

# The Daily Tar Heel

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

133 YEARS OF SERVING UNC STUDENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 134, ISSUE 1

## PRIMARY ELECTION PREVIEW



### In Congress

In a rematch of the 2022 Democratic primary for the 4th District, incumbent Valerie Foushee and local politician Nida Allam are facing off again, joined by political newcomer Mary Patterson from Durham.

### On the board

Six candidates are vying for three spots on the Orange County Board of County Commissioners, which oversees development, school funding and taxation. Candidates have addressed concerns about funding cuts and the revaluation process.

### In the schools

Voters will elect four of six candidates to the Orange County Schools Board of Education in this general, nonpartisan election. The district is navigating state and federal funding cuts, as well as declining enrollment.

### In the sheriff's office

Incumbent Charles Blackwood boasts more than a decade of experience as Orange County Sheriff. He is facing off against progressive challenger David LaBarre, who has worked in the Durham County Sheriff's Office for two decades.

READ THE FULL ELECTION PREVIEW ON PAGES 2-10

## ELECTIONS | DISTRICT 4 PRIMARY

### Valerie Foushee eyes third term in Congress

The incumbent's campaign emphasizes experience, collaboration

By Jessica Hudnut  
Assistant City & State Editor

When U.S. Rep. Valerie Foushee (D-N.C. 4th) was serving as a state senator, she offered Camille Berry, who now serves as Chapel Hill's Mayor Pro Tempore, a ride home from an event in Carrboro.



DTH FILE/JUNE BREWER

Valerie Foushee speaks at a UNC Young Democrats forum on Feb. 17.

Berry, then working for Community Home Trust, offered to give Foushee a tour and show her some of the affordable homes within Northside. She said Foushee gave her the side eye

and told her to buckle up.

Berry said she learned on the tour that Northside was a community that treated its members like family.

"She told me about one woman who lived in a house who would always offer snacks to the kids," Berry said. "She told me about someone else's aunt who lived there. She knew the stories, the families in those homes."

Foushee is up for reelection for a third term to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Previously elected in 2022, she is running as an incumbent against challengers Nida Allam, vice chair of the Durham Board of County Commissioners, and Mary Patterson, a political newcomer.

Foushee previously defeated Allam in the 2022 primary before winning the general election over Republican Courtney Geels. She was reelected in 2024 over Republican Eric Blankenburg and Libertarian Guy Meilleur.

A Chapel Hill native, Foushee has served in a variety of roles during her nearly four-decade career in public service.

"Having lived in the area all my life, I've seen how this area has progressed," she said. "I have progressed along with it."

She joined the Chapel Hill Police Department in 1987, and she continued her work there until she retired in 2008.

From 1997 to 2004, Foushee served on the Chapel Hill-Carrboro

CONTINUE ON PAGE 3

### Nida Allam seeks to change the status quo

Durham politician has run on championing working families

By Taylor Motley  
City & State Editor

When Nida Allam lost the 2022 Democratic primary to represent North Carolina's 4th District in Congress, it wasn't surprising.

Allam, who had less than a decade in political experience at the time, was campaigning against Valerie Foushee — an instantly recognizable name, someone with decades of experience in local and state politics and a candidate who received millions of dollars in outside spending support.

In the years since, Allam has continued to serve on the Durham County Board of Commissioners, with goals like making the area more affordable for residents and working with community members to create an inclusive environment.

But voters in the 4th District never lost sight of the 2022 race. Allam has constantly received calls and messages from local activists and community members encouraging her to run again, yet she was initially hesitant to embrace a second campaign against the now-incumbent Foushee.

After President Donald Trump was elected to a second term and the Triangle began to see the impacts of his administration, Allam

kicked her fighting spirit into gear and announced her second campaign against Foushee for Congress this past December.

"We can have elected officials who hear us and see us, and that's what we're trying to do here in this district," Allam said.

Just 11 years ago, as Allam's graduation from N.C. State University was on the horizon, she had no plans to go into politics. Majoring in sustainable materials and technology, Allam was on track to become a project manager.

Her life shifted when her three close friends, Deah Shaddy Barakat, Yusur Mohammad Abu-Salha and Razan Mohammad

CONTINUE ON PAGE 3



DTH FILE/AVA SHARON

Nida Allam speaks at the Durham Convention Center on Feb. 13.

## ON CAMPUS

● Progress stalls in addressing cuts to scholarship for veterans' children | PAGE 12

● Adolfo Alvarez reflects on which campaign promises have come to fruition | PAGE 12

## IN LIFESTYLE

● UNC fraternities boast large student turnout at Battle of the Bands | PAGE 14

● Senior Amelia Fisher releases a collection of faith-based personal essays | PAGE 14

## IN OPINION

● VERSUS: Columnists debate the value of the transfer credit system | PAGE 15

● Columnist Drew Sherrod tells Democrats, "It's time to treat Gen Z like adults" | PAGE 15

## ON THE FIELD

● Senior guard Seth Trimble carries UNC men's basketball to win over No. 24 Louisville | PAGE 16

● Offensive struggles doom Diamond Heels midway through three-game ECU series | PAGE 16

“ Stand for something or you will fall for anything. ”  
ROSA PARKS

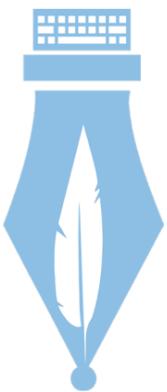
The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893  
133 years of editorial freedom

- ALLI PARDUE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
EDITOR@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
MADELYN ROWLEY PRINT MANAGING EDITOR
PRINT@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
AVERY THATCHER DIGITAL MANAGING EDITOR
DIGITAL@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
DANEEN KHAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGING EDITOR
COMMUNITY@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
DANIA AL HADEETHI DEI COORDINATOR
DEI@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
REGAN BUTLER UNIVERSITY EDITOR
UNIVERSITY@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
TAYLOR MOTLEY CITY & STATE EDITOR
CITY@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
MATTHEW MAYNARD SPORTS EDITOR
SPORTS@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
LOLA OLIVERIO LIFESTYLE EDITOR
LIFESTYLE@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
SYDNEY BAKER OPINION EDITOR
OPINION@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
AIDAN LOCKHART ENTERPRISE EDITOR
ENTERPRISE@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
GRACE DAVIDSON DESIGN EDITOR
DESIGN@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
CONNOR RUESCH PHOTO EDITOR
PHOTO@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
AVA SHARON DEPUTY PHOTO EDITOR
PHOTO@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
KATHERINE MCRAE DATA EDITOR
DATA@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
AMELIE FAWSON AUDIO-VISUAL EDITOR
AUDIOVISUAL@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
FRANCIE WILHELM COPY CHIEF
COPY@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
MARINA MESSURA DEPUTY COPY CHIEF
COPY@DAILYTARHEEL.COM
ABBY MISS AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT EDITOR
AUDIENCE@DAILYTARHEEL.COM

CORRECTIONS

- The Daily Tar Heel reports any inaccurate information published as soon as the error is discovered.
Contact Print Managing Editor Madelyn Rowley at print@dailytarheel.com with issues about this policy.



Mail and Office: 109 E. Franklin St. Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Will Lingo, executive director, 962-4215
Advertising & Business, 962-1163

One copy per person. Please report suspicious activity at our distribution racks by emailing dth@dailytarheel.com
© 2026 DTH Media Corp. All rights reserved

Behind our 2026 primaries election coverage

By Taylor Motley
City & State Editor

When candidates vied for town council seats and sought victory in mayoral races this past fall, the conversation was centered around how uncontentious those elections were. But with Election Day for the 2026 primaries just a week away on March 3, nearly every race leaves room for a shakeup of those in office.

More than 50 candidates are seeking elected office across local, state and federal roles. Our coverage of the primaries is focused on the most contentious races impacting Orange County residents, from the 4th District matchup gaining national attention to the contest between a

longtime incumbent and a progressive challenger for sheriff. Some races are entirely uncontested, such as district attorney, and others have no primaries and will not be on the ballot until fall.

Orange County is one of the most solidly blue counties in the state, as are the state and congressional districts the county is a part of. Rarely does a Republican candidate see victory in our area. For Orange County candidates, winning the primary is almost always a guaranteed win in the fall.

In nearly all of the races Orange County residents will vote in on Election Day, the de facto winner of the election will be decided by the winner of the Democratic primaries on March 3, with no Republican candidates to face off against in the fall. The nonpartisan

election for the Orange County Schools Board of Education is not a primary, and the four winning candidates will be sworn in shortly after the election.

Among candidates in the Democratic primaries, policy disagreements still persist, largely related to development, taxation and navigating funding cuts at the local level. Writers for The Daily Tar Heel's City & State Desk spoke with candidates across races in Q&As to help voters quickly analyze what topics candidates care about.

Next Tuesday's elections will affect Orange County for years to come — those elected will be responsible for developing affordable housing, responding to the impacts of President Donald Trump's administration and

contending with a Republican-led state legislature. We will provide live online coverage to break the news of who will be the officials serving Orange County.

X: @dthcitystate



Editorial Staff

Assistant Editors: Alice Scott, Jackson Auchincloss, University; Sarah Clements, Jessica Hudnut, City & State; Beckett Brantley, Brian D'Aguzzo, Sports; Becca Savidge, Kate Alexander-Heyward, Lifestyle; Eva Eapen, Opinion; Aubrey Word, Design; Michael Pearson, Photo; Jordyn Balam, May Proctor, Audio-Visual; Gabe Thumm, Emily Eschleman, Audience Engagement; Lilli Johnson, Brooke Xu, Dayna Wilkerson; Copy

Editors: Brigit Pierce, Crossword Editor; Ashley Hinostrza-Villacorta, Spanish Translation Editor

Investigations: Dania Al Hadeethi; Jessica Baugh; Satchel Walton; Keya Mahajan; Phoebe Martel; Liza Chartampila

University: Akash Bhowmik, senior writer; Claire Harutunian, senior writer; Kayla Bradshaw, senior writer; Victoria Deal, senior writer; Lydia Winstead, senior writer; Dylan Skinner; Emily Brietz; Hannah Mackin; Joaquin Mestre; Jordan Andreasen; Michael Singleton; Ragan Huntsman; Bella Pires; Suhas Nittoor; Tuli Asokan; Kate Markus; Beyza Guvenc; AnnaJames Lynch; Justin Jackson; Ella Palmer; Charlotte Dowdy; Lauren Geddes; Julia Horstkamp; Alexie Blake; Ella Martino; Juliet Loffredo; Kayla Brogan; Maya Keating; Shiena Fernando

City & State: Brantley Aycocock, senior writer; Mihika Agrawal; Rita Choufani; Joseph Cole; Ha Lien Gaskin; Emmy Grigoni; Sophie King; Amelia Linton; Aruba Manzoor; Sakethram Maramraj; Liam Markham; James O'Hara; Lorelai Palmer; Emmy Russ; Joshua

Sarfert; Kate Sinha; Emily Spottswood; Elise Strickland; Shloka Sunil; Jake Williams

Sports: Harry Crowther, senior writer; Alexandra Jones, senior writer; Josh Markotich, senior writer; Jack Morris, senior writer; Molly Louison; Dylan Stalter; Caleb Schalliol; Katie Reeves; Sarah Stephens; Tess Alongi; Sofia Szostczuk; Alexander Panas; Amy Snively; Cyrus Porter; Eva Patel; Katherine Clark; Emma-Grace Hart; Sophia Brady; Sumayah Lodhi; Aidan McPherson; Andrew Ford; Claire Eggers; Courtney Edwards; Natalie Carton; Dara Dediare; Retheth Narula

Lifestyle: Emma Arthur, senior writer; Cooper Hall, senior writer; Mollie Ray, senior writer; Nadia Jefferson, senior writer; Shreya Senthilkumar, senior writer; Amanda Aguilar, senior writer; Mila Ahmed; Zahra Alqudaihi; Sophia Firdausi; Eliza Hage; Ava Jenkins; Margaret Lyon; Erin Mun; Tiffany Plusnick; Maisie Cahn; Darden Cone; Brooke Davis; Isabelle Dietrick; Reese Doherty; Akshara Gudipati; Sophie Lassiter; Jane Laurence; Sridha Nalamada; Chloe Nappier; Anagha Puranik; Harper Senff; Ella Williams; Kailey Plaza-Byrd; London Dernis

Opinion: Owen Baxter, editorial board; Luis Fuentes, editorial board; Arya Mehta, editorial board; Nakai Moore, editorial board; Mary Blake Nobles, editorial board; Jeswin Antony, editorial board; Ruby Ranson, editorial board; Zain Zeeshan; Teo Almaguer; Kyle Bublic; Quin Edelin; Connor Foote; Anna Gage; Cooper Hall; Paisley Holland; Radian Hong; Victoria Kirova; Sree Linga;

Jaden Miller; Shea McIntyre; Kriti Peechu; Margeaux Pierson; Hannah Pomeranzeva; Esha Singaraju; Mani Williams; Elisa Troncoso; Sadie Romero; Scout Ross; Lara Mcdowell; Anabella Platt; Drew Sherrrod; Giselle Almeida; Greenlee Laughlin; Mary Nelson; Neehar Kale

Design: Amanda Hess, senior designer; Camila Garrido, senior designer; Carly Evans, senior designer; Mila Horsley, senior designer; Alex Cvetkovski; Angel Shen; Audrey Murray; Claire Montero; Ella Hardin; Isabella Dugarte-Carrasco; Isabela Nash; Jayden Pupoh; Kaitlin Stratemeier; Katherine Kananau; Kendyl Thomas; Lorelai Palmer; Lydia Chen; Margaret Jester; Meg Jenkins; Natalie Jones; Nick Lotz; Samantha Brennehan; Stephanie Hughes; Wren Silman; Erica Lopez

Photo: Pearce Barnes, senior staffer; June Brewer, senior staffer; Anthony Guerra Flores, senior staffer; Amanda Kirkpatrick, senior staffer; Abbey McKee, senior staffer; Olivia Paul, senior staffer; Alyssa Albritton; Benjamin Brickner; Haydon Bode; Melanie Contreras; Eva Dew; Benjamin Eggleston; Joseph Forgione; Sophia Graci; Leena Grmani; Ethan Harrell; Harrison Lennon; Kate McCullough; Mason Miller; Abby Montreuil; Elyssa Mothershed; Rafay Niazi; Ali O'Brien; Adam Qaimari; Lauren Ray; Cassidy Reynolds; Bryson Smith; Cal Stoke; Julian Michael Swart; Huseyin Tuna; Hayden Wittenborn; Alex Yang

Data: Aleena Sebastian; Alissa Shyshkova; Austin Pierce; Davis Hunter; Diya Joshi;

Emma Taylor; Isabella Cooper; Ivy Nangalia; Sarayu Pesala; Shreya Shabari; Sindhura Chundi; Winta Abraham; Yuqi Peng; Charlene Wu

Audio-Visual: Kshitiz Adhikari, senior staffer; N'Nia Brickhouse, senior staffer; Kayla Collins, senior staffer; Diego Lerma, senior staffer; Nikhil Mehta, senior staffer; Andrew Sellers, senior staffer; Lev Bearman; William Becker; Ella Campbell; Emmy Grigoni; Allison Helms; Tae Hong; Naya Hromic; Lauren Mallet; Adarshana Lakshmi Narayanan; Ke Shi; Willow Lawson; Maya True Wasik; Alexandra Bautista

Copy: Albert Carlson; Ana Katherine Weeks; Carmen Ramirez Medina; Harper Stumb; Halle Tourian; Helen Dehnert; Jonathan Pitcavage; Kate Golden; Katharine Park; Katie Mohr; Katie Zarzour; Lojine Goumaa; Lucy Cook; Maria Prasolova; Peyton Sccheel; Reed Pruchiewski; Ryan Guzman; Shivani Handa; Srinithi Mohan, Virginia Feagans

Audience Engagement: Amber Angelillo, senior staffer; Anna Gage; Ariana Rivera Romo; Arshi Ranjan; Claire Moran, senior staffer; Emma Carroll; Emma Evans; Kira Hepppe; Lam Phan; Madeleine Denechaud; Nakayla McConaughy, senior staffer; Payton Hutchins; Regan Sumy, senior staffer; Savannah Bishop, senior staffer; Shae Thomas; Susanna Mann; Tae Hong; Jared Cruz, Owen Dyer, Kayla He, Rosemary Ruan, Madelyn Scholle; Elaine Shi

Professional and Business Staff

Business & Professional Staff: Will Lingo, executive director; Sarah Ederle, bookkeeper; Megan McGinity, Director of Sales; Barb Starbuck, creative manager

1893 Brand Studio: Sam Perry, managing director; Catharine Yoder, marketing director; Betsy Porter, account manager; Annie Ascher, campaigns team lead; Sophia Melin, storytelling team lead; Max Marlow, design team lead; Kiki Kozak, account executive

Advertising Staff: Alyssa Crane, Student Advertising Director; Eva Barratt, account executive; Delaney Broderick, account executive; Duncan Brown, account executive; Noah Hughes, account executive; Srikar Kalagara, account executive; Aleynah Maxwell, account executive; Anabella Mikels, account executive

Printing: Triangle Web Printing Co.

Distribution: Ricardo Harris

DTH Socials

- www.dailytarheel.com
@dailytarheel
@dailytarheel
@dailytarheel
The Daily Tar Heel
The Daily Tar Heel
@dailytarheel
@dailytarheel



Do NOT bag your recyclables in plastic or paper bags.

Do NOT put plastic bags, film, wrap, or mailers in recycling carts.



919-968-2788
recycling@orangecountync.gov
orangecountync.gov/recycling

# ELECTION ★ PREVIEW

## Foushee looks to build on experience

Continued from Page 1

City Schools Board of Education. She was then elected to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners, where she became the first Black woman to serve as Board chair. In 2012, she was elected to the N.C. General Assembly, where she served first in the N.C. House of Representatives and later in the N.C. Senate.

Today, Foushee serves as the first woman and the first Black representative for District 4.

Foushee said her priorities if elected include addressing affordability, preserving democracy and dismantling U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

Because the Democrats currently hold a minority in the House, former 4th District Rep. David Price, who endorsed Foushee, said she is in a difficult situation. However, he said she has successfully delivered benefits to the district during her first term.

Most recently, 2026 fiscal year House appropriations packages delivered \$21.1 million in community project funding to the 4th District, covering projects including affordable housing, transit upgrades and water resources.

Foushee has been criticized for accepting funds from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's political action committee in her previous campaign. She also visited Israel in 2024 to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Palestinian leaders. She received more than \$2 million from AIPAC's PAC in 2022, but she has not received any AIPAC dollars since 2024.

"I do not accept funding from AIPAC," Foushee said. "I haven't for more than two years. I wish we could move on."

Contributors to Foushee's 2026 campaign include Delta Air Lines Inc. PAC, Google LLC NETPAC, the Employees of Northrop Grumman Corp. PAC and the Lockheed Martin Corp. Employees' PAC.

Among her endorsements are the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund and various elected officials, including several from Orange County.

Several endorsers said they chose to support Foushee's campaign because of her experience as an incumbent congresswoman.

Carrboro Mayor Barbara Foushee said she supports Valerie Foushee's efforts to work across the aisle, and she appreciates the mentorship she has received throughout her career.

"Being able to go to someone like her, who has a servant's heart, who leads with care, who leads with love, has really been a saving grace for me," Barbara Foushee said.

Valerie Foushee said her experience sets her apart from the other candidates in the primary.

"I have served at every level, and I have been a successful progressive fighter at every level," she said. "I've fought for everything from civil rights to reproductive freedom and now to defending all of us against Trump's policies."

X: @jessicahudnut

## Allam hopes to continue speaking out

Continued from Page 1

Abu-Salha, were shot and murdered in their Chapel Hill home.

In her last semester before graduation, Allam had found a new calling in life — to carry on the legacy of her friends through public service.

Currently serving as the vice chair of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, Allam has focused her local political efforts toward supporting the county's immigrant population, supporting affordable housing and funding local public schools.

Natalie Beyer, a member of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education who endorsed Allam, said Allam has been an impactful leader who supports the local community.

"I think she is the voice of the next generation that is needed in this moment," Beyer said.

Allam has gained most of her reputation from her work outside of the office, though, grabbing attention for her efforts to engage with the community on the streets of Durham.

"It's so important to bring community leaders', community members' voices alongside with me, because when I go to D.C., no one person can get everything done," Allam said.

Four years ago, Allam was unsuccessful in her run for Congress, but these dynamic years since have created room for a shakeup.

The 2022 matchup was the most expensive Democratic congressional primary in state history, with more than \$3 million in outside spending pouring in for Foushee compared to about \$340,000 for Allam. Foushee and Allam are on a nearly even playing field in the total contributions to their 2026 campaign to date.

Allam's campaign is riding the nationwide wave of more progressive Democrats being elected to local and state offices as communities contend with the impacts of President Donald Trump's second term.

Allam and her opponent, Foushee, are both more progressive than the average U.S. House Democrat. Allam, however, has taken a more outspoken and bold approach to politics.

As a naturalized citizen herself, Allam has called for the abolition of ICE for several years. Foreign policy has been a hallmark of Allam's political activism from her earliest days in the field, calling Israel's war on Gaza a genocide and strongly opposing it.

Allam is also centering her campaign around bolstering a strong economy and livable wages, fighting climate change and championing voting rights and democracy.

Victoria Plant, a UNC student who works with Allam's campaign, said that Allam's connection with the community made her feel empowered as a voter.

"It means so much to know that your representative supports you and the things that you're working towards," Plant said.

As Election Day approaches, Allam is ramping up her campaign efforts more than ever, venturing throughout all parts of the district to engage with voters.

With community advocates and a nationwide progressive wave on her side, Allam is eager to change the status quo.

"The average person in this country is sick and tired of not having their elected officials speaking up for them," Allam said.

X: @dthcitystate

### NEWCOMER

## Mary Patterson wants to represent everyday people in Congress

The former teacher is motivated by her lived experiences

By Sarah Clements  
Assistant City & State Editor

In the upcoming democratic primary for North Carolina's bluest congressional district, incumbent Valerie Foushee and Durham County Commissioner Nida Allam, two experienced politicians with a wide array of high-profile endorsements, have captured the majority of media attention in what has become a rematch of the 2022 race.

Joining them on the ballot is Mary Patterson of Durham, a newcomer to politics who said she is ready to be the positive change she'd like to see in politics.

Patterson, a retired teacher with experience in human resources, has not launched a

significant campaign, receiving no endorsements and reporting \$0 raised or spent on advertising to the Federal Election Commission as of early February. Foushee and Allam, who have raised more than \$1 million combined, reported campaign expenditures of \$546,252 and \$583,151, respectively.

"When I came in, they said they had 14 open positions for U.S. House of Representatives," Patterson said. "I did not know that I was running against other people for the same position, same district."

Patterson said it was her lived experiences, both as a teacher in North Carolina — which ranks 43rd in the nation in annual teacher salary — and her own negative experiences with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services after she found mold in her apartment, that motivated her to run for public office.

If elected, she said she would prioritize policies preventing politicians from investing in the stock market, work to improve infrastructure in cities like Durham and ensure continued support for programs like Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that help low-income individuals.

"I can relate to people," she said. "I've been dealing with people for the past 55 years, face-to-face, dealing with the public issues that people face on a daily basis, with salary, unequal wages, poor housing, trying to feed their families with little to no money, people living on the streets, trying to find a place to stay, food to eat. So, yeah, I've seen it all, and we do our best to try to help and pitch in wherever we can."

X: @sarahhclements



Institute for the Arts and Humanities

MARY STEVENS RECKFORD MEMORIAL  
LECTURE IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

# The Politics of Our Family Stories

Brussels, 1994 | Nice, 1942



Stéphane Gerson

New York University

MARCH 5, 2026 at 4 P.M.

UNIVERSITY ROOM, HYDE HALL  
EARN CLE CREDIT  
IAH.UNC.EDU



College of Arts and Sciences

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidates talk development, equity of recent tax revaluations

### Adam Beeman

He supports dense, affordable housing and by-right zoning

By Liam Markham  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Liam Markham spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners At-Large candidate Adam Beeman about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Adam Beeman:** I want voters to know that I care about where I live, and I want this county to work for everyone, and not just some of us. As a local electrical contractor, I've worked throughout the county, and I've seen the struggles of the low-income, and I've seen the successes of the higher net income earners, and so I want to make this county work for all of us.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**AB:** So my focus is CTE in the high school level. Right now, we don't really have very many robust programs for CTE. And I don't know if you saw the news yesterday, but there's an electrical investment. They're making a \$9.25 million investment to train apprentices because we have a shortage of electricians. But it's not just the electricians. It's across-the-board

trades. And I'm not just saying the building trades, everything, culinary arts, all those skilled positions that people take for granted. We need to start focusing training and training the people at the high school level so they can come out of high school either ready to go to the workforce or continue on their college education and improve on what they've learned.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**AB:** With more density, you lower the cost. If you can build an apartment building or something that's a larger structure that houses more people, you're gonna lower the per-unit cost. And that's the kind of thing we really need to think about, stacking people up instead of spreading people out. Across the county, we need to start really thinking about that. One of my things is by-right zoning in some of those major corridors.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would be your top priorities for budget allocations?

**AB:** One of my first priorities is going to be going through the budget line by line to figure out where we have waste and redundancy that we can eliminate. And then my, one of my bigger priorities would be polling the actual County workers and asking

them specifically, directly, where can we save money? What can we do? What things are working, what's not working? Rather than guess or pay for a consultancy to come in and tell us what's wrong, why don't we just ask the people that are actually doing the work every day? They know whether they're using that software anymore, or if we could do without that over there, before we eliminate people's positions and all that other stuff.

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs to be changed and how can the board help address inequities?

**AB:** Absolutely, that process needs to be changed, and that's one of the things that, one of the first things that I would do is sit down with the tax department and have them explain to me how we arrive at the valuations that we've arrived at. Because I was just in a meeting a week ago where they had a report about the inequities, and it's typically favored towards the low-income, and the brown and Black neighborhoods are disproportionately taxed higher than the rest of the county.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?

**AB:** I would say the school bond one was the biggest issue, and yes, the \$300 million was great, but if we still are \$200 million short, I'm not



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM BEEMAN

Orange County Board of County Commissioners At-Large candidate Adam Beeman poses for a portrait.

entirely sure what we're supposed to do to solve that problem. So, I don't know, I wasn't in the meetings to know what the tax rate would have been or should have been, and I understand from some of the talks I've had that they just couldn't stomach pushing the tax rate up any

higher, and I get that. But, I really don't know what the solution was supposed to be for the other \$200 million that we were short on.

X: @dthcitystate

### Karen Stegman

She would support more housing, funding for social services

By Brantley Aycock  
Senior Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Brantley Aycock spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners At-Large candidate Karen Stegman about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Karen Stegman:** I was born and raised in Orange County, and I went to Carolina. I built my career here. I'm raising my family here, so being part of this community and serving this community has always been a part of my life. Most recently, I served eight years on the Chapel Hill Town Council, so I would bring to the role both a very deep knowledge and love of this community as well as long, deep experience as a local elected official.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**KS:** Our county has a housing shortage, and we need more housing. Additionally, and related is we need to protect our critical farmland and rural and natural areas in the county. Another topic that's really top of mind for folks around affordability is the property taxes in our county. We



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN STEGMAN

Orange County Board of County Commissioners At-Large candidate Karen Stegman poses for a portrait.

have learned, thanks to a lot of community advocacy, that the valuation was not done fairly and equitably. And so that's a really important issue that we, the County, needs to fix urgently and make sure it is done properly moving forward. We also have not been proactive enough in pursuing economic development opportunities that will give us more of a tax base, also provide better paying jobs for workers in our county. We know that our public schools are being severely underfunded by the state government, and that's putting a lot of pressure on local governments to try and pick up that slack, and

so that's an ongoing challenge that we're going to be looking at really closely coming up.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**KS:** Focus on concentrating the growth in our urban environments. If we allow growth to spread out from our towns into across the county, allowing that kind of sprawl is really unhealthy for our water quality in our rural areas.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would be your top priorities for budget allocations?

**KS:** We will have to make sure that we are prioritizing the needs of our most vulnerable residents and really start there with housing security, food security, social services, mental health services — all of these core services that the county provides have to be there for our community. I also think there's a lot of opportunity to do more collaboratively instead of trying to go it on our own as Town

government, County government, school systems, the University, other major institutions in our county.

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs to be changed and how can the board help address inequities?

**KS:** Yes, absolutely, it does need to change. I was really glad to see that the county commissioners heard that feedback. They set up a working group made up of electeds and community members and county staff to review the process and to make recommendations to the commission about what needs to change and how to address those inequities. So it's going to be really important that we see this effort through and that it just doesn't end.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?

**KS:** The community last year approved a large bond for schools. The County commission was looking to be way too hands-on in the implementation of the work that's really the school board's work to do. So I think there's really a need there to have transparency and routine reporting on how that money is being used, but to also trust our school board colleagues that they know the needs and that they are best placed to make those decisions.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidates talk development, equity of recent tax revaluations

### Jamezetta Bedford

Her priority is affordability, from housing to food

By Lorelai Palmer  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Lorelai Palmer spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners District 1 candidate Jamezetta Bedford about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Jamezetta Bedford:** I really look out for and advocate for people, you know, with disabilities, people who are seniors, people on fixed incomes, the homeless, people that need a little extra help. And I prioritize our health and safety, and that social safety net.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**JB:** Affordability is really an issue for so many of us, students included. The cost of housing, the rent — the rents have gone through the roof in the last five, six years. And food, everything — it costs so much more. So we're trying, and what we're doing then for housing, we do a lot of things. We do programming for [the] homeless, we have a new bridge housing program, a house that can do six beds and has a provider.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMEZETTA BEDFORD

Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidate Jamezetta Bedford poses for a portrait.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**JB:** Let's focus the residential growth within the towns where we have water, because we're facing more of the rural residents all of a sudden — you know, not all of a sudden — but their septic are 60

years old and needing replacing, and that's a lot of money for somebody who isn't expecting that, and the cost increases.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would be your top priorities for budget allocations?

**JB:** It looks now like we're at \$18 million shortfall, and that's scary. But we have to — and part of that is we're going to have to pay \$600,000 more for the SNAP benefits, the food. The federal government is passing on some of the costs, the administrative costs, and it's based on statewide error rates, where our error rates are very low, but it's statewide, and everybody, all the DSS is, they're all working really hard to bring it lower before the rates are set.

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs to be changed and how can the board help address inequities?

**JB:** Our average residential value increase went up 52 percent, which is actually less than our surrounding counties, in four years. It's astonishing how many people are moving here and causing these increases in values and it's countywide. And so the same, Hudson [Vaughan], and some of the other advocates brought it back to us and showed us where some of the appraisals are so — you can just go, 'Oh no.' How

could a traditional historic African American home, compared to one here in Meadowmont, be higher value, appraised higher than that. So we learned that it's over-appraised and undervalued, like for mortgages. That's historic, it's systemic.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?

**JB:** We have this \$300 million bond for the school facilities, and we have two school districts in Orange County. We have Orange County Schools, we have Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools, which is all wonderful. We have this budget approved, and County commissioners wanted an ILA, an interlocal agreement, with the schools, so that the staff who do facilities and are going to be building these new schools and budget people from both school districts in the county would have regular meetings — because it's so much money, the last bond was \$120 million, and now we're at \$300 million — so that we would have really good communications and make sure, because we had a different consultant, make sure that the projects that are coming forward follow this report. There were some errors in the report, so we understand that, but follow that principle of improving educational spaces, and at a certain point, you're throwing good money after bad.

X: @dthcitystate

### María Palmer

She says the recent revaluation process was racist, unfair

By Kate Sinha  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Kate Sinha spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners District 1 candidate María Palmer about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**María Palmer:** I want them to know that I am committed to making everyone welcome and safe in Orange County — that's my priority. I think a diverse and inclusive county is better for everybody. By diverse, I don't just mean racially diverse, or just culturally diverse. Socially diverse, financially diverse, where everybody can thrive, not just the people that make a certain amount of money.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**MP:** The reason that I decided to run was the racist and inequitable taxation. Well, valuation of property happened four years ago, and I was part of folks that advocated for change, and then it happened again four years later. And I thought, we need to hold the commissioners accountable for this and need some action and some promises. And then I realized well four years ago Jamezetta ran unopposed — my

opponent, you know my opponent ran unopposed — and she might not even show up and for our meetings to demand accountability. And that's when I decided we didn't need that. It would be better not just to have a strong people-powered movement to lobby the commissioners to change, but that we should have people at the table and voting.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**MP:** We have learned so much about sustainable development. My kids have gone to different schools and every school that was built became progressively more sustainable from lighting, from water we use, everything, and I think we have to up the standards for building in Orange County, but also we need to build up. We need dense infill that will bring down costs, both the cost of building and the cost of service, and at the same time be more sustainable. Because you concentrate folks around transit, they can work and live nearby, and they don't have to get in their cars and drive from out in the county, or from Durham or Chatham County.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would be your top priorities for budget allocations?

**MP:** Housing is a top priority for me because if you don't have the dignity of housing then you can't study, you can't do well in your classes, you

can't do well at work, you can't raise your children. So fixing our housing crisis and doing the repairs for the elders in the community, in looking for transitional housing for the homeless, all those things are top of my list. The schools are my priority as well because if we don't fund our schools responsibly and we don't demand accountability from our school board for running the schools and fixing the schools in a way that people value, then people won't live in Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs changed and how can the board help address inequities?

**MP:** Absolutely it needs change. I mentioned that when we first started speaking — that's the reason I'm running. The valuation process is deeply racist and unfair and it hurts poor folks, particularly Black folks, but all low-income people and middle-income people compared to some of the wealthier areas. I myself experienced this. I'm buying a home to downsize now — my kids are grown — and moving from a Black neighborhood where my house valuation went up by hundreds of thousands. My house, the value has supposedly quadrupled, but I'm moving to a different neighborhood farther south and a white area, which is valued at less than I paid for it two months before the valuation. So I mean, it makes no sense.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARÍA PALMER

Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidate María Palmer poses for a portrait.

**MP:** The valuation obviously should have been handled differently. Experts should have been consulted all along the North Carolina Housing Coalition. We should have put in

place a new system, and we should have tested it before implementing it.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidates talk development, equity of recent tax revaluations

### Beth Bronson

She wants sustainable growth that protects rural areas

By Avery Thatcher  
Digital Managing Editor

*The Daily Tar Heel's Avery Thatcher spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners District 2 candidate Beth Bronson about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Beth Bronson:** I am a lifelong resident that has gotten into this race to show that regular people can participate in their democracy, and that we should all be paying attention to the way our government works and doing the things that we begin to change, to effect good change.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**BB:** I'm hoping that we can find a way to start making responsible growth, sustainable growth. We really want to make sure that we're doing purposeful, economic development, and that it is not leaving behind the people that are already in the area. I think that another critical issue is protecting our land, water and air. There is a huge need to focus on preservation of the existing natural resources that we have and leveraging those economically, as well as for quality of life. And third, I would say that we need a more



PHOTO COURTESY OF BETH BRONSON

Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidate Beth Bronson poses for a portrait.

transparent and effective listening methodology for local government. We need to bring citizens in so that government isn't happening to them — it's happening with them.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**BB:** That's one of my primary issues coming into this campaign. I live near an economic development district, and their decision to build

warehouses rather than grocery stores is something that I wanted to bring to their attention. And in doing so, I got involved with the planning board and the Board of Adjustment. I was appointed by the commissioners to these advisory positions, and I have done my best to understand what that means as development pressures arrive in Orange County.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would your top priorities be for budget allocations?

**BB:** I think with budget allocation, it's going to be a really hard conversation. Going to be a lot of challenges coming up. I think as of right now, we are \$21 million short on our County budget because of these funding cuts. And what that translates to is we're gonna have to come up with really creative ways to meld programs together and allocate resources effectively, so that we are not just cutting programs, right?

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs changes,

and how can the board help address these inequities?

**BB:** I absolutely think that the evaluation process needs to be addressed. I think that there have been some systemic issues that have inherently put out people in historically Black neighborhoods, in lower-income areas, and I think that the property tax valuation is outpacing a lot of people's ability to stay in place. And we have to do everything we can to make sure that we're not displacing the people that have made the county what it is.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?

**BB:** I think that there have been some decisions about community development and housing developments in the rural areas. I think that could have been handled a little bit differently. I think there needs to be more of a conversation about what types of utilities need to be expanded, and where do we need to be expanding those two rather than, how much can we fit? How many bedrooms can we fit on a septic field? Right? That is absolutely a consideration, but I think that there are going to be ways that we can work around that. I think we're not addressing affordable housing, and we're not creating requirements for affordable housing within these development projects that are coming through. And that's something that I would like to address.

X: @dthcitystate

### Earl McKee

He would focus on completing the broadband program

By James O'Hara  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's James O'Hara spoke with Orange County Board of County Commissioners District 2 candidate Earl McKee about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Earl McKee:** I've served both as chair and vice chair of the board, been active in not only boards and commissions locally, but also regionally and sat on a couple of state boards. I have been very active in maintaining funding for schools, funding for emergency services and law enforcement operations, and insisting that wait times be reduced for all kinds of emergency and protection services. I was instrumental in the light rail defeat, even though we spent about \$160 million between Orange and Durham County that was a total waste.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County and your district specifically that you would address on the board?

**EM:** The thing that I really am going to focus on is completion of this broadband program. We still have approximately 1,000 properties in Orange County that were covered

by the contract that have not been completed. So, completion of that and then completion of other areas to fill out that every property in Orange County being passed is a priority for me. The continued funding and the continued improvement of the school systems for education will also be a priority as it has been. And the ever-increasing need for services, the ever-increasing costs brought on by inflation, brought on by federal cuts, brought on by state cuts.

**DTH:** As Orange County continues to expand its population, the County will have to evaluate growth and development. What is your vision for how Orange County can balance development with sustainability?

**EM:** I don't know that you're going to contain or control so much as try to direct the growth to areas that are sustainable for that growth and not impinging on environmental issues. The last two housing projects that came before the board, I voted against them, even though I know that we've got to accommodate housing for people moving in. I voted against them because the environmental impact, the traffic impact and the inability for the developers to explain to me my concerns.

**DTH:** Orange County will have to navigate its upcoming budget cycle while taking state and federal funding cuts into consideration. What would be your top priorities for budget allocations?

**EM:** I have already called for a 2 percent budget cut across all County departments and County capital

projects in the coming year. I do eliminate cuts for the schools because I think education is absolutely critical for the health and the benefit of our youth.

**DTH:** Residents have expressed concerns with inequity in Orange County's revaluation process. Do you think the process needs changed, and how can the board help address inequities?

**EM:** We need to look at our own processes to try to figure out why older properties on the same street, at a smaller square footage, were valued at a higher value than other homes that were newer and larger. And we did have repeated instances of that, and it wasn't always just a slight increased evaluation of the older home. It was a very large one, and unfortunately, it seemed to center on our low-wealth areas and our minority communities.

**DTH:** What decision from the Board of County Commissioners over the last year do you wish would have been handled differently, and how do you think it should have been addressed?

**EM:** The one over the last year involves broadband. We voted to amend the contract with T-Mobile, which bought out or merged with Lumos. We had no trouble with Lumos while they were holding the contract and while they were working with it. When T-Mobile and Lumos merged, got bought out, or whatever happened, there was a sudden and distinct shift in the apparent intent and the speed with which this fiber was



PHOTO COURTESY OF ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County Board of County Commissioners candidate Earl McKee poses for a portrait.

being placed, and we voted to amend the contract and pay more than the contract called for. I was opposed to that, even though that was the best decision. I would have preferred to went through a

costly lawsuit to try to enforce the contract, but looking back, I think that would not have been the best decision for that.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Schools Board of Education candidates talk funding cuts, declining enrollment

### Anne Purcell

She hopes to continue improving students' results and growth

By Sophie King  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Sophie King spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Anne Purcell about her experiences and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Anne Purcell:** Well, I am a lifetime resident of Orange County, of Hillsborough. Grew up here; my parents grew up here. Roots go way back into Orange County. I have 30 years of experience with Orange County Schools as a teaching assistant, as a teacher, as an assistant principal, as a director of student services and as a principal for 11 years.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County schools that you would address on the board?

**AP:** A primary focus is on academics and getting our students where they need to be for the grade level that they're in, and preparing our students when they graduate from high school. We want them to be prepared to do whatever they want to do when they come out of high school. We have a superintendent who bases things on data. She and

her team are a very data-driven team, and they look at the data, look at where the students are, look at what they need to be successful and work with teachers and Professional Learning Communities, PLCs, they are in the classrooms, helping teachers and planning what students need. And so I think we're on a wonderful trajectory right now of improvement in student learning.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**AP:** Our major concern is that we're not able to give teachers an increase in — we'd love to give them an increase in supplement, but we just simply don't have the money right now to do it. We are, as I said, we're focused on academics, and we are not going to take away from the children at all. We're using every penny that we have and making sure that we're using it very wisely.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**AP:** Parents want to see that we are getting results and that their children are getting results and growing as they are learning and growing in their learning. And I

think that parents are looking at that and saying, okay, they're doing some great things in Orange County, and I think we will get some of these children back. I hope that we do. But again, it goes back to, how are we getting the word out about the good things that we are doing in Orange County, and we've got to get that word out in any way that we can, and let people see the positive things that we're doing.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**AP:** We have an AI team already put together that is going to be looking into this and coming up with a policy for us to use. We first need to have training for our teachers and staff so that they fully understand the pluses and the minuses to AI. And our IT department has had training in AI, and they need to begin to train our teachers and do some professional development with them to make sure that they understand.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**AP:** If you look at our data from last year, you also should see that our minority students' growth and



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE PURCELL

Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Anne Purcell poses for a portrait.

proficiency was more than our white students' were last year, and that's the first time that's ever happened in Orange County schools. So we are definitely addressing that already and working with our minority

students to make sure that they're getting exactly what they need.

X: @dthcitystate

### Will Atherton

He would prioritize career and technical education, clubs

By Mihika Agrawal  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Mihika Agrawal spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Will Atherton about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Will Atherton:** I would like voters to know that for me, I'm about being in the schools, being present in our teacher activities and our student activities and ensuring I'm out in our community, so I'm hearing about concerns and issues that are important to all of our community. I've also been on the school board eight years, and since I've been on the school board, we have seen wonderful success and progress with our district.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County Schools that you would address on the board?

**WA:** So first and foremost, I strongly believe about our students having options. And what I mean by that is not all our students are going to go to college, nor do they need to. So I strongly believe in support of our career technical education, or CTE, which allows our students to get education and training, that they can go straight into work if they want to. They could go into college,



DTH FILE/MASON MILLER

Will Atherton takes notes during an Orange County Schools Board of Education meeting on Oct. 7, 2024.

they could go into a community college, start their own business. And I feel strongly that we need to have those options available for our students. I also believe in our students also working on clubs and extracurricular activities like band, art, those kind of things, because it's so important for kids to have things that they look forward to, and that they have a place of belonging in school, because we know that students aren't just going to school for reading and math.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired

expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**WA:** So my priorities will always be to have the extracurricular activities, our arts, our music, our drama, all of the activities that will keep our kids in school, and also making sure we have the materials, the funding to support our teachers. And that includes professional development, because our teachers do need that on-calling support. That includes, if they want to do boards, their board certifications, which allows them to get additional money from the state, also the recognition of that. And we know when teachers do have that

board certification, students, just by the science of it, are more successful in classrooms.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**WA:** First and foremost, we've got to show that Orange County is the best place for students to come to, and that's multiple things. Such as, one, our academics — making sure our students are successful. Two, we need to do more outreach to our community to tell them

about all of our programs. For example, all of our CTE options that we have for students.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**WA:** We created a task force that's made up of our media specialist, some of our teachers, and I got the honor of being part of that, as my background in technology. And so one of the important things to me of that is, one, first and foremost, is not ignoring that the AI exists and that it is here, and we need to make sure that we have a plan to address it. So, second is making sure that we have clear guidance and professional development for our teachers. This is for them to understand how AI is used, some of the ways that students can use them.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**WA:** Continue to look at new ways of doing things, because we know that we have different ways people learn, and we are seeing things like culturally relevant materials are helping reach students. I think it's important for us to continue down the path of ensuring that we're hearing from all of our students and working with all of our families.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Schools Board of Education candidates talk funding cuts, declining enrollment

### Sarah Smylie

Her top priority is addressing inequities among students

By Aruba Manzoor  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Aruba Manzoor spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Sarah Smylie about her experiences and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Sarah Smylie:** I am a current school board member, I have been on the board for eight years, and I have been a parent in the district for 11 years. And across that whole time, I have really been focused on helping Orange County Schools become a more excellent, equitable, inclusive school district. My focus always has been on making sure that every student gets what they need and that every teacher and staff member experiences a positive and collaborative workplace, and that every family is a real partner in their children's education.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County Schools that you would address on the board?

**SS:** My No. 1 priority is really making sure that every student gets what they need to thrive personally and excel academically. Orange County Schools works really well for many, many students and is a rapidly improving district in terms of our academics, but we know that

there are too many students who are not benefiting equally from that. So we know that there are disparities for students of color, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, multilingual learners. And so, addressing those disparities and really figuring out how schools can work for all kids is the number one priority right now.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**SS:** Moving forward, I just want to make sure that we're prioritizing spending money that directly impacts students and making sure that we're focused on the effectiveness of all the strategies we are using — really understanding the value and impact we're getting from any of our investments.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**SS:** I think we just need to be the best option. I think we need to create schools where all kids are really successful, they love coming to school, they feel like a part of the school community and families feel that way too. I think if we create great schools that will attract families. And the other amazing thing about that is that it also benefits the students who are already choosing Orange County



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH SMYLIE

Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Sarah Smylie poses for a portrait.

Schools. So that is my top priority, is really making the school experience a great one. And then secondly, because so many families make this decision when their kid is like 4 years old, I just think we need to be telling our story more effectively. Especially with young families, and be sharing that information with them sort of earlier in their process of considering school districts.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**SS:** I have a lot of concerns related to AI personally, but I also think that it exists, and our kids need to be able to navigate this world of work in the future effectively. And so, for me, that means putting a really big emphasis on critical thinking and strong judgment as we are equipping students to thrive in their future lives after high school.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can

the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**SS:** The thing I think makes the biggest impact in addressing this is a team of teachers and leaders in each school working together in a continuous improvement process. That's what we see makes the biggest impact on the achievement gap. Like nationally, when you look at the real models of places that have disrupted that, you have a team of teachers who have a clear vision that they're working towards together.

X: @dthcitystate

### Brian Edwards

He wants improved pay for teachers, stronger retention

By Elise Strickland  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Elise Strickland spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Brian Edwards about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Brian Edwards:** I want voters to know that I am a 2007 graduate of Orange High School. I've spent almost my entire adult life in public safety. So I have the lived experience with public safety and school safety because I was a senior at Orange High School in 2006 when a former student showed up with an arsenal attempting to commit a mass shooting.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County Schools that you would address on the board?

**BE:** One of the biggest issues impacting Orange County Schools right now is the budget, as with pretty much every school system in the state. When the state hasn't passed the budget that they were supposed to pass back in July, it puts us in a bind. And we can't really rely on the federal government right now, because they shut down at pretty much every opportunity. So



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN EDWARDS

Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Brian Edwards poses for a portrait.

we need to find a way to work with the resources that we have, find out what programs work, maybe scale

down the ones that don't, and find the resources, the money, to actually give teachers the stipends that they

deserve because they haven't had a raise in two years yet.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**BE:** So my priority is, as I've always said, I believe the biggest factor of student retention is teacher retention. So we need to make sure that our teachers feel respected and that they're paid properly, so that they don't have to leave for surrounding districts or private or charter schools.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**BE:** The one thing that we definitely need to do as a school board is to help get the word out about the CTE programs that Orange County Schools have. Because the amazing thing is, the people that take the, the students that take the, CTE programs, have about a 95 percent graduation rate. So we know that those programs — whether a student wants to go to college, community college or be an apprentice, get into the trades, we need to make sure that they know that Orange County Schools has the resources for them to do whatever they need to do.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**BE:** I believe that artificial intelligence is a tool, but we cannot use it as a teacher. Obviously, whatever your views are of it, it's here to stay. There's no doubt about that. So, I believe we can definitely use it to teach students. We can teach students how to actually use it, but we still need to focus on the original way of doing research with primary sources and secondary sources.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**BE:** Well, the district needs to actually start, and the district has been doing a good job of this lately, but the district needs to figure out why the gap actually exists, and help students with the different reasons why they're not achieving as well as white students — which can be anything from problems at home to food insecurity, and I believe the school system can play a big part in helping to solve that.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Schools Board of Education candidates talk funding cuts, declining enrollment

### Lori Russell

She will prioritize supporting and recruiting teachers

By Emily Spottswood  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Emily Spottswood spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Lori Russell about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Lori Russell:** I am, first of all, a parent of three. I've got three kids. Two are currently in Orange County Schools. One has already graduated. I am a lawyer. I have spent my career in ethics and policy and accountability. I have got deep roots in this area, but I've also spent a lot of time living in other places, including West Africa, the Peace Corps, volunteer in France for some time during my career. I care a lot about our schools, and I want to make sure that we're doing the very best we can for all of our students.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County Schools that you would address on the board?

**LR:** The most important thing, I think, is teacher recruitment and retention. So, on that, just as a note, I think that we have a lot of great teachers already in our school system, but we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to retain them. The competitive compensation, of course, is a primary way of



PHOTO COURTESY OF LORI RUSSELL

Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Lori Russell poses for a portrait.

doing that, but we know that we are facing constraints, so we need to certainly continue to advocate for competitive compensation wherever possible. But we also need to think about other things, like mentorship, manageable workloads, classroom resources and opportunities for development like professional growth.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**LR:** Teachers are one of the most important things that we can fund, meaning that they have the highest impact on our student experience when we have teachers who are able to really be there and support our students to the best of their ability. I want to continue supporting teachers in that way. I also want to look at how we can partner with community organizations to help meet kids where they are and really support them in a holistic way. I think that is something that we could prioritize from a budget standpoint, is those interactions with the community. And then finally, I think we just have to really look at new ways of innovating and

learning and education, including considering new technologies.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**LR:** OCS has a very strong school system, and we've got dedicated educators and a commitment to serving every child, and I think we need to do a better job showcasing that. Every parent does what they think is best for their child, and in order to make sure that they are getting good

information about the options that are available to them, we need to ensure that we are working with the community to tell them our story.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**LR:** We need to be really looking at the data and what research is telling us about the impact of AI and technology on our students, so that we are paying attention to how we can best continue to develop children who are able to think critically, process well and work with peers. So that doesn't mean that we ban all use of artificial intelligence. There are actually some really interesting uses for it in the school when it comes to things like differentiated learning.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**LR:** Equity means meeting students where they are, so that every kid gets what they need to be successful, and that, of course, means that we are looking at evidence-based approaches for helping to narrow those gaps, like early literacy, targeted academic interventions, making sure that we are paying attention to barriers related to language and disability.

X: @dthcitystate

She wants to create 'mini-academies' to expand education

By Shloka Sunil  
Staff Writer

*The Daily Tar Heel's Shloka Sunil spoke with Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Saru Salvi about her experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Saru Salvi:** Education in my family is extremely important since my great-grandmother was enslaved until about the age of 12, which meant she was not allowed to have an education. So through the generations, we've achieved higher and higher levels.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues impacting Orange County Schools that you would address on the board?

**SS:** I would like to see a much higher rate of proficiency as quickly as possible. And in order to achieve that, because we have no money, I would like to have the community understand that the school system is in a crisis, and everyone to step up and volunteer, either in the schools or in what I call "mini-academies." The mini-academies would be run like Saturday morning at community centers. We would take the schools to the student.

**DTH:** Amid federal and state funding cuts, Orange County Schools is contending with a limited budget that does not account for desired expansion funding. What are your priorities in allocating the district's budget to ensure the success of staff and students?

**SS:** In order to keep teachers, we want to be able to give them the salary that they're worth. But with the limited funds, that's very, very difficult. So we're going to have to be very creative in how we hold on to the staff, whether it be through recognition, letter writing campaigns, parents writing their teachers, telling them how much they appreciate what they're doing for their students. These little things can actually make a difference — make the teacher feel wanted and supported.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools has seen a steady decline in enrollment across the district since the 2018-19 school year. What steps will you take to counteract declining enrollment and motivate families to enroll their children in Orange County Schools?

**SS:** There's a worldwide decrease in birth rates, so that certainly is going to affect how many students are entering any school when they get to that age. The other situation, which I'm sure is that on everyone's mind, is the fact that we have charter schools and voucher programs that take money away from the public schools. I think to get that back, we have to bring the proficiency up in the classrooms so parents

feel comfortable sending their children to the public school. To do that, again, we have to work as a community since we don't have funds to hire additional teachers, reading coaches, math tutors.

**DTH:** Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used by students across the country to aid in and complete school assignments. What is your vision for regulating artificial intelligence use in Orange County Schools?

**SS:** We need to teach the students how to use it properly. I also believe that they should have handwritten exams, you know, the old blue book. So that you know that they're actually digesting what they're reading and being able to understand and think and compose an essay on what it was that they read and their opinion. And that will keep them from depending on artificial intelligence completely.

**DTH:** Orange County Schools saw significant growth in academic performance across the district last year, but an achievement gap between white students and students of color remains. How can the district work to narrow this gap and achieve equity among students?

**SS:** I am proposing that the community as a whole step up and volunteer in these mini-academies so that we can go to the community and help the children that really need help — the children whose parents, as much as they would like to, aren't able to help them. The only way we're



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARU SALVI

Orange County Schools Board of Education candidate Saru Salvi poses for a portrait.

going to decrease the demand on federal funds is to have these kids educated so that they can go out and get a decent job and have a career. And an education is the

only way to pull them and their family out of poverty.

X: @dthcitystate

## In a series of Q&A's with The Daily Tar Heel, Orange County Sheriff candidates talk cooperation with ICE, detention center conditions

### Charles Blackwood

He seeks to support officers' well-being and encourage retention

By Jake Williams  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Jake Williams spoke with Orange County Sheriff candidate Charles Blackwood about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**Charles Blackwood:** Having a sheriff in a county that's intimately familiar with the folks that live and travel through and work there, and has a full knowledge of the history of the county is vital. It's almost like running a company. Institutional knowledge is critical to the well organization and well working of that company, just like a sheriff who's been in a county for a while and maybe grew up in the community and understands what the residents of that community want to take care of them.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues you would address as sheriff?

**CB:** I have focused my platform on major priorities, and that is the health and wellness of my staff and the people we serve. The other priority is recruitment and retention of well-qualified individuals who want a career in law enforcement. I believe it's important to keep those employees that are devoted and they have proven themselves to



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLES BLACKWOOD

Orange County Sheriff candidate Charles Blackwood poses for a portrait.

want to work in the industry. The other priority is understanding that we live in a time when information changes rather quickly, and with that information change also, technology changes and becomes more available to make the job both more efficient and more effective.

**DTH:** The N.C. General Assembly has recently passed legislation that increases sheriffs' responsibilities to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. How will you comply with this legislation while also protecting immigrants in Orange County?

**CB:** Well, we follow the law with respect to the Senate, the House bills and the 318 that was addition

to House Bill 10. So when you talk about protecting the public, we've never changed our stance on that. And I want people to understand that this deal affects folks who are arrested, brought before a magistrate and deemed to meet the criteria for a detainer to be issued, to be served by Immigration Customs Enforcement. That doesn't mean that the person that's living on whatever street in Orange County, that goes to work every day, comes home every day, pays their taxes, does what they're supposed to, is in danger.

**DTH:** The Orange County Sheriff's Office fired detention officer Brian Edwards last fall after social media posts in which Edwards declared himself as antifa, an anti-fascist

movement. How will you balance employees' free speech rights with public trust in the department?

**CB:** There are boundaries that have to be recognized, and when the boundaries are danced upon or crossed, and it creates mistrust or even fearfulness, we've got to do something about that. And that was an unfortunate incident, and I hated it had to come about like it did, but the cue and cry from the public was so strong. I felt like it was important to let them know that we did take a stand.

**DTH:** The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services has previously cited the Orange County Detention Center for unsanitary conditions and violating supervision standards.

What steps will you take to ensure compliance with state standards for detention centers?

**CB:** When we're talking about a detention center, we want to make sure that everything is being done to keep it safe, to keep it healthy and to keep us in a good standing with our Department of Health and Human Services. And if we weren't doing that, they would shut that down, and they haven't done that. We're making corrective measures whenever they bring them to our attention, and that's just the way business is done.

**DTH:** Gov. Josh Stein recently signed an executive order encouraging the state to improve its responses to situations involving people with behavioral health disorders. How will you improve the Sheriff's Office's response to these situations during both calls and in the county's detention center?

**CB:** So I think that the way that we've responded to our behavioral health issues in Orange County have been exemplary. I have been working with the Governor's Crime Commission as its chair and with our governor to address mental health needs throughout our state and to make sure that the folks that we take care of in their everyday lives are receiving the care that they need, the people in our detention center are getting the care that they need and the people who wear the guns and badges are getting the help that they need. And I think we're doing a really good job in that area.

X: @dthcitystate

### David LaBarre

He hopes to improve department's response to crisis situations

By Ha Lien Gaskin  
Staff Writer

The Daily Tar Heel's Ha Lien Gaskin spoke with Orange County Sheriff candidate David LaBarre about his experience and aspirations for the role. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** What do you want voters to know about you?

**David LaBarre:** The first half of my career was heavy law enforcement, so, patrol, I worked investigations. I managed our intelligence unit. I was selected to be on the sheriff's anti-crime and narcotics unit, and then, following that, I was selected to be on the FBI Safe Streets Task Force. And then in the second half of my career, I transitioned into the current position that I'm in now, where I do budget development, capital improvement and write all the legislative documents to the [Durham County] Board of County Commissioners.

**DTH:** If elected, what are the primary issues you would address as sheriff?

**DL:** I think the first issue is to improve our response to our neighbors in crisis in the community. So I know that Chapel Hill has started a program called CARE, which is a kind of an evolution of their Crisis Response Unit, which includes basically unarmed mental health professionals responding to these crisis, and in some cases, they have a co-response so they would be

accompanied with law enforcement in the event that the calls got out of hand for the particular worker. I know that that has also now been adopted in Carrboro, and after talking with both police chiefs in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, it's working very well.

**DTH:** The N.C. General Assembly has recently passed legislation that increases sheriffs' responsibilities to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. How will you comply with this legislation while also protecting immigrants in Orange County?

**DL:** If elected, I have to enforce all the laws of North Carolina. The House Bill 318 has pushed sheriffs closer to cooperating with ICE in terms of honoring ICE detainees. They also have put in requirements where we have to notify ICE upon releasing folks from jail. But still, I think there's an opportunity and a responsibility to protect our immigrant population. So, in terms of what we've seen across the country, specifically in ICE, if any group of folks comes up in a nondescript vehicle, wearing plain clothes, wearing masks, not wearing any insignia, I think it's my job, my responsibility, my duty, to find out who they are and why they're here, because they're not identified.

**DTH:** The Orange County Sheriff's Office fired detention officer Brian Edwards last fall after social media posts in which Edwards declared himself as antifa, an anti-fascist movement. How will you balance employees' free speech rights with public trust in the department?



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID LABARRE

Orange County Sheriff candidate David LaBarre poses for a portrait.

**DL:** I definitely support free speech, but I think not all speech is free, and I would work with my legal team and compare that to what our civil liberties are. The comments that are made that have struck the duties of the office, whether that's a threat towards someone in the community, or a statement that causes fear that can be communicated as a threat — which is actually an offense, communicating threats — we would deal with that, and we would deal with that on a case-by-case basis.

**DTH:** The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services has previously cited the Orange County Detention Center for unsanitary conditions and violating supervision standards.

What steps will you take to ensure compliance with state standards for detention centers?

**DL:** I think I would start with immediately addressing what the state jail inspectors' findings are, and if needed, we would request for additional funding or resources to resolve that. As a sheriff, I will conduct a thorough review of all the historical inspections to identify if there's any trends, and those trends being, with maybe the personnel that's involved, and/or the infrastructure, and that's the failures thereof.

**DTH:** Gov. Josh Stein recently signed an executive order encouraging the

state to improve its responses to situations involving people with behavioral health disorders. How will you improve the Sheriff's Office's response to these situations during both calls and in the county's detention center?

**DL:** I think going back to what we talked about, the CARE program that is currently in place in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, expanding that countywide, so that improves our response to our neighbors in crises, and it also serves as a diversionary tool, as an alternative to policing to reduce harm, to extend care to those individuals.

X: @dthcitystate

CLIMATE CHANGE

## Judge dismisses Carrboro's lawsuit against Duke Energy

The Town's case was deemed better suited for legislative action

By Jake Williams  
Staff Writer

On Feb. 12, a judge dismissed the Town of Carrboro's climate lawsuit against Duke Energy, which alleged the company misled the public for decades about the dangers of fossil fuels and should be held liable for local climate-related damages.

In his dismissal, North Carolina Special Superior Court Judge Mark Davis ruled the case raises issues that courts are not equipped to decide and instead belong to lawmakers and regulators.

Carrboro filed the lawsuit in December 2024, alleging Duke Energy had known for decades about the climate risks of fossil fuels but misled the public through public relations campaigns and false promotion of nonrenewable energy sources as climate-friendly.

Duke Energy, based in Charlotte, provides electric utilities to more than 8 million customers across six states. It is the third-highest emitter of greenhouse gases in the United States,

according to a 2025 report by the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Political Economy Research Institute.

The Town argued those actions delayed the transition to renewable energy, worsening climate change and contributing to damage from heat, storms and flooding that cost them millions of dollars in repairs.

The lawsuit was historic, marking the first time anyone sued an electric utility for alleged deception related to the dangers of fossil fuels.

Duke Energy filed two separate motions to dismiss, arguing the Town lacked legal standing, that federal law preempted the claims

"While we're disappointed and disagree with the result, Carrboro is evaluating all of its options, including appeal, and that is all that I'm able to say at this time," Carrboro Mayor Barbara Foushee said.

Davis wrote that Carrboro's argument fails to recognize the complex nature of climate change, as it cannot be clearly attributed to a single entity.

Davis also wrote that issues concerning fossil fuel-related emissions are already assigned by law to the North Carolina Utilities Commission and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

In an email statement to The Daily Tar Heel, Duke Energy wrote, "We are pleased with the court's decision to dismiss the Carrboro climate change litigation. The ruling enables us to continue prioritizing safe, reliable service for our customers while working collaboratively with communities on long-term energy and environmental goals."

Donald Hornstein, a professor of law at UNC, said he understands the message Carrboro sent with this lawsuit, but thinks the case will be difficult to win based on its broad argument if it continues.



DTH DESIGN/CAMILA GARRIDO

"While we're disappointed and disagree with the result, Carrboro is evaluating all of its options..."

Barbara Foushee  
Carrboro mayor

and that climate policy questions fall outside the role of courts.

Davis rejected Duke Energy's claim that Carrboro had no legal standing, stating that municipalities in North Carolina possess the right to sue over harm to their property.

He ultimately dismissed the case on the grounds of the political question doctrine, a legal principle that stops courts from hearing cases that are better suited for resolution by the legislative or executive branches.

"[It] was sort of courageous to bring this case," Hornstein said. "I hope they don't pursue it any further. Yeah, I think they made their case. And unfortunately, Carrboro, like every other area here, is going to be affected by climate change in the months and years and decades ahead, and I would want as clean a slate as possible to bring claims in the context of specific injuries later."

The Town worked with NC WARN and the Center for Biological Diversity on the lawsuit, two environmental nonprofits that assisted with the litigation process and legal fees.

Jim Warren, executive director of NC WARN, said challenging major corporate polluters, such as Duke Energy, is crucial given the failure of the federal government's response to the climate crisis.

"Duke Energy Corporation wields far too much influence and control over the state government, the legislature, the governor's office, under both parties for many years, and the regulatory system, of course," Warren said. "And so those branches of government have failed North Carolina badly for many, many years."

X: @dthcitystate

ENVIRONMENT

## Local farmers prepare for crop impacts amid severe drought

Orange County has been under warning since early January

By Emily Spottswood  
Staff Writer

Orange County was placed under a severe drought warning in early January, which may soon impact local farmers once the winter season ends and the farming season begins.

Before the National Drought Mitigation Center placed the county under the severe drought warning, the area had been in a moderate drought since late November.

A severe drought classification was given due to Orange County currently being in the 10th percentile for the lowest precipitation, soil moisture and stream flows the county has received over the past 100 years.

In addition to Orange County, 31 other counties in North Carolina have also been placed under a severe drought classification.

Despite the severe drought classification, many local farmers are not worried yet.

Howard Allen, founder and owner of Faithfull Farms based in Chapel Hill, said while the drought is not currently affecting his production due to the winter season, he already has infrastructure set up from a previous drought that hit his farm.

Some farmers — like Jonathan Ray, who runs Cates Corner Farm, which is based in Hillsborough — have ponds and other water sources available with clay-based soil, which holds more water than sand soil that other farmers have.

Chloé Sherer, market manager for the Carrboro Farmers' Market, said farmer participation in the market has been steady, with the

only major impact being the recent winter weather.

"For a lot of farmers here, this is their only sales outlet," Sherer said. "So, even if they don't have as much as they usually do, for example, when there's a drought that affects their crop yields, they may not have as much. They usually still come because it's their only option to connect with consumers and sell their products even if the yields aren't as high."

While local farmers have not been affected by the drought, they all share the common worry of the drought persisting into the warmer weather, when more water would be needed as crop production expands.

Karen McAdams, who runs McAdams Farm based in Efland, said they are stockpiling mulch and trying to conserve water as much as they can before the warmer weather causes higher evaporation rates.

"If you're in the middle of a drought, the dead of winter is the best time to be in one," she said. "But we're really going into spring with a deficit, so we really need some rain to replenish everything."

Gregory Characklis, a professor in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health's Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, said it is too early to tell if this drought will have a significant effect in the summer, and that it will become clearer on April 1 with the beginning of the spring season.

Sherer said she was thankful that she had not heard about any negative impacts on the farmers due to the drought.

"The winter vegetables are pretty hearty," she said. "If they can grow in the winter, they can survive anything."

X: @dthcitystate

# Tar Heel Verses

Sponsored monthly by Bob Young '57 in honor of his wife, Pat, and the 1957 UNC National Championship basketball team.

## Obituary

Making an omelette is simple.  
You always start with the onions.

By Princess Adeyi

An omelette without onions is exceptionally bland. When you have to make an omelette you always start with the onions. When you make an omelette unless you want your omelette to taste bland, do it like this. When you make the omelette, do it like this. Grab a medium sized purple one and remove the outer shell. Do it like this, and remove the outer shell. Chop it into pieces with the knife in mama's kitchen drawer that you left last night after Kenny came home with the news with the knife in the junk drawer that night when Kenny came home, screaming the melanin off his face, "she's gone" he said. Then Kenny came home with the news last night, "mama's gone," he cried and your chest rose tall inside of you, yeast-like gas lined your lungs, mama's dead. And the yeast, like gas, is sitting behind your lungs, but the air is clumped hair in the kitchen drain, Kenny please help me. The yeast and the gas, and your lungs are sitting in the drain, God please help me. The knife you hold questions you, and you cut. Mama please help me. So you cut. Till the waters tarnish your skin, and your eyes refuse to blink. You cut purple until your eyes no longer blinks, uneven lines litter the plate, and sharp, sweet sulfur stings. When your eyes no longer blinks, and sweet sulfur sings, the words of mama will always ring, "an omelette without onions is not acceptable. You always start with the onions. An omelette without onions is not an omelette" and a life without mama is not a life. For the day you make an omelette, you will learn that life without mama is not life. You will have to learn to live in this world, alone, you, me, us

Bio

Princess Adeyi is an Interdisciplinary Studies major focusing on neuroscience, linguistics and global studies. Her hometown is Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia.



# University

## The Daily Tar Heel

### MILITARY FAMILIES

# Funding for veterans' children scholarship still uncertain

## North Carolina budget stalemate stalls progress

By **Tulsi Asokan**  
Staff Writer

Ahead of the anticipated April budget session, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs secretary Jocelyn Mitnaul Mallette sent a letter to the N.C. General Assembly urging lawmakers to address funding for the North Carolina Scholarship for Children of Wartime Veterans.

The Jan. 28 letter follows the prorating of spring 2026 awards by 25 percent after the scholarship did not receive anticipated funding due to the ongoing budget stalemate. North Carolina remains the only U.S. state without an enacted budget for the 2025-27 biennial.

The scholarship originally covered full tuition, room and board at North Carolina's public institutions for the children of deceased or disabled wartime veterans. This cut affected about 100 student scholarship recipients at UNC.

Mallette's letter specifies that between \$1,617,169 and \$2,420,359 is needed to fully refund students for spring semester scholarship funding.

"We did receive positive responses to the letter, including responses that insinuate that the General Assembly, from leadership, is planning to fully fund the scholarship when they come back for the short session," Corey Slife, NCDMVA legislative director, said.

Slife said lawmakers could address the funding either by passing a comprehensive state budget or, if broader negotiations remain stalled, through a stand-alone appropriations bill.

While stand-alone measures are less common, there is precedent for the legislature using this approach to fund the CWV scholarship. In 2019, when the program faced a funding shortfall, lawmakers passed Senate Bill 560, appropriating an additional \$2.4 million in recurring funds to the scholarship.

In statement to The Daily Tar Heel, N.C. Rep. Allen Buansi (D-Orange) did not indicate whether lawmakers were considering a stand-

alone appropriations bill. However, he wrote that both the N.C. House and Senate proposed budgets would relocate \$2.1 million in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-26 fiscal year to offset scholarship prorations.

"We need to do right by [veterans' children] by passing a responsive state budget that keeps their scholarships in place so they can commit fully to their studies and pursue their dreams after graduation," Buansi wrote.

Although there is no immediate funding solution as the NCDMVA awaits the General Assembly's budget reconsideration in April, Mallette said she has been collaborating with leaders across the state's public higher education systems to support students during this period of uncertainty.

In her letter to the General Assembly, Mallette wrote that she has worked with the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority to request that educational institutions allow students to enroll in classes and remain at their universities despite balances owed due to the prorating of CWV awards.

Associate Provost and Director Jackie Copeland of the UNC Office



DTH DESIGN/GRACE DAVIDSON

of Scholarships and Student Aid wrote in a previous statement to The DTH that the University will defer bills for affected students until Mar. 31, with plans to reevaluate once the short session convenes.

In a statement to The Daily Tar Heel, UNC Chancellor Lee Roberts wrote that the University is aware of the proportion of the CWV scholarship.

"Our Office of Scholarships and Student Aid and the Military and

Veteran Student Success Center are providing individualized support to students navigating this uncertainty, including access to emergency funding and other resources," Roberts wrote. "We care deeply about these students and their families and will continue to advocate for a resolution."

X: @dailytarheel

### STUDENT GOVERNMENT

# Adolfo Alvarez reflects on his administration's progress

## Some campaign promises were kept, others incomplete

By **AnnaJames Lynch**  
Staff Writer

Throughout his term as 2025-26 student body president, Adolfo Alvarez has implemented or is in the process of implementing multiple of the initiatives that he promised to advocate for during his campaign. But, some of these remain incomplete or entirely untapped.

Here is the Alvarez administration's progress so far:

### The Carolina Closet: Almost complete

Alvarez established the Carolina Closet, a free resource for students seeking professional attire, which was part of his platform to push for financial accessibility.

"I think that in such a short term, you have to focus a specific project that you're able to accomplish and deliver towards the end of the term," he said.

Initially, the plan was for students to "borrow" from the closet, but because of the donations that have been received, it's expected that students will be able to own an outfit of their own.

Alvarez said one of his main concerns is the long-term viability of the project, making sure that it outlasts his administration. Now, through its permanent establishment in the Undergraduate Senate, the Carolina Closet can continue without relying solely on future student body presidents, he said.

The project has raised approximately \$30,000 so far, according to Carolina Closet interim director Veronica Quiett.

### A 24-hour library: Incomplete

Alvarez's platform also included promises of a 24-hour library.



DTH FILE/ABBEY MCKEE

Student Body President Adolfo Alvarez poses for a portrait at the Bell Tower on April 3, 2025.

### Menstrual product access: Complete

Undergraduate senator Liam Kiley also credited Alvarez with supporting the institutionalization of FlowForward in the student government as part of his Reproductive Health Task Force. The student organization stocks free pads and tampons in multiple bathrooms across campus. This institutionalization created the Menstrual Health Access Commission, which has now secured more than \$20,000 a year in funding due to a recently passed referendum.

### Housing application equity: Incomplete

Alvarez also promised to work on making UNC's on-campus housing application more holistic — taking into account financial, medical, transportation and other challenges. This past June, Alvarez told The Daily Tar Heel he was working on redesigning the application, including advising Carolina Housing on how to have a more structured process that took hardship situations into account.

Carolina Housing made some changes to the process for the 2026-27 school year, including moving the Returner Housing Application and Housing Selection Process to the spring semester, in order to give "students and their families more time to research and plan their living arrangements for the upcoming academic year," according to their website.

It is unclear how much formal involvement the Alvarez administration had in these changes, but greater hardship considerations were not integrated into the application as promised.

Alvarez launched a petition to create a 24-hour study space on the first floor of Davis Library last fall, but Alvarez said it has not reached the minimum amount of signatures — 5 percent of the student body.

"We want to turn that in by the end of the academic year, a petition that has 5 percent of the student body advocating for a 24-hour library," Alvarez said. "Because there is an existing project proposal from the University libraries that would create this 24-hour lounge in Davis Library — they just need help from us."

### Graduate student stipends, excused absences for sickness: No progress

Alvarez also campaigned on increasing graduate student stipends and expanding University-excused absences to include when students are sick with the flu and COVID-19. Progress was hindered in these two areas because of a lack of administrative support, Alvarez said.

"When I did mention it to University leadership, it never really led to anything, or any valuable follow-up conversations," Alvarez said concerning stipends.

X: @dailytarheel

### FEATURE

# Meet Jackson Best: UNC's satirical SBP candidate

## Or, meet John Tarheel: the host of 'Hill After Hours'

By **Ella Martino**  
Staff Writer

Most students have heard of UNC junior Jackson Best. Some might know him as John Tarheel, the host of the late-night comedy show, "Hill After Hours." Others might recognize his bylines from UNC's satirical publication, The Oh Well.

But recently, Best has been gaining traction for running, again, as a write-in candidate for student body president. On his campaign Instagram account, he claimed to have invented the iPod, walked on the moon and built Davis Library.

"I'll be the idiot so you don't have to be," Best said.

His campaign, although inherently satire, had hidden depths, Isabel Levine, a UNC sophomore and friend of Best's, said.

"He did it as a joke, yes, but he really does care about UNC," she said.

Best has conquered many comedic realms in his time at UNC. Not only in his student body president campaigns, but also in his role as assistant editor of The Oh Well and his associate producer and hosting roles at "Hill After Hours."

But his pursuits didn't begin — and certainly don't end — there. Best has been a student of comedy for most of his life.

"I just always wanted to tell stories, make people laugh. Whether it was through books or writing or movies or whatever, it's just something I enjoy doing," Best said.

His childhood friend, UNC junior Joe Kledis, has watched Best's journey progress since the first grade.

"Me and him would make our own comics in the back of class when we probably should be focusing more on the lectures," Kledis said. "That was the start of a much bigger habit."

Best said his younger brother Wilder has had a major impact on his comedy.

That fact might not be a surprise to followers of Best's campaign. When he declared his write-in candidacy for the student body president election, Best cited getting his younger brother off the UNC waitlist as one reason for the campaign.

"I want to ensure that he can have the same Tar Heel experience that I had," Best wrote in his letter. "And as of right now, I don't think that would be possible."

That announcement was the second time Best ran as a write-in candidate in the student body president race. Best's two years of vying for the position began with campaign mastermind Julian Taylor.

Taylor, a UNC graduate and former writer for The Oh Well, said Best was the perfect fit because he is "open to expressing himself very publicly" in a way that others may struggle with.

What began as a joke resulted in Best's most impactful moment at UNC: editing his student body president campaign video last year and seeing it all come to life.

"I had never been a part of anything this big," Best said.

Another milestone coming up for Best is "Hill After Hours" going live for the first time on Feb. 26 at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center.

But even in this new medium of comedy, Best is confident in his abilities to entertain.

"I might not be the tallest, I know I might not be the most athletic and most good looking or whatever," Best said. "But I'm going to make this motherfucker laugh."

But with Best graduating next year, this begs the question: what's next? For Best, it doesn't end at UNC.

"At the end of the day, I have no damn clue what I'm gonna be doing after I graduate, but the one thing that I do hope is that I continue to make people laugh," Best said.

X: @dailytarheel

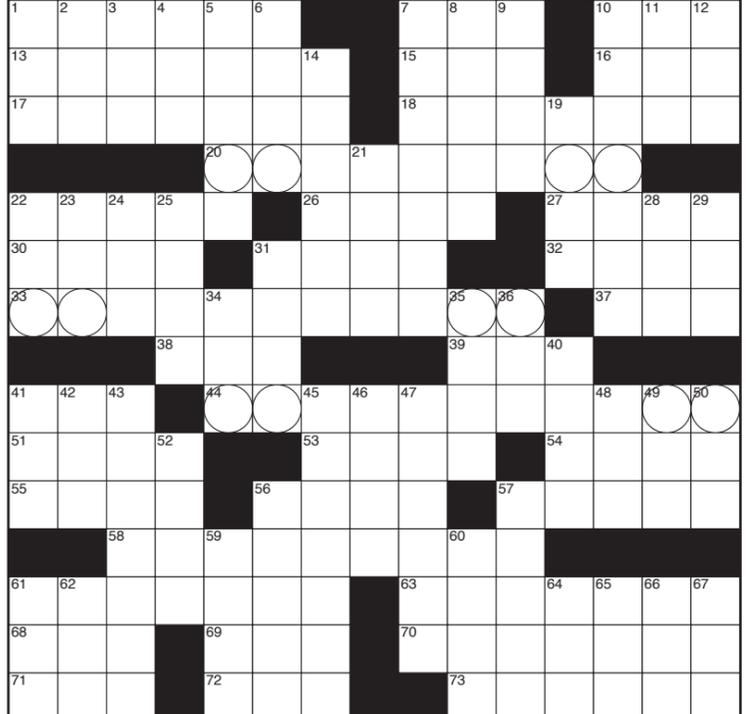


# FUN 'N' GAMES



**WE HAVE THE ANSWER.**  
Solve your job search with new business skills.

Kenan-Flagler Business School  
Master of Accounting | Master of Science in Management



**ACROSS**

- 1) Origami ridge
- 7) Sudden death periods, abbr.
- 10) "Duck Hunt" console, familiarly
- 13) Java's neighbor known for tigers
- 15) Contract ender?
- 16) Poetic preposition
- 17) Left port
- 18) Killer wave
- 20) Admissions officer
- 22) 404, to a web user
- 26) Tony's counterpart
- 27) Prefix for space
- 30) Yesterday, in Mexico
- 31) Ticked off
- 32) "Careful with this link" letters
- 33) Stick shift selection
- 37) Mayweather win (abbr.)
- 38) NBA's Magic
- 39) Oft contracted word
- 41) Brand of camera or lip balm
- 44) Like clothes off the rack
- 51) Towel end?
- 53) "\_\_\_ mio!" (Spanish cry)
- 54) "The pressure \_\_\_"
- 55) Fortified tower
- 56) "... unto us \_\_\_ is given"
- 57) CFOs, for instance
- 58) Hit from behind, or what happened to this puzzle's theme answers, in a way?
- 61) Add some honey to
- 63) Winning candidate
- 68) Feline in the sky
- 69) Live \_\_\_: Taco Bell slogan
- 70) Ones that let
- 71) "Affirmative"
- 72) Point opposite NNW
- 73) Place a value on

**DOWN**

- 3) CPR giver
- 4) Batteries in TV remotes
- 5) Fab Four drummer Ringo
- 6) Great Lake with the shortest name
- 7) Like al fresco dining
- 8) Take a sample bite
- 9) Talk trashed?
- 10) Dearest partner?
- 11) Interrupter's sound
- 12) Due x tre
- 14) He was hung up on chads, once
- 19) Palindromic food
- 21) "\_\_\_ your pardon?"
- 22) Organ for listening
- 23) Grain in whiskey or a Salinger title
- 24) MLK's title
- 25) Vegan cookie
- 28) Bobby's monogram, in '60s politics
- 29) Cutesy letters resembling an anime face
- 31) Speck of land in an ocean
- 34) Growling sound
- 35) Raisins on a celery "log"
- 36) Joey of children's fiction
- 40) "Try both and pick a side"

- candy
- 41) "\_\_\_! A mouse!"
- 42) Coy suffix?
- 43) Sound investments?
- 45) Google program for targeted marketing
- 46) "Fly" singer Celine
- 47) "... into the wild blue \_\_\_"
- 48) End for Japan or Taiwan
- 49) Dem rep. sworn into Congress at age 29
- 50) Co-workers of MDs
- 52) Parried blade
- 56) Gray ones are hard to resolve
- 57) Heavens on earth
- 59) Spots for checks and balances?
- 60) Zeno of \_\_\_
- 61) \_\_\_ as a fox
- 62) Lil'
- 64) Dollar divs.
- 65) Driver's aid
- 66) Critical-care ctrs.
- 67) Slalom shape

Got questions about the crossword?  
Send us an email at [crossword@dailytarheel.com](mailto:crossword@dailytarheel.com)

## SUDOKU

THE SAMURAI OF PUZZLES By The Mepham Group

6	9							
	8	5		6	3			
	2	3	4	8	1			
	7					1		
9								6
	5						9	
		1	4	9	8	3		
	4	7		3	6			
					7		2	

**"File, Shift, and Shop"**  
This week's puzzle was created by Foster Childress, a senior at UNC. Foster is a math major with an economics minor.

## Horoscopes

Today's Birthday: February 25, 2026

Yeah, this is a big year — especially for your career. You will receive multiple jobs offers, but you'll need to exercise patience to find the right one. That patience will take you far this year. The lows may be quite low, but the highs will make it all worth it. Hold fast, and persevere.

**ARIES**, today is a 3 — Dream on, little one. Your fantasies will soon take shape. Not today, but soon.

**TAURUS**, today is a 1 — Touching grass is good for the soul. But today, stick to the brick sidewalks to avoid certain death.

**GEMINI**, today is a 3 — You were out of line, and you know it. Go apologize.

**CANCER**, today is a 5 — "Bridgerton" Season 4 is out, and it's your sign to have a Regency era England-themed party.

**LEO**, today is an 8 — It's almost Women's History Month. You will get that job offer you've been waiting for, because your future employer loves women.

**VIRGO**, today is a 9 — Watch your mouth! Your biggest opp is looking for a way to get you canceled.

**LIBRA**, today is a 5 — Spicy foods will not sit well with you today.

**SCORPIO**, today is a 9 — Flowers are starting to bloom on campus. It's almost spring; things are looking up for you!

**SAGITTARIUS**, today is a 0 — You HAVE to drink more water. It will solve 95 percent of your physical ailments.

**CAPRICORN**, today is a 2 — Don't forget to vote in the upcoming elections. Doing your civic duty will make you feel better.

**AQUARIUS**, today is a 5 — Love is in the air, but only until Saturday. Act fast, or you could miss your chance.

**PISCES**, today is a 9 — The groove is in the heart. Have a dance party with yourself, and let the music transport you. You need a break.

Answers to last week's sudoku:

4	9	7	2	6	3	8	5	1
1	8	5	4	7	9	3	2	6
2	6	3	5	8	1	4	7	9
7	1	4	3	2	8	9	6	5
3	2	6	9	5	4	1	8	7
8	5	9	6	1	7	2	3	4
5	4	2	1	3	6	7	9	8
9	3	8	7	4	5	6	1	2
6	7	1	8	9	2	5	4	3

Answers to "Xs and Os"

ARTS	RIPEN	CATS
MARE	ETHNO	AREA
EVIE	VSIGN	GELS
XIMME	EFL	THESES
	ECRU	LOO
PBS	HENRY	XINGER
RETRO	ONI	WACO
ONEA	FRANC	STOP
STIM	IOS	ILENE
TOG	INGIT	OUTNOD
	NHL	SNOB
BASSET	HIP	OGERS
LUCK	FARRO	AVOW
TROY	OPTIC	MAMA
SATE	RUSSO	ELON

**The Daily Tar Heel is now accepting community crossword submissions!**

We want all cruciverbalists to submit, regardless of experience level. Scan the QR code for submission guidelines.

**YOPO**

**FREE YOGURT UPGRADE**

Buy a small cup & upgrade to a medium for free! Buy a medium cup & upgrade to a large for free! Toppings extra, offers cannot be combined.

EXPIRES 03/01/2026

**YOPO**

**3 FREE TOPPINGS!**

Buy any medium or large cup and get 3 free toppings! Must present coupon in store. May not be combined with other offers.

EXPIRES 03/01/2026

Downtown Chapel Hill  
106 W. Franklin St | 919.942.7867  
[www.yogurtpump.com](http://www.yogurtpump.com)

# Lifestyle

## The Daily Tar Heel

### MUSIC

## Local acts play in Interfraternity Council's Battle of the Bands

The event amassed a much larger turnout than expected

By Margaret Lyon  
Staff Writer

The Cat's Cradle main room buzzed with spirit and rivalry last Thursday night as students competed for first place at UNC Interfraternity Council's Battle of the Bands.

At the event, six bands competed for a cash prize and the opportunity to play at an upcoming IFC-sponsored music festival in April. Competitors included local groups TBD, For The Record, Rubber Band, Out of Gas, Lily Room and Squares.

The event ended up being so successful that IFC — which was not trying to profit off the event — ended up writing a \$1,000 check to Stomp out Hunger at NC, a student-run nonprofit that provides meals and aid to the Chapel Hill community.

"I was expecting like [200]-300 people," IFC's Vice President of Events and UNC sophomore Walker Wilson said. "I mean, I think in the end we sold like 800 tickets."

The idea for this event was not new for the council, but upon becoming a member last fall, Wilson made it his mission to increase the scale and success of it. To start, Wilson reached out to Cat's Cradle in December, knowing its reputation as an iconic local venue. Once the event was official, advertising began.

Aidan Tobin, a UNC sophomore and IFC's vice president of public relations, managed the marketing side of the event. He distributed posters around campus and created graphics for social media to get it on students' radars.

Tobin said he enjoyed seeing the Thursday night turnout and watching people supporting their friends and school through the competition.



DTH/JOEY FORGIONE

Cooper Delo plays guitar for Rubber Band during the Battle of the Bands at the Cat's Cradle main room in Carrboro on Thursday.

"We have a bunch of talented people who really want to play some music and sing and jam together and just have a good time," Tobin said.

Sign-ups to participate were first come, first served, and all participating bands were required to have at least one member in a fraternity governed by the IFC.

Wilson purposefully did not release the order the bands would play in until the night of the event so concertgoers would stay for the whole show, instead of just for the bands they came to support.

"I know the other bands appreciated that too," Wilson said. "Because all the bands had a pretty good following, but it helped to have a big crowd for everyone."

UNC sophomore Cooper Delo, the bassist for Rubber Band, said the event was very memorable.

Delo said it was a new experience to be playing on a big stage like the one at Cat's Cradle, and while it was intimidating at first, his nerves went away when his band started playing.

"When all your friends are here supporting you, and we just have the best sound engineers here, we're not gonna sound better than we are here," Delo said.

Wilson said he wanted to make the voting audience-driven, giving the crowd the ability to vote for their favorite band via a Google Form. At the end of the event, so many people responded to the form at once that it crashed.

The competition ultimately resulted in a three-way tie, with winners being Out of Gas, TBD and Lily Room. The three winners will have the opportunity to play at a music festival at the Forest Theatre this spring, alongside South Carolina band Stop Light Observations.

Wilson said he was excited to see what his two-month labor of love and planning resulted in and wants to do it again. In the future, he said he hopes to plan a similar event open to all campus bands — not just those affiliated with fraternities — for a schoolwide Battle of the Bands.

X: @dthlifestyle

### MEDIA

## The Carrborean aims to make local news more accessible

Publication prioritizes connection through print availability

By Harper Senff  
Staff Writer

In a town known for its vibrant arts scene, diverse community and sustainable, independent spirit, residents of Carrboro once had to scour dozens of websites to figure out what was happening in their own backyard. When Jennifer Yourkavitch grew tired of piecing together local updates from scattered social media posts, newsletters and event pages, she decided to create one place where the community could see itself clearly.

In June 2025, Yourkavitch launched The Carrborean, an independent, free print publication built on a simple premise: everyone's voice matters, and everyone deserves to be on the same page.

The paper covers local stories, events and art for people living in Carrboro, with a strong emphasis on shared access to information and inclusivity. Rather than relying on digital algorithms or fragmented platforms, The Carrborean aims to serve as a unified, community-driven information hub.

"I never knew what was going on in town all this time I lived here," Yourkavitch said. "You have to go to so many websites to find out, 'OK, what's at this place? What's in this place?' I thought, well, I could provide a service. I could go to all those websites and put it in one calendar so people have one place to look to find out what's going on."

What started as frustration with scattered information quickly became motivation to create authentic connection. Yourkavitch said the choice to prioritize printed copies of the monthly paper was intentional.

Printed copies of The Carrborean are available in various locations in and outside of Carrboro, and PDF versions of print editions are accessible through a monthly subscription to the website.

Featured articles and the monthly events calendar are also online for free.

"When we look at that paper, we're all seeing the same thing," Yourkavitch said. "It's not a special algorithm for you and a different algorithm for me. It's the same thing, and it's something that is a bit nostalgic, but people, I think, are missing authentic connection — a way to connect with people. And I thought the newspaper could provide that."

For graphic designer Denise Todloski, that sense of connection is reinforced through visual media. As she assembles each issue, Todloski said she has developed a deeper appreciation for the vast busyness of the town.

"The event calendar is the most comprehensive thing ever," Todloski said. "I've lived here forever, and I have to say, until I started laying out that thing and looking at all the things going on, I was like, 'In one month, all that happens in Carrboro? Holy cow.'"

The publication also welcomes submissions from all who seek to contribute to the paper. Todloski said opening a platform where anyone can write whatever they want is huge.

That same commitment to ensuring all voices are heard extends beyond business owners and longtime residents. Samantha Shaw, a journalism teacher at Carrboro High School, said it is uniquely rare to find a community paper willing to publish students' work.

"I think it is the most meaningful [thing]," Shaw said. "To have a paper that wants to share student voices is not very common."

For student Alys Traylor, that opportunity carries weight. They said that, though the youth have historically been told they have a voice, it is not as easy to speak out anymore.

In a day and age where the media landscape is often shaped by digital noise and personalized algorithms, The Carrborean offers something purposefully collective.

X: @dthlifestyle

### CREATIVE WRITING

## UNC senior releases her first book, 'Ever-Present'

The work is a collection of faith-based personal essays

By Emma Arthur  
Senior Writer

In January 2026, UNC student Amelia Fisher released her first book, "Ever-Present," a compilation of 26 nonlinear creative essays.

Fisher is a senior double majoring in media and journalism and psychology. Each essay of "Ever-Present" encompasses a lesson from Fisher's life, dating back to her experiences in high school.

The book first took form in voice memos that Fisher would record after a spontaneous wave of creativity. She began documenting the recordings in 2019, with the most recent ones recorded last summer.

In the middle of her junior year at UNC, Fisher began prioritizing turning these ideas into writing to fulfill a lifelong dream of hers.

"A lot of it would look like really late nights or really early mornings, when I was trying to get these thoughts out that were still fresh in my mind," Fisher said.

A large component of the book derives from Fisher's Christian faith. She said she didn't want it to read like a formal devotional, but instead hoped to share personal stories that would feel relatable to a wide range of readers.

Fisher said she wrote "Ever-Present" because she couldn't find a faith-based book that asked questions in a way that felt honest. She set out to write something rooted in personal stories that acknowledged the challenges of faith and uncertainty. Her work is for students in seasons of transition, for overthinkers and for anyone searching for reassurance — including herself.

Fisher's editor, Katherine Snow Smith, a former media and journalism professor at UNC who has published her own essay collections, connected with Fisher through a mutual contact, and their writer-editor relationship developed from there.

Smith describes Fisher's writing as confident, relatable and easy to connect with. She said readers finish the book feeling like they've gained and learned something from her stories.

"She takes little moments in her life that are good and bad, and memories we've all had in college



DTH/CAL STROKE

UNC senior Amelia Fisher sits on the steps of the Hill Hall rotunda on Friday with her new book, "Ever-Present."

with our parents or our siblings, and she turns them into experiences that taught her something, and therefore teaches you something," Smith said.

Fisher's lifelong friend, Molly Rudisill, designed her website and has a chapter in the book devoted to her. Rudisill is a senior at UNC majoring in information science and data science and has been close

friends with Fisher since they were sophomores in high school.

The chapter about Rudisill is called, "Friendship Bracelets With Jesus." Rudisill created "U R Loved" bracelets during her senior year of high school after several student deaths by suicide. The bracelets were made to raise awareness and funds for the American Foundation

for Suicide Prevention and the Child Mind Institute.

Fisher describes Rudisill in the chapter as "vivacious, spunky, life-giving, wildly entertaining and fiercely loyal." Rudisill said she had no idea that Fisher was including her in the book until she read the manuscript.

"It was just so sweet, and it showed Amelia's heart towards me and towards her other friends," she said.

Rudisill said she has seen Fisher grow more confident throughout the publishing process, especially as she's realized how meaningful the book is to readers and how clearly her love for others has shown through in the essays.

Fisher said she hopes that her book offers readers hope, comfort and encouragement.

"I hope that people walk away from it feeling touched and feeling inspired to look for, whether it be looking for God more so in every day, or looking to slow down, to be present or to practice gratitude," Fisher said. "I think that my hope is, whether it's every chapter or just one, that something would resonate."

X: @dthlifestyle

# Opinion

## The Daily Tar Heel

COLUMN

### Dear Democrats, please treat Gen Z like adults

By Drew Sherrod  
Columnist

On February 4, Kamala Harris's KamalaHQ X account posted a video teasing a new project. Seeing this, I found myself wondering what it could possibly be. Is it announcing a run for California governor? Is it a new manifesto of progressive policies? Will she come out with a line of "Hot Girls for Harris" baby-tees?

But I knew not to keep my hopes high. The next day, Harris herself announced that her campaign account would be revamped into a "Gen-Z led progressive content hub," named @headquarters\_67 — as a reference to the already dead "6-7" meme.

The announcement was immediately met with scrutiny by those on the left, with users calling out Harris's futile attempt to appeal to Gen Z. My peers' complaints led to a single point: it's time for the Democratic National Committee to talk to us like adults.

It only took Harris' team one day of backlash to change their username, trading "67" for a more neutral "68" before subsequently naming the account @HQNewsNow.

Currently, people's faith in the Democratic Party is low, despite recent victories in state and local elections. Democrats are scrambling to find messaging that will reach younger voters as the party loses its grip on Gen Z. Just as the KamalaHQ could not decide on an X username, the Democratic Party itself is facing an identity crisis in the wake of Trump 2.0.

In a recent essay in *The New Yorker*, Charles DuHigg writes of the differences between mobilizing and organizing.



Then-Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to the crowd during a campaign event in Raleigh on Aug. 16, 2024.

DTH FILE/ANNA CONNORS

Democrats are talented at mobilizing, or getting people to do a certain thing, whether that be encouraging turnout at rallies or receiving millions in donations. But when it comes to organizing — building an infrastructure of leaders to catalyze grassroots change — Democrats are falling flat.

Democrats' response to Trump's tyranny is all spectacle. Initiatives make noise, but their hours in the news cycle are numbered. Acts

like Cory Booker's marathon speech against Trump are symbolic rather than effective. No Kings Day protests boast millions of participants, but these rallies seem more like opportunities to make witty signs rather than enact true resistance.

Republicans, however, are not facing a crisis in organizing, especially when it comes to youth outreach. Turning Point USA, a conservative advocacy group,

enjoys a presence on high school and college campuses across the country. The organization has galvanized youths through its initiatives of educating and training students in conservative politics on a smaller scale. They've built a community of young conservatives with no barriers to entry. But where is this kind of organization on the left?

Enter Zohran Mamdani. The New York City mayor's victory can be owed to his grassroots campaign. Unlike Harris, he won over Gen Z, earning 78 percent of its vote.

Mamdani's campaign did rely on a prominent social media presence, but he traded meme-speak for community-oriented messages addressing real issues. He incorporated multiple languages in his campaign, was frequently spotted on the subway and even led a scavenger hunt across New York City — all while encouraging thousands of volunteers to canvass for him, knocking on 3 million doors.

Regardless of what moderate Democrats think about his policies, the sentiment is clear: organizing is a winning strategy.

When Harris made her @headquarters\_67 announcement, the collective groan from the left should not have been shocking. For Democrats, the key to youth voters was never getting swept up in cultural currents like "6-7" or Charli XCX's "Brat." It lies in inspiring us to organize within our communities — treating us like adults, not brain rot kids with votes and dollars to be won.

X: @drew\_sherrod

#### VERSUS COLUMNS | TRANSFER CREDIT

### AGAINST: External courses devalue a Carolina education

By Manuela Williams  
Columnist

In 2020, scrolling my For You Page meant endless Renegade dance videos from members of the Hype House. In 2026, scrolling means enlightenment every 60 seconds: a physics major explaining how quantum mechanics proves that manifestation actually works or a psychology major explaining how trauma can be released in child's pose. Before coming to college, I would have considered anyone with a bachelor's degree in the field they were discussing to be credible. Nearly two years into my degree at UNC, I've realized how credentials treated as proof of expertise offer little evidence of real understanding.

When we turn to experts to explain areas we aren't knowledgeable in, we rely on accolades like degrees to signal reliability. But on anonymous online platforms, anyone can claim expert status. And honestly, who is interrupting their scrolling flow to vet the person they're getting information from, check if their sources are peer reviewed or question whether the statistics they dropped came from a sample size of eight people?

Beyond these self-made "experts," this credibility crisis extends to people who have received a formal higher education, but through programs with substandard academic rigor. Colleges like UNC, with an extensive transfer credit system, are contributing to the hollowing of the degrees they award. By prioritizing swift accumulation of credits over degree quality, universities are weakening the very credentials we depend on to distinguish genuine expertise from false performance.

This fall, 42 percent of UNC's first-year class received dual enrollment credit for at least five courses, meaning that nearly half the class can graduate at least an entire semester early. A smaller, but not insignificant, portion of these students step foot on campus with entire associate's degrees completed. Young first-years, considered juniors by credits, can plan to walk across the stage at commencement after spending just two years at UNC. This

accelerated undergraduate path is increasing in popularity — as students seek to reduce college debt and earn wages sooner. But completing a degree in "efficient mode" risks sidelining the learning part altogether.

Writing to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a university professor described a student failing his calculus class for the second time. The student earned two years' worth of credits through dual enrollment classes — ones that tested knowledge exclusively using multiple choice exams.

From a student's perspective, the James G. Martin Center published an account from a North Carolina public school student, detailing how dual enrollment in her county takes the form of online, asynchronous classes; cheating is common, and meaningful engagement with the material is rare.

If classes claiming to be college-level aren't going to require sufficient mastery of content, they shouldn't be used to bypass years of higher education.

As grade inflation and the abuse of AI tools plague all levels of education, it has become easier than ever to earn a passing grade. But what happens when C's scraped together in high school translate to credit on college transcripts, placing students into upper level courses they were never prepared for? And because "C's get degrees," these graduates become eligible for high-paying, skilled jobs, including in fields like medicine, where inadequate knowledge can have tangible consequences.

While increasing the number of college graduates benefits both individuals and society, the priority should be strengthening the quality of education, rather than simply maximizing the UNC System's degree output. A system that allows courses lacking rigor to be granted full college credit must be evaluated. Otherwise, the opportunity that dual enrollment provides risks becoming a shortcut that will eventually dilute trust in the value of a UNC degree.

X: @dthopinion

### FOR: UNC's transfer credit system benefits low-income students

By Anna Gage  
Columnist

As UNC's deadline to list a class as pass/fail approaches, many of us are taking a long, hard look at our transcripts. Some of us are crying during office hours in fruitless attempts to raise our grades.

Others are boosting their GPA by transferring community college credits to UNC. For some, this is nothing more than a way to pass the summer by and to mitigate the damage that a calculus class at UNC could do to their transcript. For others, these classes are a lifeline, allowing them to get through college without a heaping mound of debt.

North Carolina has a strong network of very affordable community colleges, which allows students to dual enroll throughout high school, transfer to a UNC System school with an associate's degree or take summer classes during college. Students often seek to transfer as many courses as possible from community college to avoid rising university tuition payments.

Under the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement, community colleges must petition universities to have their courses approved. Regardless of the faculty scrutiny that these classes must overcome to appear on students' transcripts, there remains a question of whether they are challenging enough to be considered on par with UNC's course offerings. However, if we mitigate that concern by making community college content more challenging — or raising the bar to transfer these credits — the effects of such reforms will fall disproportionately on low-income students who rely on these classes to graduate from school.

In North Carolina, community colleges are systematically underfunded and under-resourced. Baseline funding for community colleges was not altered in 2025-26; funding is not keeping pace with costs. Making the classes at these schools more difficult requires extensive resources and may stretch limited budgets even thinner.

Moreover, the demographic of students attending community colleges already

navigates more obstacles than those who can afford to spend four years at UNC. One-third of two-year community college students are from households earning less than \$20,000 per year. Injecting difficulty doesn't level the playing field for UNC students — it merely compounds the barriers that community college students already face.

The transfer credit system, for all its flaws, dramatically improves prospects for lower-income students. The bachelor's degree holder earns an income 86 percent higher than a high school graduate. This can generate economic mobility for students who did not grow up with a safety net, and it underscores why transfer credit systems are so necessary — they dramatically reduce the cost of university for many.

Transferring degree prerequisites from a community college doesn't exempt students from higher-level coursework at UNC. Regardless of program, students can only transfer 75 credits. Even if students completed initial courses through the "easier" community college option, they still need to master the content required to pass their upper-division courses. For example, if you take a Chemistry 101: General Descriptive Chemistry I equivalent at Durham Technical Community College and transfer the credit here, you'll likely have to take another difficult course like Chemistry 261: Introduction to Organic Chemistry I at UNC — just to get the degree.

"Easy" classes exist at UNC, too; no amount of reform will ever remove the existence of easy paths to graduation. Rate My Professors remains, and word of these types of classes travels quickly. Some students, who found it difficult to open a textbook all semester, are suddenly motivated when faced with the task of finding a class that requires neither attendance nor exams.

Our transfer credit system garners contention; some may argue reform on the basis of improving academic quality. In truth, all it would do is reduce degree completion in communities that most need the economic mobility that a degree can provide.

X: @dthopinion

# Sports

## The Daily Tar Heel

### MEN'S BASKETBALL

## Seth Trimble has career night in win against No. 24 Louisville

The senior guard scored 30 points against the Cardinals

By Brian D'Aguanno  
Assistant Sports Editor

Seth Trimble had this game circled. With Louisville's prolific backcourt, he wanted the challenge.

But with his recent shooting struggles following his late-game heroics versus Duke, he knew something had to change.

In practice leading up to the game, he ramped up his aggressiveness. And he simply began looking to score the ball more.

A simple tweak that couldn't have come at a better time.

Bucket after bucket on Monday night — in surgical fashion with the same forceful drives to the rim he's shown his whole tenure — Trimble took over with a career-high 30-point outing in No. 18 UNC men's basketball's 77-74 win over No. 24 Louisville. But for the first time in his four-year North Carolina career that's seen just about everything, Trimble did something he hasn't quite done yet: produce as undoubtedly the No. 1 scoring option. And after struggling to find a rhythm over the past couple games, Trimble came out aggressive and looking to score, en route to UNC's fifth ranked win of the season.

"It was a mindset coming in," Trimble said. "Most of the season it's just come naturally. But I felt like these last few games I've been in a place where I found myself not being aggressive."

Trimble knew it leading up to Monday. His coaches and teammates pointed out his lack of aggression at halftime of North Carolina's win over Syracuse on Saturday.

The team told Trimble they needed him to attack more after he had 0 points on only one shot at the break. Honesty for UNC's leader who wasn't producing enough in the absence of standout first-year forward Caleb Wilson.

"We all got on him, we needed him. We needed him to be more



DTH/AVA SHARON

UNC senior guard Seth Trimble (7) dunks during the men's basketball game against Louisville on Monday at the Dean E. Smith Center.

aggressive," first-year guard Derek Dixon said. "I thought he did a good job of that and just carried that momentum into tonight."

It only took a little over 30 seconds for Trimble to record his first bucket against the Cardinals, which also happened to be the game's opening points.

By the time he recorded his 9th point — which came on his first 3-point make since the game-winner versus Duke — a little over eight minutes in, Trimble knew he was locked in and feeling it. With that, his aggressiveness only increased. Every time he touched the ball, Trimble was looking for a way to get to the basket.

"I just knew there would be more to come," Trimble said.

And he was right. But he also knew there would be a chance for a big night leading up to the contest.

Coming into the game, along with his reshaped aggressive mentality, Trimble saw how Louisville guarded ball screens on film. He knew that as long as he attacked the basket, he would have a big game. The Cardinals showed on screens with their big men, allowing Trimble to easily turn the corner on downhill drives and get his primary defender behind him. So, he kept doing it, and kept finding the bottom of the net.

"Coming off ball screens, the thing that I loved about him was he

was thinking attack," head coach Hubert Davis said. "He wasn't coming off looking to pass."

After sharing a backcourt with RJ Davis for his first three seasons and now sharing the court with Wilson, it's never felt like Trimble has been the go-to scoring option quite like Monday. In every timeout situation, the play was to him. On each trip down the court, he was the one initiating the offense.

For seemingly the first time as a Tar Heel, there was no doubt it was Trimble's offense.

Louisville battled back in the second half after North Carolina got out to multiple double-digit leads, but it was once again Trimble who showed up to help ice the game. Following struggles early from the line — where he went 3-for-7 — Trimble went 4-for-4 in the final two minutes to seal the resume-boosting win for the Tar Heels.

The changes implemented over the last week in practice and to his mentality led to an aggressive, career-best scoring performance when UNC needed every bit of it.

"Realizing what good can happen for this team when I am aggressive," Trimble said. "I just feel like it opens up so much more."

X: @briandaguanno4

### BASEBALL

## Offense falls flat in UNC's Game 2 loss to ECU

Five of North Carolina's hitters are now batting below .250

By Jack Morris  
Senior Writer

DURHAM, N.C. — Gavin Gallaher had half of North Carolina's hits on Saturday afternoon.

The preseason All-American second baseman blasted a three-run home run to left field to even the score in the third inning. He also added a single in the eighth.

But when the team only has four hits, hitting half of them is a little less notable.

Minimal offensive help from the remainder of the lineup overshadowed the junior infielder's spectacular day, as the Tar Heels posted their worst offensive output of the season in a blowout defeat.

"It's pretty easy to coach a guy like Gavin Gallaher," head coach Scott Forbes said. "But everybody isn't like Gavin Gallaher."

No. 10 North Carolina fell flat offensively in Game 2 against East Carolina, suffering a 10-3 loss at Durham Bulls Athletic Park. The Tar Heels failed to scratch a run in the final six innings, recording a season low in hits and only reaching two baserunners after the Gallaher long ball. UNC had no answers for Pirates reliever Sean Jenkins, who struck out seven coming out of the bullpen, ultimately letting East Carolina take control in the closing frames.

Defense and pitching have outpaced hitting in the young 2026 season. But when North Carolina jumped out to an undefeated start, the deficiencies didn't imply much of a concern. In Game 1 of the three-game set with East Carolina, the Tar Heels tallied a season-high in hits, silencing some of those doubts.

Game 2 was a different story. Some of those slumping hitters slipped back into troubling habits at the plate. Four starters now sit below a 0.250 batting average. In seven starts, junior center fielder

Owen Hull, junior third baseman Cooper Nicholson and junior first baseman Erik Paulsen all have five hits or fewer. And this time, the offensive lull came with a result that reflected it.

"You have to help them on the mental side as well," Forbes said. "So we'll work hard to do that."

UNC struck out 12 times on Saturday. In five of the nine innings, North Carolina went three-up, three-down. And after Gallaher offered a lifeline when facing a 3-0 deficit, there was nothing left in the tank for the remainder of the game.

"We didn't execute our plan the way we wanted to," Gallaher said.

Forbes gifted a lot of credit to who the Pirates brought out of the bullpen.

Jenkins froze the Tar Heels in the box on multiple occasions. He flashed a tough mix of off-speed pitches, highlighted by a cutter and splitter. And not only did it keep the UNC lineup from scoring runs, it also couldn't draw walks — something North Carolina relies heavily on.

The Tar Heels responded to the early deficit, but after East Carolina drilled a three-run home run of their own in the top of the seventh, UNC faced true adversity for the first time this year.

And it had no answer. Gallaher's late single came with the score well out of reach. But the inability to grab the momentum in the fourth, fifth or sixth left the door wide open for the Pirates. Eventually, when the score was still knotted up in the seventh inning, they jumped through it.

When the Tar Heels weren't striking out, much of the contact was weak, leaving the East Carolina defense mostly unchallenged.

Fixing the offense starts with someone other than Gallaher making some noise.

"We'll find ourselves in a similar situation down the road," Gallaher said. "So just use it as experience, go home, rest, come back ready to play better tomorrow."

X: @jackmorrisiv

### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

## Young depth provides spark in victory over Pittsburgh

Laila Hull and Nyla Brooks combined for 35 points

By Sarah Stephens  
Staff Writer

It was a slow first quarter. The Tar Heels shot 22 percent from the field and only 10 percent from three.

Pitt, which is 1-15 in the ACC, had been leading the full first quarter against then-No. 22 North Carolina, until a shift happened in the second.

Head coach Courtney Banghart put in redshirt sophomore guard Laila Hull with just over a minute left in the first quarter. Less than two minutes into the second, Hull knocked down a three and UNC took the lead, 15-14. It only went up from there.

The 78-50 victory did more than just tie a program record for 3-pointers in a single game — it validated Banghart's decision to lean on her young depth. By starting first-year guard Nyla Brooks and giving extended minutes to Hull, the Tar

Heels dominated a conference win while allowing their veteran starters to rest before a high-stakes stretch against Virginia, No. 12 Duke and a looming ACC Tournament.

"With our group, the younger group, we kind of know that when we go in, all we need to do is play hard, and that's going to help the team," Hull said.

Hull, who previously had a career high of four 3-point makes against N.C. A&T in the 2024 season, stood out in the 2025 Cancun Challenge. She was on par with her career best of four assists against South Dakota St. in November.

She averaged over 17 minutes during that three game stretch and scored 18 total points.

"I don't think we would have won the Cancun Challenge without her," Banghart said.

As a redshirt two seasons ago, she had extra time to watch, learn and then play.

Her focus wasn't on forcing herself back onto the court after a shoulder injury. Instead, she took the time to learn from her older teammates.

Hull averaged 5 points per game, shot 41 percent and 35.9 percent from beyond the arc in nonconference play earlier this season.

But her 19 minutes against Pitt were the most she had played since the Cancun Challenge, and she has regularly played fewer than five minutes a game.

"The world's not going to wait for Laila to get experience," Banghart said. "We just need her to be ready when she's called upon."

Against Pittsburgh, she shot 50 percent across the board.

"I don't think without my mental strength that I've grown in the past year that I would have been able to play like this today," Hull said.

She notched a career high five 3-point field goals and 17 points.

And it was contagious. Brooks — who had her first career start — landed 18 points. The energy of made shots spread between the team, as it gave sophomore guard Lanie Grant the spirit to sink threes.

"One person doing well gives another person confidence to also



DTH/LAUREN RAY

UNC first-year guard Nyla Brooks (7) dribbles the ball during the game against Pitt at Carmichael Arena on Sunday. UNC won 78-50.

do well and to play well," Hull said.

Looking ahead, UNC has a busy week of play. It faces a tough Virginia roster on Thursday followed by another bout with No. 12 Duke on Sunday.

Then, 72 hours later, the ACC tournament begins in Duluth, Ga.

On both ends of the bench, Banghart has the same expectation. She has led North Carolina to 12 conference game victories in back-to-back seasons, the first time that has happened in 20 years.

X: @dthsports