in niche, underrepresented subjects. Purifoy said the Department of Geography recruited her in large part because it wanted to launch a minor in environmental justice.

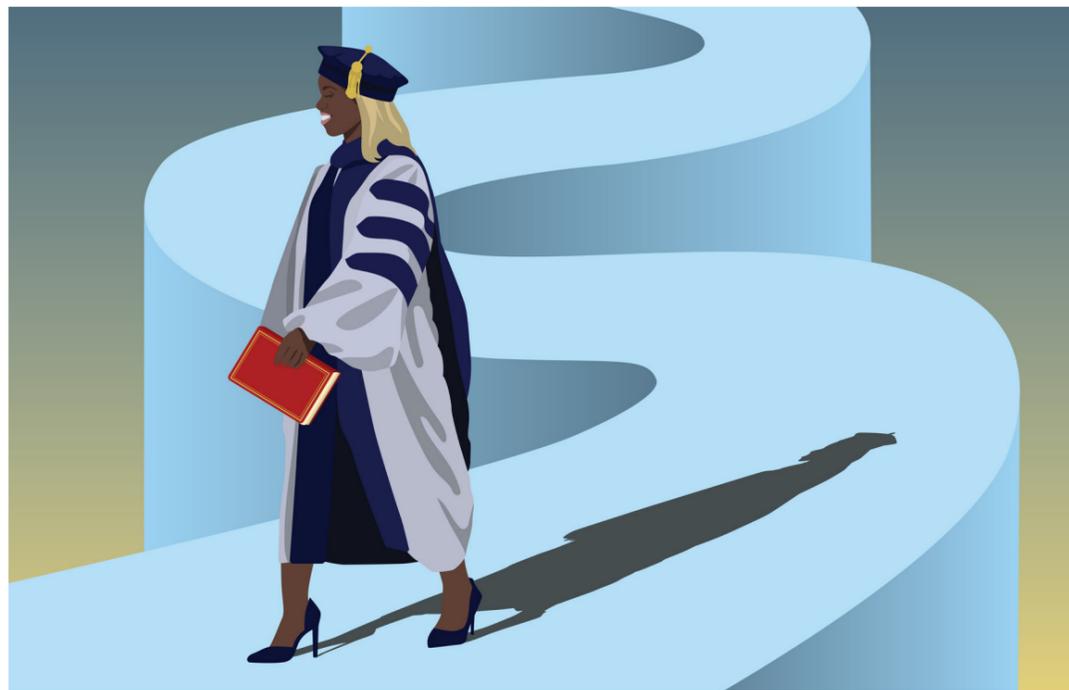
Ribisl said having diverse faculty in a department makes it more competitive for grants. His department often does community-engaged partnerships, and community organizations prefer to work with faculty who grew up in similar, underrepresented communities.

Ribisl gave the example of a former CPPFD fellow in the Department of Health Behavior who, with now-retired professor Geni Eng, worked with a community health organization in Greensboro on research to reduce bias in doctors treating Black lung cancer patients.

"Having individuals who come from the groups that are bearing the greater disease burden is really important to help with a solution," Ribisl said.

In its Dec. 5 statement, UNC Media Relations said the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research is focused on new programs.

"This October, the OVCR launched the Catalyst Faculty Research Cluster Program which aims to advance impactful interdisciplinary scholarship at Carolina through recruitment and retention of scholars within strategic research clusters and provide the professional development and training that were hallmarks of the CPPFD," Media Relations said in the statement.



DTH DESIGN/CARRIE-ANNE ROGERS

Though the program was two years long, departments had to be honest with their fellows about their chances being hired after their first year, a CPPFD alumni who requested to remain anonymous to protect their employment said. Fellows often had a chance to do a job talk near the end of or after their first year, after which the entire department voted on whether the fellow would join the faculty.

In this respect, the CPPFD felt like being interviewed for over a year, William Sturkey, associate professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania and CPPFD alumnus, said.

Sturkey said he tracked how many times he went for coffee or attended an informal meeting with a faculty member. His tally: 30.

"There's some advantages [in] that you can kind of make friends, and you can really get to know the

female adolescents involved in foster care or the juvenile justice system. Yi won a DEI Mini Grant award from the UNC School of Medicine for her research in 2023.

"I was really productive in publishing papers and doing a couple of research projects that would have taken me probably double the time if I had been in another postdoctoral fellowship," Yi said.

### CPPFD's impact on departments

In 2008, 25 years after the CPPFD was founded, 113 of the 132 graduates had found tenure track positions at UNC or elsewhere. But in the first two and a half decades of the program, Anderson-Thompkins said the University struggled to retain fellows as faculty members.

Still, graduates of the program found tenure-track positions at



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