

# The Daily Tar Heel

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025

132 YEARS OF SERVING UNC STUDENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 133, ISSUE 1

## BUDGET

# NIH cuts impact UNC research

Federal funding decreases target grants and indirect costs

By Maria Sullivan

Senior Writer

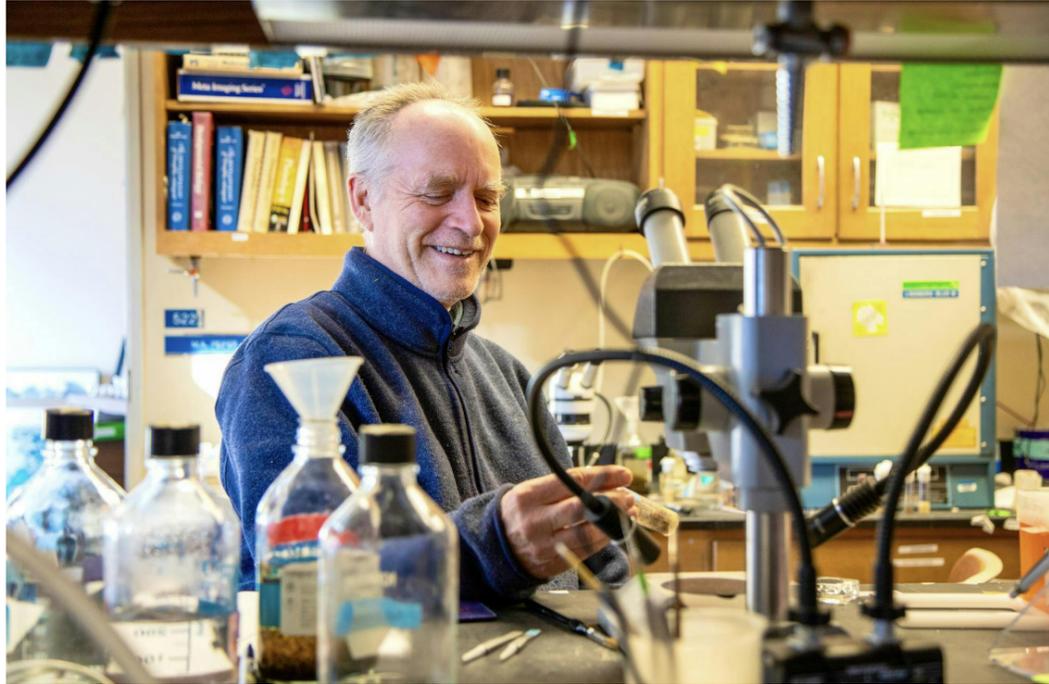
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The recent announcement of National Institutes of Health funding cuts pertaining to grants and “indirect” research costs has left the UNC research community dealing with a sense of shock and anxiety. The NIH’s proposed 15 percent cap on indirects, a decrease from the previous 55 percent cap, could cause damage to UNC’s status as a cutting edge research institution.

The proposed cuts come after an onslaught of executive orders from President Donald Trump. Following the NIH announcement, a Massachusetts federal judge blocked the policy. The temporary order remains in place today.

“I don’t like calling it indirect costs, because I don’t think anybody understands what that word means — that it sounds unimportant. The real name for that is facilities and administration,” UNC School of Medicine professor Mark Peifer said.

At UNC, Peifer’s research creates a foundation for the betterment of disease treatments, and he has approximately 100 undergraduate students working in his lab, in addition to doctoral candidates and post-baccalaureates. There are 300 other



DTH/CASSIDY TOY REYNOLDS

Mark Peifer, PI of the Peifer Lab, researches disease treatments with approximately 100 undergraduate students.

biomedical researchers running labs of a similar caliber at the University, together bringing in \$800 million in federal funding to the University.

Peifer said his lab has a \$375,000 direct budget, money that comes directly to his lab for research expenses. He also receives 55 percent of that amount on top of the direct budget for facilities and administration, or indirect costs.

However, new executive orders and NIH funding cuts would cut that percentage to 15 percent.

“A scientist like me is running a small business, and our product is new knowledge,” Peifer said. Peifer said indirect costs are also paying for the care that people are receiving in the new cancer hospital, or in clinical trials, including things like rooms for

patients to stay in and heating costs. Indirects pay the salaries of the electricians who keep the lights on.

Maternal and Child Health professor Iheoma Iruka said that changes like these could damage UNC’s status as a high caliber research institution.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 3

## COMMUNITY

# Eno Arts Mill hosts youth art collectives

Event held twice a month creates LGBTQ+ space

By Marion Rambler

Staff Writer

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Every first and third Tuesday of the month, the Eno Arts Mill hosts the Teen Arts Collective, a space for LGBTQIA+ identifying teens to create art and find community with each other.

Funded by grants through the Orange County Arts Commission, the Collective is completely free and does not require reservation. Over time, the teen space has evolved from three to four teens each session to over 20.

Natalia Torres del Valle is a licensed clinical mental health counselor, a registered expressive arts therapist and the founder of the teen space.

“Community is so healing and that was one of the reasons I wanted to start this group,” Torres said.

Torres said that she’s found the kids that come in often feel isolated and the space has allowed them to

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## BASEBALL



DTH FILE/JAY’LA EVANS

UNC senior right-handed pitcher Aidan Haugh (47) catches the ball during a game against Longwood at Boshamer Stadium on Feb. 28, 2024.

# Pitcher Aidan Haugh strikes out ECU

Diamond Heels beat Pirates 6-3 in final game of series

By Emma Moon

Assistant Sports Editor  
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GREENVILLE — Head coach Scott Forbes approached Aidan Haugh before the fifth frame of North Carolina’s final series game against East Carolina University.

The senior right-handed pitcher had already fanned a career-high nine batters. After a rough first

inning, Haugh was putting on his best performance in Carolina Blue. He was riding a high.

So, when Forbes asked Haugh in the dugout if he wanted to pitch the next inning, the senior replied with two quick words.

“Hell yeah.”

In the bottom of the fifth, the Pirates went three up, three down. Haugh struck out one more batter with a 93 mph fastball.

Haugh’s career-high 10 strikeouts in five innings of work propelled the Diamond Heels to a 6-3 victory

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## ECONOMY

# Business owners discuss upcoming Trump tariffs

Federal policy to have trickle-down effect on cost of supplies

By Kristin Kharrat

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On Feb. 1, President Donald Trump signed an executive order implementing a 25 percent additional tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10 percent additional tariff on imports from China. The tariffs on China went into effect on Feb. 4 and the tariffs on Canada and Mexico will go into effect on March 4.

In Chapel Hill and Carrboro, some local business owners are preparing to alter their business models or increase prices in anticipation of the tariffs.

Gerald Cohen, Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise chief economist, said 40 percent of U.S. imports come from Canada, Mexico and China. He said a wide range of goods are imported, including automotive parts, oil, clothing, electricity and more.

Tariffs cause the cost of production to increase for U.S. business owners, leading to an increase in prices to absorb the effects of the tariffs, Cohen said. He said the higher consumer prices

also likely means less demand.

Sonny Singh, Al’s Garage owner and operator, said he expects the tariffs to have a large impact on the entire automotive manufacturing and repair industry since most car parts are imported.

An increase in automotive repair costs will cause people to stop maintaining their vehicles, which threatens public safety, he said.

In addition to the tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China, Trump restored a 25 percent tariff on steel and elevated the tariff on aluminum on Feb. 11.

“Lots of [car] parts are made of aluminum, like fenders and hoods,”

Singh said. “Some of the parts are not aluminum, there might be plastic, so it’s not like [suppliers] are only concentrated on aluminum — they’re going to start raising their prices all across the board.”

Cohen also said the cost of aluminum foil, takeout containers and produce will impact local restaurants on Franklin Street.

Jack Warren, the general manager of VooDoo Wing Co., said he expects the tariffs to have a trickle-down effect on the restaurant’s prices, as some of their materials are imported.

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“ This above all: To thine own self be true. ”

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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DTH/PEARCE BARNES



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**Third time's the charm**

On Wednesday, Feb. 19, UNC students celebrated their third snow day of 2025. With the National Weather Service reporting over three inches of snow, the Southern Part of Heaven became a winter wonderland. Classes were cancelled on Wednesday and Thursday, allowing students to forget about midterms and enjoy the snow. There's nothing quite as magical as making snow angels in Kenan Stadium, having snowball fights on the Quad, and sledding down the hills of South Campus.

In the evening, UNC basketball invited everyone within walking distance to fill the Dean E. Smith Center, with or without a ticket, for the men's basketball game against N.C. State. The Tar Heels crushed the Wolfpack, 97-73, a perfect end to an unforgettable snow day.

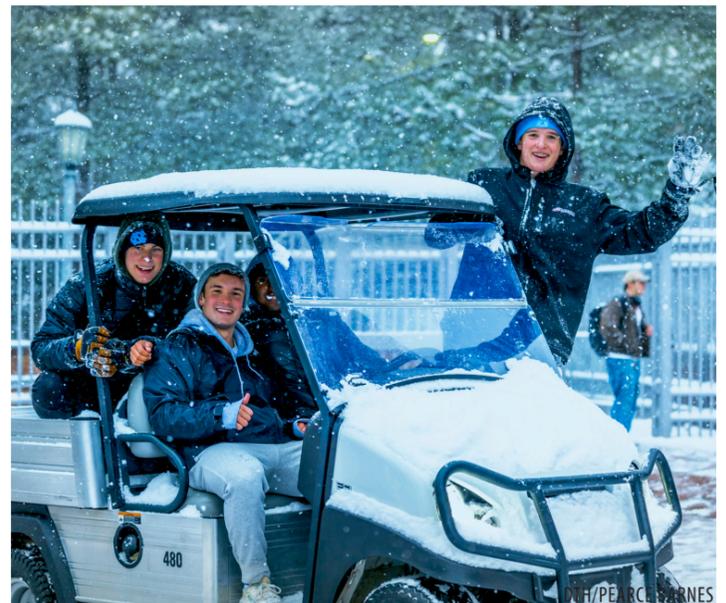
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TECHNOLOGY

## Documents reveal admissions has used AI to review writing since 2019

UNC allocated hundreds of thousands to the service

By Alice Scott

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The UNC Office of Undergraduate Admissions has used an automatic essay grading technology to review application essays for grammar and writing quality for five past admissions cycles, according to documents obtained by The Daily Tar Heel.

The DTH previously reported on UNC's use of Durham-based company Measurement Incorporated's Project Essay Grade engine. Newly obtained documents confirm that the admissions office has used this scoring service since 2019.

The PEG engine is a machine learning artificial intelligence technology used to evaluate and score unique writing.

Vice Provost for Enrollment Rachele Feldman said that the admissions office began using the PEG engine in their application review process so that evaluators could spend more time reading essays for content. She said the office also

wanted to increase the consistency of how essays were evaluated.

Jared Rosenberg, the interim associate provost and director of undergraduate admissions, wrote in an email that the University initially learned about MI through research conducted by a former colleague.

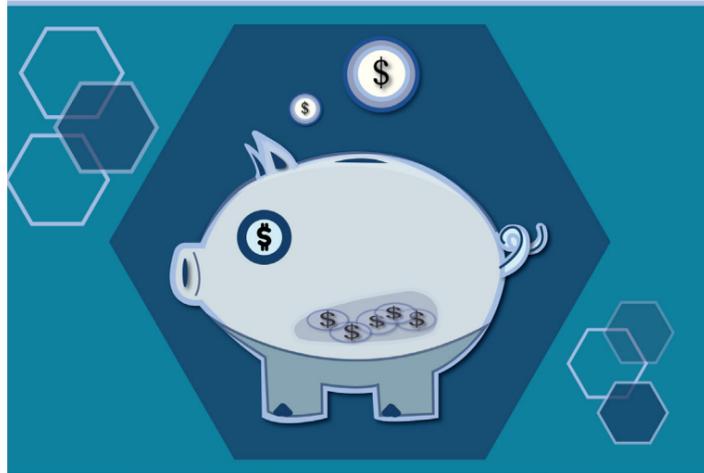
"The University evaluated several companies that provided automated writing evaluation technology but ultimately selected MI because it allowed us to focus exclusively on assessing writing mechanics, complexity and grammar rather than evaluating essay content," Rosenberg wrote.

In February 2018, MI conducted a pilot study with UNC to determine the viability of its automated scoring technology to evaluate application essays.

The study involved rescoring essays previously scored by the UNC admissions office. Feldman said UNC used essay scores assigned by the admissions office's strongest evaluators to teach the PEG engine machine learning.

The University conducted a second pilot study in March 2019. UNC continues to use the same holistic PEG scoring model.

Rosenberg wrote that essays are



DTH DESIGN/ISABELA NASH

scored and securely sent without identifying information to MI. Then, the company sends the scores back to UNC.

Rather than focusing on grammar or writing quality, Feldman said, evaluators can read essays to get to know prospective students' talents and strengths.

"It really adds to the picture that we can't fully get just by looking at someone's grades, classes and test scores," Feldman said.

Admissions Ambassador and UNC sophomore Charlie Costal said the main piece of advice he gives to prospective students during tours is to write a strong essay that displays personality and commitment.

"Showing that you would make your mark and bring something positive to campus and our culture is the most important part," Costal said.

Admissions evaluators review the essay score in the context of a prospective student's whole

application, Feldman said. The technology is not used in an initial round to cut certain applicants who don't score high enough.

"I don't think a decision would ever be yes or no based on that score alone," Feldman said.

She said the PEG essay scores are generally more consistent than scores assigned by human graders. However, Feldman said, readers may go back and "override" the PEG score.

UNC has developed a cumulative maximum budget of almost \$200,000 on the PEG engine technology, according to MI's contract with UNC. Feldman said the spending makes up less than half of a percentage point of the admissions office's budget.

For the 2024-25 admissions cycle, UNC has a maximum budget of \$53,000 for MI's essay scoring service — the most the University has budgeted for the technology in a single cycle.

The DTH was unable to reach a MI representative for comment by the time of publication.

Feldman said the admissions office is always looking at ways to improve its processes amid a changing technological landscape.

X: @alice\_scotttt

CLIMATE

## Sunrise UNC releases report on cogeneration facility

Organization shares findings on environmental impact

By Dylan Skinner

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Student climate activist group Sunrise UNC shared research around the University's coal-burning cogeneration facility in a recent press conference and chalk art event.

According to a report compiled by Sunrise researchers, "Stuck in the Smoke: UNC's Coal Plant and Solutions for a Green Transition," the plant burns 4,000 tons of coal annually.

The plant, located less than a mile from the Old Well, currently burns 60 percent natural gas and 40 percent coal, producing steam to power the University and hospital.

UNC is seeking a permit change, that would allow it to begin burning engineered pellets made from byproducts of packaging and label industries on a trial basis.

In the press conference, Sunrise UNC Research Lead Victoria Plant said this switch would be more harmful.

"They've chosen these plastic pellets made by Convergence as a greener option, which is actually worse in terms of air quality, because they will emit 1.2 pounds of PFAS per year," she said.

PFAS, commonly known as "forever chemicals," are found in water, human and animal blood and the air. Research shows they may be linked to harmful health effects.

Plant said switching from coal to pellets would result in a 6 percent decrease in University emissions, making the effects of air pollution on community health "not worth it."

According to the report, the University says it's reduced coal use by 54 percent since 2007. It also states that the coal burned at the facility still releases 127 tons of nitrogen oxides



DTH/OLIVIA PAUL

Members of Sunrise UNC use chalk to write messages in support of climate justice in front of South Building on Feb. 17.

and 182 tons of sulfur dioxide per year.

Sunrise UNC communications lead Kiersten Hackman said that the University has shown an appalling lack of knowledge about the plant.

"We released four to six times the EPA limit on our emissions because of a legislative loophole a couple years ago," Hackman said.

The organizing coordinator for Sunrise UNC Amy Okonkwo said that coal burning is an outdated method of steam production, saying that the pollution site is an example of predominantly Black and brown communities having to come to terms with pollution.

"This act of environmental injustice and racism must come to an end," she said.

Okonkwo concluded the press conference by saying that Sunrise calls on Chancellor Lee Roberts and the plant's systems manager, William Lowery II, to increase transparency with the public and create a binding plan to close the cogeneration plant.

The report details an alternative solution to coal and fuel pellets, suggesting electrode boilers are a high-quality option that complies with the plant's current infrastructure. The boilers pass an electric current through the water, generating heat which boils the water, creating steam.

These boilers would run on electricity sourced from Duke Energy, which supplies most of UNC's energy. The report states that 54 percent of the electricity that Duke Energy supplies is clean, consisting of nuclear, hydroelectric power and solar energy energy, whereas neither coal nor natural gas are clean.

The report said that if the electrode boilers are implemented, carbon production will be down 44.8 percent if Duke Energy continues to decarbonize at its current planned rate. This is a higher rate than the 6 percent proposed by plastic pellets.

In an email statement to The Daily Tar Heel, Media Relations wrote that the University appreciates students' interest and advocacy for transitioning away from coal fuel.

"Generating steam using electricity has some favorable attributes relative to combustion. However, there are significant challenges around capital cost, fuel prices, reliability and carbon emissions reductions that we continue to assess," the statement reads. "Each potential pathway for the campus energy transition presents its own set of challenges, and we continue to explore options as markets and conditions shift."

X: @dailytarheel

## Community reacts to proposed NIH cuts

Continued from Page 1

Iruka also said that UNC could be left behind on a global scale, especially when it comes to dealing with "wicked problems" including climate change, education and public health.

"So all this actually is not just about us researchers at UNC and the institution," Iruka said. "There's actually real people, real human beings behind this, those who work here, but also the community where this information is shared."

Maternal and Child Health professor Iheoma Iruka said that changes like these, and an inability to perform cutting edge research, could damage UNC's status as a high caliber research institution.

Iruka also said that UNC could be left behind on a global scale, especially when it comes to dealing with "wicked problems" including climate change, education and public health.

"So all this actually is not just about us researchers at UNC and the institution," Iruka said. "There's actually real people, real human beings behind this, those who work here, but also the community where this information is shared."

Fourth year doctoral candidate JP Flores said he was inspired by the "March for Science" in 2017 following Trump's first inauguration.

"I'm a student that was also paralyzed, like many others across the country. I'm also a very action-oriented, 'what do we do next,' type of person, and that's why a bunch of students and I have created the Stand Up for Science movement," Flores said.

The nationwide "Stand Up for Science" rally has now garnered the support of 40 cities and is expecting a turnout of over 50,000 people, including Bill Nye the Science Guy. The rally will take place on March 7, 2025, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C.

In the lab Flores works in, every year a post-baccalaureate

scholar is funded by the NIH Postbaccalaureate Research Education Program, which provides opportunities for undergraduates in pursuit of a research doctorate. The program was just scrubbed from the NIH website, and was not renewed at the University. Last year, Flores said he worked with a PREP scholar to compile an atlas of over 100 inspiring Latinx scientists.

"She came in wanting to look for representation in others, and she also has a mission to try and inspire the next generation of Cuban scientists. But now we don't have programs like PREP to bring scholars like this in," Flores said.

Peifer said that another serious and understated concern is the prevention of meetings to evaluate grant proposals. While these meetings are being shut down, no new grants can be approved, meaning that essentially, "science has stopped."

"That will mean any young faculty member who is writing their first grant won't have any money. But it also means, really, by the end of this fiscal year, this place will close," Peifer said.

He hopes that the research community will turn to action in the face of "anger and despair." Next week, he said he plans to bang on senators' office doors until somebody answers.

"I'm not gonna give up," Peifer said. "This is the career that I spent my life on, and I'm not gonna let them take this career away from young people."

University desk senior writer Adele Morris contributed reporting to this story.

X: @mariaesullivan

## FUNDING

## How Department of Education cuts could impact UNC

Axing agency may affect financial aid and research programs

By Adele Morris

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President Donald Trump may sign an executive order directing the Secretary of Education to limit the affairs of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), which contributes federal aid and research funding to UNC.

In an email statement to The Daily Tar Heel, UNC Media Relations wrote that the ED provides federal aid to students attending the University through several programs, including Pell Grants, the Federal Work-Study Program, federal loans and AmeriCorps grants.

“As of Dec. 31, 2023, 11,484 students were receiving \$214.3 million in financial aid from federal government programs administered by the department,” the statement read.

Alison DeMasi, a UNC sophomore studying biology, receives money from the ED through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. She said restrictions on the funding may dissuade prospective students from pursuing a university degree.

“It’s going to affect a lot of students and really put a strain on their decision of whether they can continue their education, depending on if they’re willing or able to take on any sort of debt, if they’re not able to pay for their education without using money from the FAFSA,” she said.

According to the University’s 2022-23 aid profile, 34.8 percent of students received need-based aid that academic year. Of those who received need-based aid, 77.5 percent were grants and scholarships, 21.1 percent were loans and 1.4 percent were work-study.



DTH DESIGN/GRACE DAVIDSON

The Trump administration has made efforts to freeze some of these funds.

On Jan. 27, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget issued a now-withdrawn memorandum requiring federal agencies to review all federal financial assistance programs and supporting activities consistent with the Trump administration’s policies. The memorandum also ordered a pause on the distribution of the funding while the review was underway.

Had the order remained standing, students may have seen grants, loans and other financial

assistance programs halted. UNC’s Office of Scholarships and Student Aid posted an update on their website clarifying that for now, students will receive financial assistance without interruption.

that post-secondary students may begin to look for other options.

“A lot of students, if they can’t get the money they need, like scholarships-wise or grants or loans, it’s going to deter them from going

“If they can’t get the money they need, like scholarships-wise or grants or loans, it’s going to deter them from going to a university.”

Alison DeMasi

UNC sophomore

DeMasi said while she does not think such an order to freeze financial assistance programs will occur again, she acknowledged that it is a possibility. Given the uncertainty surrounding federal funding, she said

in increased enrollment in the Carolina Student Transfer Excellence Program, or C-STEP. The program provides low and moderate-income students guaranteed admission to UNC after

successfully completing courses at a partner community college.

DeMasi also said she could envision the growth of private endowments to fill in funding gaps from ED cuts. She noted that University donors may choose to put more money toward scholarships over other campus resources.

Some members of the Chapel Hill community have voiced concerns about the impact of a ED shutdown beyond federal aid.

Samuel Atwood, an American history and A.P. U.S. Government teacher at East Chapel Hill High School, said he is concerned about a loss of protection for students who experience identity-based discrimination. He said the ED allows students who experience discrimination to file complaints with the department’s Office for Civil Rights.

UNC currently has open suits within the OCR.

“Students with disabilities, learning disabilities, students who identify as transgender or gay or lesbian who experience discrimination, they may have less recourse for sure,” Atwood said. “So I think that’s definitely probably the top concern.”

In addition, some UNC professors have cited concerns over the loss of research funding from the ED.

Theoma Iruka, professor in the Department of Maternal and Child Health at Gillings School of Global Public Health and faculty fellow at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, said about 60 percent of her research is federally funded by the ED and the National Institutes of Health.

“What we are doing in terms of being able to provide evidence or science that really improves our lives collectively — whether on climate change, whether on education, whether on health issues — we’re going to really be behind,” she said.

X: @adelepmorris\_

## ENGINEERING

## Joint UNC-N.C. State department renamed after donation

N.C. State alumnus Ross Lampe Jr. invests \$20 million

By Joaquin Mestre

Staff Writer

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The UNC and North Carolina State Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering has been renamed to the Lampe Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering.

The renaming follows a \$20 million donation to the program from Ross W. Lampe Jr., a N.C. State alumnus and philanthropist with a background in electrical engineering. Faculty and administrators are already planning to use the donation to further the program’s mission of bringing together medicine and engineering.

“I’m making this investment because I believe in the power of higher education and these bright faculty members to make a difference, and I want to see this department continue to grow and become even stronger,” Lampe said in an NCSU communications release.

Since 2003, the Joint BME department has been structured across the two universities. The program, according to its website, has faculty and students that take courses on both campuses.

BME Department Chair Paul Dayton said the program first incorporated undergraduate students in 2016. In 2023, the department was the third largest BME program by number of Biomedical Engineering bachelor’s degrees obtained.

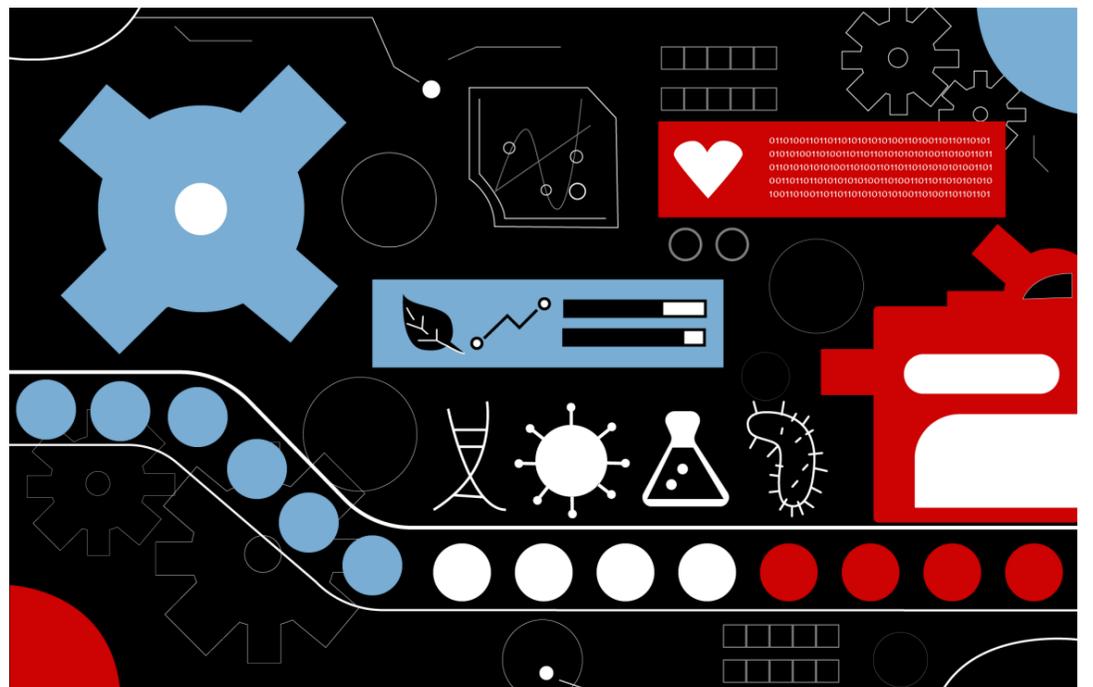
The program offers five areas of research: Biomedical Imaging, Biomedical Microdevices, Pharmacoengineering, and Regenerative Medicine and Rehabilitation Engineering, allowing students to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biomedical and Health Sciences Engineering from both universities with accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

Dayton said Lampe’s investment allows for greater flexibility and innovation within UNC and N.C. State’s BME research, as it will enable the program to rapidly pursue initiatives and grow its reputation. In this pursuit, he said the funds will be used to support new grant initiatives, acting as a multiplier to exponentiate research.

“The endowment doesn’t directly change classes or things like that,” he said. “But what it will do is because it’s going to be amplifying our research and development program, that will directly benefit our students, because we really try and involve a large percentage of our students in the research experience.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Biomedical Engineering industry is projected to grow at 7 percent for the next decade, faster than the average for all occupations nationally. The joint BME Well-Being Director, Jason Franz, said the growth is partially due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

Dayton said roughly half of UNC’s BME faculty have startup companies with developed technology at the University. As a faculty member that launched a startup with the support



DTH DESIGN/SHAMIL LUQMAN

of the program, Franz said the funds will be pivotal in helping accelerate the development of intellectual property and patents, as well as translating research discoveries into clinics and communities that will have a real impact.

Kabir Dewan, a senior BME student, said he was drawn to the interdisciplinary aspect of the program, providing an applicable degree that not only satisfied premed requirements but also fostered his interest in applying engineering towards improving people’s lives.

“I do think it’s a really unique position where you can take all your

hardcore engineering classes at N.C. State and get some of that expertise, and get a lot of the soft sciences, like biology and chemistry, at UNC,” Dewan said.

With a specialization in Rehabilitation Engineering and Biomedical Imaging, Dewan said that he is both excited about the recent donation’s ability—and also confident in the program’s leadership—to use the funds effectively.

Dayton said the BME department is excited to receive this “transformative” investment.

“This endowment in biomedical engineering will really make

a substantial impact in our department’s ability to conduct cutting edge biomedical research and facilitate its translation into the commercial and clinical space, as well as to train the next generation of biomedical engineers,” he said.

X: @dailytarheel

## Businesses anticipate rising costs

Continued from Page 1

“If my food suppliers or my dry goods suppliers — which are normally one in the same — are having to raise their prices, then obviously we are going to have to follow,” he said.

Singh also said he anticipates an increase in cost and a consequential increase in prices, especially since Al’s Garage orders automotive parts from its suppliers on a need-basis. He said he plans to allow customers to bring their own parts once the inevitable price increases come into play.

Cohen said raising prices is a probable reaction, but the question of how much prices will increase and whether consumers are willing to bear those price increases remain.

He also said that some Chapel Hill residents are UNC researchers whose wages are impacted by federal funding cuts, and they may want to limit their spending at businesses and restaurants. Local business owners may be caught between needing to raise prices and wanting to retain their customers, Cohen said.

Although Warren expects changes in business costs, he said he has not made any changes yet because his suppliers have not communicated any price changes. He said once his suppliers raise their prices, menu prices will increase but not dramatically.

“I think what we’re all trying to figure out is what it’s actually going to look like when we get an invoice,” Warren said.

Historically, business owners have reacted to similar tariff policies in strategic ways. Cohen said some business owners increased the prices of complementary goods to parallel the effect of tariffs on goods. For example, this meant raising the price of clothes dryers when washing machines were being directly impacted by the Trump administration’s 2018 tariffs, he said.

According to a press release from The White House, the tariffs are a part of the Trump administration’s “Fair and Reciprocal Plan” on trade, which aims to correct imbalances in international trade, decrease illegal immigration and increase domestic production of goods.

Cohen said, theoretically, tariffs can boost domestic production in North Carolina — specifically agricultural production. However, he said Trump’s legislation on immigration does not allow for foreign-born agriculture workers to serve as the labor force for domestic agricultural production, undoing the theoretical benefit of the tariffs.

“Every business has a thing that it does individually, based on the way they see conditions on the ground,” Cohen said.

X: @kristinkharrat

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH | EVENTS

# XOXOK plays renditions of iconic Black hits

Durham artist Keenan Jenkins performs at Carrboro concert

By Phoebe Martel  
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The Town of Carrboro concluded its celebrations for Black History Month on Sunday afternoon with sing-alongs and stripped-down spins on soul classics from the artist XOXOK.

“It’s a beautiful day outside,” Keenan Jenkins said to open his set. “You could have been at any number of places today, but you are here with us and we really appreciate that.”

XOXOK is the atmospheric soul project of Keenan Jenkins, a UNC alum now based in Durham. His original music is influenced by both contemporary and classic R&B, with Sunday’s set at the Carrboro Century Center spanning several decades of crowd-pleasers ranging from Bill Withers to Beyoncé.

Michelle Blume, recreation supervisor for the Town’s recreation, parks and cultural resources department, recruited Jenkins to perform the morning of the concert after the scheduled saxophonist canceled due to illness.

Blume also said the Town’s Black History Month concert series, now in its third annual installment, aims to spotlight Triangle musicians and introduce their work to the Carrboro community.

“We try to bring in different artists of different genres to provide music for the Town to come out and enjoy on a Sunday afternoon,” she said.

Previous concert series performers included the United Strings of Color, an all-Black classical ensemble from Cary, and the Chrishawn Darby Quartet, a jazz band formed at North Carolina Central University.



DTH/AAVAS JOSHI

Keenan Jenkins, also known as XOXOK, performs at the Town of Carrboro’s 2025 BHM Concert on Sunday, Feb. 23.

Jenkins, who completed a doctorate in psychology at UNC in 2016, typically plays with the backing of a three-person band. However, on Sunday, his vocals and guitar were the main event. He serenaded a nearly-full reception hall with smooth melodies and personalized renditions of Aaliyah’s “Are You That Somebody” and Beyoncé’s “Love On Top.”

Jenkins’s selections were all covers from Black artists, although his second-to-last song was an XOXOK original titled “Worthy.”

Audience members clapped and sang along with Jenkins throughout his set, especially to Al Green’s “Let’s Stay Together” and the two Bill Withers songs that ended the set. Jenkins also asked the crowd who their favorite Black artists were and played

covers of the most common responses.

Attendees included young families, veterans and Town staff. Organizers set up a table with Black History Month stickers, wristbands and other items. The Durham chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, a Black fraternity, distributed pamphlets about youth mentorship programs and voter registration initiatives.

Larry Chadbourne said he and his friend decided to come out and listen to XOXOK because he wanted to support the Town’s efforts to honor Black History Month.

“There’s a lot of music around here — some of it’s free, which is nice; we had the choice today of going to a Baroque concert in Chapel Hill, which we’ve done before, which costs,” he said. “But we decided, ‘Let’s go to this

and see what it’s like,’ — and also you know, as part of Black History Month, to honor that because right now, there are people saying, ‘We don’t want to honor all the diversity in the world,’ so we’re here.”

Charles Alston, a Carrboro native who served for 29 years in the military, also attended the event. He and his friend chose to attend Sunday’s event as part of an effort to attend Black History Month programming throughout February. Alston describes himself as a music lover, and he said he enjoyed the concert’s small-scale, locally-oriented nature.

“It was a nice selection for him to give to an audience like this,” Alston said.

X: @dthcitystate

# Documentary takes a look at ‘The Man Behind the Counter’

Screening explores overlooked figure of Greensboro Sit-Ins

By Ha Lien Gaskin  
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On Friday, the Orange County Department on Aging hosted a documentary screening at the Seymour Center in honor of Black History Month. The documentary, “The Man Behind the Counter,” dives into an often overlooked aspect of the Greensboro Sit-Ins.

The Greensboro Sit-Ins were a series of demonstrations in the 1960s protesting segregation, in which Black customers sat at the counter of a white-only restaurant and asked to be served. Four students from NC A&T University, dubbed the Greensboro Four, were the face of the Greensboro Sit-Ins at Woolworth’s store.

But people often overlook the fifth person in the famous photo from the sit-in — the man behind the counter.

Charles Bess was a busboy for Woolworth’s at the time of the sit-ins and is the subject of the film. Bess said at the documentary screening that during the protests he felt scared for the young boys sitting in front of him. But he was also proud.

“It was hard to see these guys sitting there and I couldn’t talk



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE STUDENT

Four college students from N.C. A&T University participate in The Greensboro Sit-Ins at Woolworth’s store on Feb. 1, 1960.

to them,” Bess said. “That really bothered me. But here’s what I did. I wrote a note. And on that note was saying ‘I’m with you all the way.’”

Garrett Davis, the film’s producer, was inspired by the idea of telling the stories of everyday people.

Davis met Bess at his church, where he is still very active in the church theater. He said that he had no idea who Bess was when one of his fellow church members pointed the older man out to him.

Davis said that he wants to use his platform for something positive, and he wants people of color to remember their history.

“I am on a journey to hear ordinary people who were in places that they were either ashamed

of or had no idea what was going on,” Davis said. “I want to give them a voice. And so when I saw that picture of the man behind the counter, everyone talks about the Four, no one ever asked about him. That’s why I want to do this.”

After the screening, Bess, a fine figure in his sharp tan suit and his puffs of white hair, sat down for a Q&A with Davis and the audience. The audience was bursting with questions, anecdotes and words of thanks to the former diner worker.

Ian Bowater, an attendee, shared his own experiences visiting The International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro where the original Woolworth’s counter and seats are displayed.

“One day, when I was in there [the museum], there was another guy, and he said, ‘Hey, that’s me,’” Bowater said. “And he was looking at a picture of a march from around that time, and suddenly the whole experience changed, because there was a human witness there.”

Hilda Baker, a resident of Chapel Hill for all of her 75 years of life, said she remembers facing a lot of racism in her childhood.

“I’m just hoping that other people in here can see it and realize what we went through back then, what happened and that it’s real,” Baker said. “Don’t sweep it under the rug. It’s real, and it’s what we lived.”

X: @dthcitystate

## IDENTIFICATION

# N.C. REAL ID requirement begins in May, but open DMV appointments are rare

Enhanced cards will be used to board flights, enter facilities

By Sarah Clements  
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Starting on May 7, North Carolina will enforce the 2005 REAL ID Act, requiring all residents to have a REAL ID compliant driver's license to board flights and visit federal facilities like courthouses and prisons.

According to Daniel Valez, Transportation Security Administration New England/North Carolina spokesperson, Congress passed the REAL ID Act after a recommendation from the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, or 9/11 Commission, that the federal government set minimum security standards for state-issued identification.

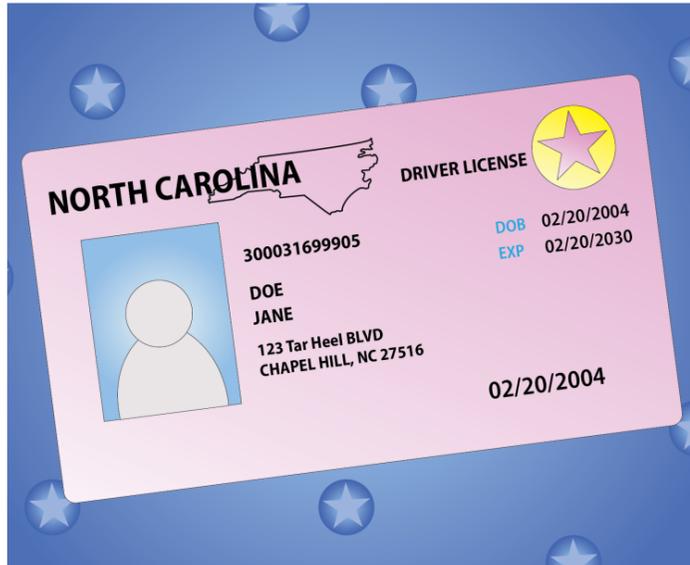
"It's just an enhancement to that card that is noted by having a star in the right upper right hand corner of the credential, and that just signifies that you provided that extra documentation that makes it meet the federal requirements to be considered a REAL ID," Marty Homan, N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles communications manager said.

Homan said North Carolina has issued 4.7 million REAL IDs since 2017, with 64,000 being issued in the last month.

North Carolinians will still be able to pass through TSA checkpoints without a REAL ID if they have another form of acceptable ID, such as a passport or a military ID, Valez said.

However, Valez said that those without a REAL ID should arrive at the airport much earlier — even prior to the recommended two hours before departure time.

"After May 7, 2025, we're not going to be turning people away in droves from the security screening, and they're not going to be flying," he said. "What will



DTH DESIGN/SREEVA CHEBROLU

happen is the process may take you a little bit longer."

To get a REAL ID, individuals need to go in person to a NCDMV and bring two documents proving N.C. residency, one document proving identity and one document confirming their social security number. Examples of these documents include water bills, mortgage payments, birth certificates and social security cards.

Homan said individuals who have had name changes will need to bring verification, such as a marriage certificate or divorce decree. Non-U.S. citizens require one additional document proving legal status, such as a permanent resident card or certificate of naturalization.

The DMV is typically busy, especially as staffing has not increased with demand, and there have been a lot of people coming in trying to get a REAL ID as the May 7 date gets closer, Homan said.

Chapel Hill resident Melissa Valego, who moved back to North Carolina in November, said she was unable to find an appointment at the Carrboro DMV for the next 90 days.

"Just getting into the DMV is just miserable," Valego said. "It is especially horrible that it's so hard, given that the deadline is approaching.

Valego said she considered walking in, but heard conflicting information about the best time and place to go. She said people recommended that she drive to DMVs as far as 90 minutes away.

Homan said DMV appointments are typically booked 90 days out, with new appointments being added every day after midnight. Appointments can be scheduled at skiptheline.ncdot.gov.

He said DMV locations only take only walk-ins during the afternoon at every location in the state to ensure time for customers without an appointment.

"We do have the May 7, 2025 implementation date, but it's not a deadline," Homan said. "We'll be giving people REAL IDs forever. I don't see us ever stopping. It's not like if you don't get it by May 7, you can't travel. That's just the date that they'll start requiring that at the airport and these other places."

X: @sarahhclements

## WORKFORCE

# Lt. Gov. announces policy priorities

Plan focuses on child care and community college programs

By Aiden Hall  
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On Feb. 13, North Carolina Lt. Gov. Rachel Hunt announced Future-Ready North Carolina, a plan to bolster workforce development by increasing access to affordable child care and reworking community college programs.

"I think it's because of our programs — that turn out high quality graduates ready for jobs — that we see a lot of investment coming into the state, and a lot of businesses are growing here," Daniel Gilligan, director of policy at Hunt's office, said.

According to a press release by Hunt's office, one of the plan's main focuses will be child care. The plan includes the N.C. Tri-Share Program, which splits child care costs evenly between parents, their employers and the state government. Hunt plans to renew the existing programs and fund new ones.

Gilligan said there is currently a \$5 billion disruption to the state's economy because of child care shortages, which he said is already in a state of crisis.

Another focus of the plan is retaining and expanding child care facilities on community college campuses across the state. According to the press release, roughly one-fifth of North Carolina community colleges have an on-site child care facility, though their funding will decrease by half in the next budget cycle and several have recently closed.

Christina Hallingse, the director of media relations at Cape Fear Community College, said the college's on-site child care facility has been a part of keeping student parents in school since it opened in 2023.

The college's child care facility expanded from a capacity of 20 children to 40 since 2023, Hallingse said. On average, she said the facility sees around 20 children each day,

though the number increases when public school is not in session, including teacher work days.

Several mothers told college staff that they were going to have to drop out for a semester because they could not find child care for their child, Hallingse said.

"The center is alleviating child care pressures that they may be experiencing when they're out of school and allowing them to attend courses here," she said.

Alongside addressing child care, Future-Ready North Carolina will support Propel NC, which Gilligan said most community colleges already have. Propel NC funds academic programs to put students in touch with local employers and give them real work experience.

Aharon Segal, an organizer for the Local 553 Union of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, said the union offers career readiness programs to commercial and industrial electricians in partnership with Durham Technical Community College. He said students in the apprenticeship work for contractors and attend classes simultaneously, which helps fill the deficit of skilled trade workers.

"There's a pretty well documented shortage of skilled tradespeople because the number of retirements, I think, are outpacing the new people coming in at this exact moment," he said.

Gilligan said the plan's most immediate goal to support Future-Ready North Carolina is a tour of all 58 state community colleges, during which they will be promoting the Propel NC funding model and building connections between community colleges and local employers.

"I think it's a great starting point," Segal said. "I think anytime you're starting out with a goal that you're going to support community colleges, and you're going to meet this workforce demand, and support the skilled trades and getting people into jobs where they can make a living, I think you're going in the right direction."

X: @dthcitystate

## TRANSPORTATION

# New train station expected in Hillsborough

Terminal set to open in 2027 will expand local Amtrak access

By Isaac Carter  
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The Town of Hillsborough is working with North Carolina Railroad, Amtrak and the state to build a new train station in Hillsborough between Gold Hill Way and Orange Grove Road, on a roughly 20-acre parcel.

The station itself will cover five acres. The Town is planning to dedicate five more acres to affordable housing, three acres to commercial spaces and the rest to other infrastructural needs, like landscape and parking.

Stephanie Trueblood, the public space and sustainability manager for the Town of Hillsborough, said many aspects of the project are ongoing and subject to change. The Town's interest in constructing affordable housing on a portion of the lot requires further planning and analysis, she said.

"This summer and into next fiscal year, we are working on a market study to put some thought into the layout and mix of uses for that property, and that presents a significant opportunity for the Town," Matt Efrid, assistant town manager for Hillsborough, said.

Trueblood said the train station project aims to reestablish passenger rail service in Hillsborough, which stopped in 1964. She said the community has expressed a desire for the return of passenger rail service, dating back to a 2007 petition with 366 signatures from town residents supporting the project.

"The community, remembering when we had passenger service, and wanting that available option again, as well as Amtrak realizing that a station would be financially feasible here, is what really got the ball rolling," Trueblood said.

Trueblood said the rail line is already utilized by Amtrak and freight lines. The Town meets with the North Carolina Department of Transportation regularly to ensure the station meets Amtrak standards.

The Hillsborough station will mark the 17th station in North Carolina that Amtrak lines travel



DTH DESIGN/ERICA LOPEZ

through, Craig Newton, NCDOT facilities engineer consultant, said.

"When an idea for a Hillsborough train station came about, we worked with the city to secure the funding for it," Newton said. "Our role is to coordinate with Amtrak and make sure that the station is designed and built to common standards."

Trueblood said the current plans for the station include a 7,700-square-foot station, rail platform,

greenway connection to downtown Hillsborough, parking, a bus stop, a constructed wetland, a public road extension and outdoor seating.

Newton said a meeting space for town commissioners and other town offices will be located within the station.

"Having another use inside the building provides a little more occupancy during the course of the day, which is good for security and those sorts of things. So it's good

that they have more stuff going on on the site, in the building than just the train station use," Newton said.

The project is currently in the planning, design and construction document-level engineering phase. Completion of the project is set for 2027, but permitting and coordination complexities may extend this date, Trueblood said.

The NCDOT, Town of Hillsborough, and GoTriangle reached a funding agreement in March of 2020.

Trueblood said the estimated total cost of the project is \$8 million, with \$7 million allocated for the station and \$1 million for the platform. Funding sources include \$686,000 from GoTriangle, \$34,000 from the Town of Hillsborough, and \$6,280,000 from North Carolina Department of Transportation via federal grant funding.

"It's in the State Transportation Improvement Program," Newton said. "There's a competitive process where local governments can submit projects to be rated for their benefit-cost ratio. It was a high importance project for that whole region, really."

X: @dthcitystate

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

# NCDHHS releases \$11 million for community diversion, reentry programs

## Funding to aid incarcerated people in rural counties

By Lola Oliverio

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On Feb. 7, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced that they will provide \$11 million to community-based diversion and reentry programs for those involved in the justice system.

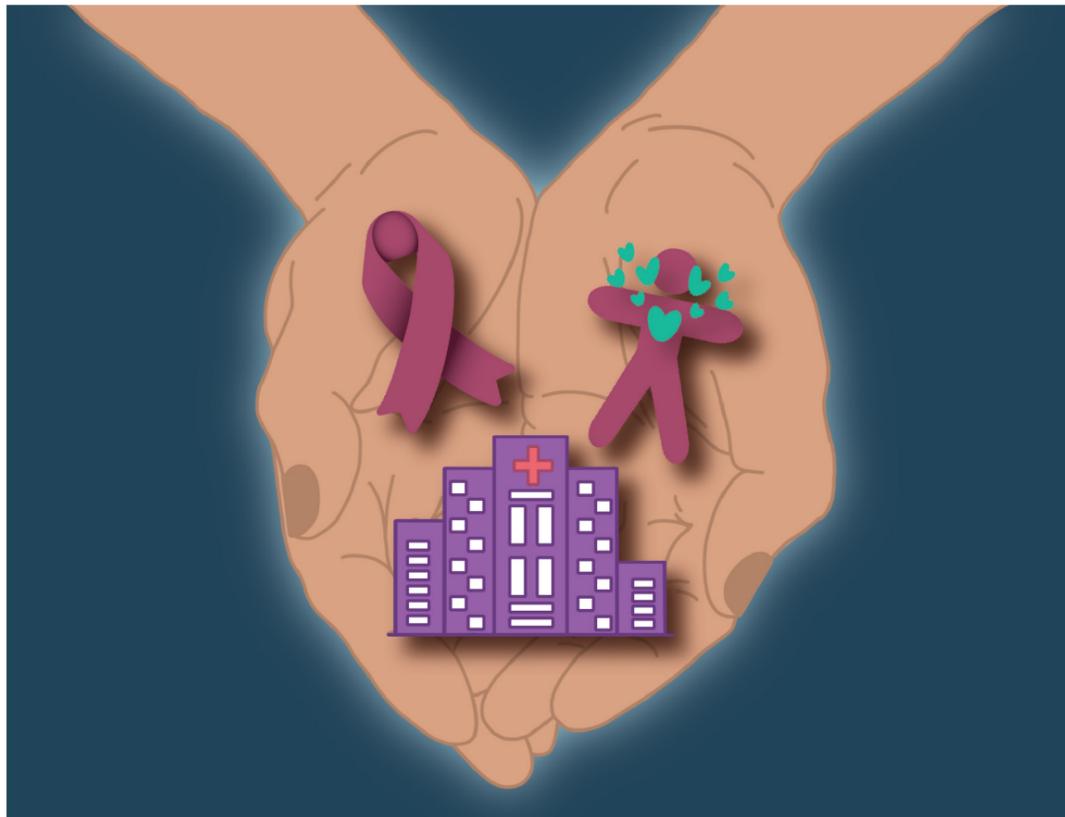
These programs help provide formerly and actively incarcerated people with access to substance use and mental health care, as well as resources to ease their reentry and adjustment to life following their incarceration.

Some programs that will receive funding include North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition and Coastal Horizons Center, which aim to expand their diversion services, especially for those in underserved areas. Additionally, the state has 23 local reentry councils that help those involved with the justice system ease back into daily life by providing housing, employment and treatment.

Those impacted by the justice system can be left without adequate housing, transportation and mental health or substance use treatment.

But in rural areas of North Carolina, access to reentry and diversion services can be sparse, Kelly Crosbie, director of the NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services, said.

The majority of North Carolina's prison facilities are located within rural



DTH DESIGN/CARLY EVANS

areas, with around 80 of the state's 100 counties being considered rural.

"It's hard to do anything when you pretty much ain't got no resources," said Kenneth Hyde, a jail administrator in Graham County, which has less than 8,000 residents, said. "We've got some. As far as resources-wise, we've got food programs and we've got job assistance programs, but we really don't have no housing,"

Hyde said that the nearest mental health facility is located in Asheville,

nearly two hours — and 100 miles — away from Graham County.

Half of formerly-imprisoned individuals are re-incarcerated within three years of their release, and over one-third are rearrested. Additionally, formerly incarcerated individuals are 40 times more likely to die from opioid overdose than the rest of the population within the first two weeks post-incarceration.

"The overall goal is to just acknowledge the fact that people

sometimes have issues — legal issues or issues within the justice system — because of untreated mental health or substance use issues," Crosbie said. "We think that they need help, and therefore, if we can get them into treatment, it's better for them."

Koinonia Community Solutions' reentry program, which serves individuals in several of the state's most rural counties, only began taking referrals in January, and within a month, already had 24 clients.

John Wallace, local reentry council job specialist for Koinonia Community Solutions in Winterville, N.C., said the organization provides food, cell services, housing, employment and job skills and case management.

"We also do career coaching and try to connect with the local community colleges and other partner organizations that may be able to provide services that we can't provide directly," Wallace said.

The organization also helps clients obtain credentials and identification, and provides vocational training, financial literacy and soft skill training, Rubi Blancas-Orduna, local reentry council coordinator at Koinonia Community Solutions, said

"In North Carolina, you come back to your county of conviction, or your home county where you live," Wallace said. "And most of the time these guys are coming back to the areas, and the resources that they need, particularly for sex offenders, are just not there."

The funding comes as part of the NCDHHS' \$835 million allocation to improve and transform behavioral health within the state — \$99 million of which is dedicated to helping those in the justice system by supporting diversion and reentry programs.

"Overall, we're trying to achieve the goals of saving lives, getting people into treatment [and] avoiding people being incarcerated for mental health issues," Crosbie said.

X: @lolaoliverio

**SPICY 9**

**Hey UNC Students!**

**Get 15% off any order with your One Card!**

The advertisement features a smartphone displaying a mobile app interface for Spicy 9 Sushi. The screen shows the restaurant's name, address (140 W Franklin St, Ste 150, Chapel Hill, NC 27516), pickup time (Today, 11:45 AM EDT), and a map of the location. Below the map, it shows 'Order details (1)' and a 'Promo Code OneCard' with an 'Apply' button. A blue arrow points from the 'Apply' button to the promotional text on the right. The background is a gradient of orange and red.

## THEATER | PERFORMANCE

## 'The Treasurer' explores complicated family dynamics

Carrboro ArtsCenter will continue showing play this weekend

By Maggie Lowder

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At 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, lights dimmed, ominous background music lowered and excited chatter simmered down in Carrboro's ArtsCenter as it prepared to begin its second performance of "The Treasurer."

A man walked into the theater, looking around. He stepped onto the stage and coldly told the audience that he is certain he will be going to hell, assuring they will find out why later on.

Colorful lights began to shine and the show started.

The 90-minute play, written by playwright Max Posner, takes audience members on a partially dark and partially comical journey through the mind of a man solely known as "The Son" as he faces his complicated and unpleasant relationship with his mother, Ida.

The show explores the feelings of guilt, frustration and self-hatred that come along with flawed and changing family dynamics, particularly when a parent and child are made to essentially switch roles once the parent reaches a certain age. The play has an added layer of complexity knowing that Ida abandoned her son when he was only 13 years old. She is left widowed now, forcing him to manage her finances and figure out a living situation.

Ida, played by Marcia Edmundson, is selfish and manipulative throughout the entire show. She tells long stories and sheds tears to get what she wants, no matter how much it costs her son.

Her personality is mostly conveyed through humor. The supporting actors, Ben Apple and Jessica Flemming, were responsible for that, as they played multiple characters ranging from The Son's

uninvolved siblings to annoyed Talbot's employees, erupting audience laughter with nearly every line they delivered.

Jenny Duve, a senior studying environmental health, said she could relate to the show's material.

"I've been dealing with a lot of family stuff like that, especially as we're in this turning point of our lives, transitioning and seeing our parents and grandparents age," Duve said.

The show goes through distinct tone shifts, one being when The Son freezes his mother's finances and screams at her over the phone. His disgust with himself is apparent in both his face and in the audience's reaction.

Mark Filiaci, who plays the Son in the show, said he knows it can be difficult to watch and some might even hate his character.

"Because, I mean, sometimes I'm not very nice. But I think there's an understanding involved with that for people who go through this," Filiaci said.

The show's ending is, without spoilers, full-circle. Filiaci, who delivered very emotional concluding lines, said it's his favorite part.

"I love the ending," Filiaci said. "It's just so ethereal to what's going on."

After the show concluded, audience members could be heard talking with each other and delivering praises to each actor, sharing their thoughts and takeaways.

Daniel O'Shaughnessy, the live events manager at the ArtsCenter, said he left thinking about the importance of human connection.

"I took away that the most important part of our lives is really our connections with other people," O'Shaughnessy said. "I think that starts with our closest relationships. And for most people, that's family."

"The Treasurer" will continue to be performed next weekend at the ArtsCenter, with shows Thursday through Sunday. Tickets can be purchased online or at the box office.

X: @dthlifestyle

## One-man show hosted in Friday Center

'The Talk' showcases Kelly's experiences as a Black man

By Zahra Alquaihi

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On Sunday afternoon, the Friday Center hosted "The Talk," a one-man show written and performed by UNC alumnus Sonny Kelly. The show centers on the conversation African American parents often have with their sons about the realities of American life for Black men.

The performance moved through different topics rapidly, weaving between the personal and the broadly experienced: between Kelly's reflections on his own family's struggles and the tragic deaths of Black Americans brutalized by the police. Kelly embodied over twenty characters during this one-man show, changing his voice and tone, using hats or glasses to switch between characters and using his body language and props to make the switch clear.

The show is largely inspired by Kelly's own experience with 'the talk' between him and his own son. In 2015, the news of Freddie Gray's death — a result of fatal injuries sustained while in police custody — initiated a conversation between Kelly and his son, Sterling, on the way to school when Sterling was just seven years old.

Kelly brought this conversation to life on stage by reenacting the panic upon hearing the news. While he tried to switch the radio channels, projected images of Freddie Gray, along with static and fast-talking journalists on the radio ultimately merged into the words 'Black Man.' These words then played on a loop, until Kelly screamed those words himself and silenced the radio.

"I just told my son essentially something brief, like, 'hey, son, this happens in our country.' I've only got



DTH/LILLAH HAYES

Director of Professional Development and Enrichment at the Friday Center Annette Madden and Sonny Kelly hosted "The Talk" on Sunday, Feb. 23.

a few minutes. You're about to go to first grade. I don't want to burden you with the world and race politics," Kelly said. "I just want to let you know this is real. So as a Black boy in America, you have to be careful and you have to be excellent and just do your best. And you're never really sure what's going to happen."

Sterling, now seventeen years old, said that even before he had 'the talk' with his father, he was somewhat aware of these racial issues because of Kelly's previous engagement with programs such as Find-a-Friend, a program in Fayetteville for at risk youth.

"How has [my understanding of The Talk] changed as I've gotten older? I don't feel like it's changed, but I do resonate with it more because I've grown up with the show at this point," Sterling said.

Sterling has now joined the family business as the audio and visual technician for Sunday's show, his first time doing it at this scale.

Kelly's spoken word and Sterling's visuals, like the American flag appearing intermittently during key moments and pictures of various real-life figures Kelly

portrayed throughout, work together to tell Kelly's story.

"Taking work from the page to the stage gives a broader and sometimes different audience for the work than exists in articles and books," Renée Alexander Craft, Kelly's graduate school advisor and mentor, said. "And it allows for real-time conversation, dialogue, about the issues that we're dealing with through research."

Among the audience was a group of young cadets, as they call themselves, who are part of the Thomas Mentor Leadership Academy, a nonprofit that helps guide young boys raised by a single legal guardian through mentorship, academic and social support.

"We were having that engagement with a group of people that oftentimes either feel silenced or pushed to the side, because, oh, 'you're just teenagers,' regardless of their race, right?" Kelly said. "But to have them to be the focal point and to know how important they are, and for me to remind them, 'y'all, you are powerful. You have things to say. You are beautiful and brilliant.'"

X: @dthlifestyle

## PAINTING

## Eno Arts Mill BIPOC Artist-in-Residence creates new exhibit

Tyamica Mabry uses pieces to symbolize her growth

By Mollie Ray

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Last year's BIPOC Artist-In Residence at the Eno Arts Mill was Tyamica Mabry, a self-taught visual artist. Recently, she created a new exhibit titled Transcendence, symbolizing her growth as both an artist and human being.

Though she also writes poems and makes jewelry, Mabry's main medium is paintings. Her passion for the medium started with her daughter, who would bring home paintings she made from school. Inspired by her creativity, Mabry began drawing cartoon characters, changed her medium to paint, and her art only grew from there.

Transcendence is an exhibit about going beyond limitations and trying new things, which Mabry did while creating her paintings. Generally, she paints more realistic pictures,



PHOTO COUTRESY OF STEVE MURRAY

BIPOC Artist-in-Residence Tyamica Mabry stands in front of her installation Transcendence at Eno Arts Mill.

but decided to make something more abstract for this project.

"With Transcendence, it was more of just whatever was inside of my head," Mabry said. "It's a form of evolving and becoming a better artist, and trying new things."

Mabry has a seemingly laid-back painting style, and doesn't often

sketch out her pieces beforehand. She starts with an idea in her head and then paints right on the canvas.

This approach was used in Mabry's pieces featured in the exhibit, which use bright colors and abstract visuals to symbolize her growth as an artist.

One of her paintings, titled "Be You," features an abstract and

geometric face using bright pink, blue, green and purple. Mabry said that this piece is a message to embrace one's uniqueness.

After painting, the time came to set up Mabry's paintings in the arts center. With the help of Carrboro Arts Commission staff and her daughter, Transcendence was curated piece by piece, in a placement that Mabry said helps tell a story to viewers.

Carrboro Arts Commission director Katie Murray said that Mabry is an extremely talented artist. Murray helps advise local agents and municipalities through the Eno Arts Mill, and helped Mabry with figuring out how she wanted to showcase her exhibit.

Murray said that she feels as though the arts can be very exclusionary at times. To combat this, the Eno Arts Mill stays very focused on showcasing artwork from people with different types of backgrounds.

"The arts are a part of our humanity, so it's important to be able to showcase artwork from all types of people, all types of backgrounds," Murray said.

Mabry's work is featured among five other artists, including her friend Tayon McLaughlin, a multimedia

artist. McLaughlin and Mabry met at a local poetry event, and began painting together at the Eno Arts Mill.

At Mabry's exhibit, McLaughlin showcased two of his paintings, focusing on themes such as rebirth and rejuvenation. He said that he was very grateful for the opportunity to showcase his work.

"The most rewarding part about being an artist — there are two words that come in my head: relief and appreciation," McLaughlin said. "It feels good to create something and people appreciate it."

Mabry said that her art is inspired by her life experiences, and that painting helps her find joy in every moment.

"Art is a form of therapy," Mary said. "It has helped me through some very difficult times in my life. It helps me be in the moment, and I feel like a lot of life is spent thinking about the past or the future, and not really enjoying the moment that we're in."

Transcendence will be up at the Eno Arts Mill until the end of the month. To learn more about Mabry and her art, check out her website Types Of Her.

X: @dthlifestyle

CELEBRATION

# UNC SEASA hosts first ever cultural gala

## 'Threads of Unity' honors Southeast Asian diversity and unity

By Shreya Senthilkumar  
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On Sunday evening, the Great Hall in the Student Union was filled with the excited chatter of students, mostly dressed in traditional Southeast Asian clothing and holding plates piled high with banh mi sliders, pad thai or basil fried rice.

Some ate their meals at tables arranged around the room, while others took photos in front of a backdrop decorated with fairy lights and paper flowers. Pop and R&B songs streamed through the speakers.

The food and festivities were part of the UNC Southeast Asian Student Association's first ever charity gala, "Threads of Unity." The name is inspired by the diversity and unity between various Southeast Asian cultures.

"SEASA is kind of unique and unlike the other Asian orgs in that there's many different parts of Southeast Asia, so it's hard to think of one particular theme that encompasses all of us," Kayla Vu, one of SEASA's design chairs, said. "So we kind of wanted to just capture how different and similar that we are."

Vu, a UNC junior, said SEASA has been trying to plan a charity gala since her first year but lacked the funds to do so. Thanks to the club's growth over the past two years, they were finally able to make it happen on Sunday.

The gala's ticket proceeds will be donated to Transplanting Traditions Community Farm, a Chapel Hill farm supporting Burmese, Karen and Chin refugees. The farm hopes to foster food sovereignty in refugee communities, meaning community control and access to agricultural and food systems. It has a number of educational, agricultural and mutual-aid oriented programs specifically for refugees in the area.

Vu said she tried to represent the charity and Southeast Asian countries in the gala's decorations, which incorporated baskets and earthy colors.

The organization's culinary chairs also represented Southeast Asia through the event's menu. Some dishes were catered by local restaurants like Cham Thai and Rasa Malaysia, while others were made by the chairs themselves.

After attendees filled their plates with food and took their seats, the night's performances began. Disaporadic, an Asian American indie band made up of UNC students, took the stage first, performing covers of the songs "Every Summertime" by NIKI and "APT." by ROSÉ and Bruno Mars in their first ever performance with all five members.

A series of musical performances followed, with rounds of trivia interspersed between. The performances ranged from Vietnamese dance troupe Blue Star to student Daffany Lee singing a song in the Hmong language.

Kasama, UNC's Filipino American Association, had the most people in their dance medley with 37 people that showcased three popular Filipino dances.

One of them, a dance called Tinikling, involved the dancers jumping over bamboo poles.

"Basically, it just mimics the movements of the tinikling bird as it tries to escape the traps set by rice farmers back in the Philippines," Elaine De Jesus, Kasama's dance coordinator, said.

During the intermission, alumnae April Bourommavong, Christy Thalangsy and Thu Neang said Kasama's performance was their favorite up until that point.

All three were once part of SEASA, with Bourommavong co-founding the club in 2018.

Bourommavong said she started the club to give Southeast Asian students a place on campus but

never thought it would be as big as it is today.

"There wasn't really a place for Southeast Asian students, especially since a lot of us never really had the opportunity to make it to secondary education, so I just think it's beautiful that this community has been built, and it's thriving and prominent," they said.

After the performances, members put on a fashion show, celebrating traditional clothing from specific Southeast Asian countries.

SEASA announced toward the end of the gala that they had raised over \$2,000 for Transplanting Traditions so far.

Kyna Lisette Zaldivar, Kasama's publicity chair and a dancer in the performance, said the gala is a great way to learn about the cultures of Burma, Laos and other Southeast Asian countries that are not often talked about.

"SEASA is an amazing organization, and Kasama loves SEASA so much, and the fact that they're doing this is incredible," she said. "So props to them, especially for it being their first time."

X: @dthlifestyle

"It's hard to think of one particular theme that encompasses all of us, so we kind of wanted to just capture how different and similar that we are."

Kayla Vu  
SEASA design chair



DTH/ALEX YANG

Members of Yu Yeng perform a traditional Hmong dance during UNC SEASA's Threads of Unity Charity Gala in the Great Hall at the Frank Porter Graham Student Union on Sunday, Feb. 23.

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## REVIEW

## The best of the Best Pictures: 2025 Oscars nominees ranked

Awards ceremony to air on Sunday, March 2 at 7 p.m.

By Charlie Bagwell  
Staff Writer  
lifestyle@dailytarheel.com

Ah, awards season. That beautiful time of year when the fattest hogs in the Hollywood sty jostle for a sniff of those little gilded statuettes. The most coveted of these Oscars is that one that will follow a film's legacy forever — the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Which film will take home 2025's trophy? Only the Academy knows. Here, however, is my ranking of the nominees.

First, I must acknowledge the elephant in the Dolby Theatre. I did not see "The Brutalist." It's old news by now, but "The Brutalist" used artificial intelligence both to augment the lead actors' Hungarian dialogue and to generate imagery of architectural designs by the titular brutalist. I believe generative AI to be a plague upon artistry and to represent a massive, imminent threat to the livelihoods of artists everywhere. It may seem like a minor nitpick over which to boycott a film, but I recommend you all boycott "The Brutalist" as well. Now, on with the list.



DTH DESIGN/ZOEY MORRIS

## 9. "Emilia Pérez"

Trash-talking "Emilia Pérez" has become so common of late that I don't even feel like engaging with it. The internet is (for once) right: it's bad! And racist. And pretty reductive as a trans story. If the Academy wanted to uber-nominate a 2024 movie about the transgender experience, "I Saw the TV Glow" is the one that they should've picked. "I Saw the TV Glow" is a fantastic movie, not racist, not edited by a 5-year-old and has more than zero good songs! "Emilia Pérez" is the polar opposite. In fact, "Emilia Pérez" is only nominally a "movie." Don't watch it. Do, however, watch "I Saw the TV Glow." Posthaste.

## 8. "A Complete Unknown"

"A Complete Unknown" is fine, if a bit surface-level. You can get the same experience as watching this movie by putting on Bob Dylan's greatest hits. The film also sidelines the more interesting stories of Joan Baez and Pete Seeger (shoutout Edward Norton) in favor of a frankly

played-out recounting of Dylan's early years. I would rather have seen a more politically-focused Seeger biopic than Highway 61 Re-Re-Revisited. Save yourself some time and skip this one. Hopefully, the industry will soon move away from its compulsion to make these boring biopics, but it doesn't seem like the times are a-changin' just yet.

## 7. "Wicked"

I've long been skeptical of "Wicked" as a concept. Do we really need a Wicked Witch of the West prequel? Does it really need to be two movies, the both of which combined will likely run close to six hours? Well, that said, "Wicked" is pretty solid! Outside of some technical nitpicks, I found it surprisingly entertaining, and I especially liked Ariana Grande's performance. Still, does it deserve to be nominated for Best Picture? I say no. A good blockbuster does not a great film make. Sorry, Elphaba stans, the best I can do for "Wicked" is hold some space near the bottom of the list.

## 6. "Anora"

It's just uphill from here! "Anora" is the first movie on this list that I'd describe as inarguably very good. "Anora" knows what it wants to do and does it well. The main issue with the picture is its length — "Anora" is a 7/10 as it stands, but could trim almost 40 minutes of fat and jump straight to a 9/10. That said, Mikey Madison kills in the lead role, and Sean Baker can sling a camera like nobody's business.

## 5. "Conclave"

"Conclave" is great! I don't have any outstanding gripes with the film, but it sinks a bit in this ranking because of how typical it is, for lack of a better word. Though I hesitate to say "Oscar Bait," this film feels lab-grown to win awards. A "Conclave" victory would far and away be the safest choice the Academy could make, and I want to see them take risks.

## 4. "The Substance"

It'll change your life! Well, I mean, maybe not, but you should still

watch it. It's a rockin' horror (horror comedy? — I thought it was pretty funny) with impeccable set design. I could live in that creepy hallway. I don't have anything bad to say about "The Substance"; it's only held back by how sheerly monumental the films I rank above it are. It might not be the Best Picture, but "The Substance" is definitely one of the best horror flicks of the 2020s.

I'll interject here to say that the three films that follow are all very, very close to each other in ranking and I ranked them based on personal taste. All of the movies in my top three are absolutely deserving of Best Picture, and I'll be delighted if any of them wins.

## 3. "Ainda Estou Aqui"/"I'm Still Here"

"I'm Still Here" is the only Brazilian film I've seen, and it still rockets to the top of my ranking thereof. Fernanda Torres, in my opinion, floors her competition for Best Actress, and the rest of the cast deliver to an almost equal degree. The biggest standout in "I'm Still Here" is the atmosphere. More than any other film on this

list, "I'm Still Here" immerses the audience in the world, locale, period and feeling of the story. One leaves the theater feeling that they just walked out of 1970 Rio de Janeiro.

## 2. "Nickel Boys"

"Nickel Boys" is more than just a fantastic story put to film — it's a giant leap for film form. I see this picture being taught in film classes everywhere within the decade, and rightfully so. I don't want to say anything more, as this is a film best experienced as blind as possible. If you only see one film on this list, make it "Nickel Boys." It's the most captivating feature of the year by far.

## 1. "Dune: Part Two"

I've raved enough about "Dune: Part Two." Go read my dedicated review of it. This movie is a monumental cinematic achievement. It rules. Desert power. 'Nuff said.

Letterboxd: @banana\_peels

## Arts collectives provide community for LGBTQ+ youth



DTH DESIGN/KATRINA DONG

Continued from Page 1

blossom into their genuine selves. While one of Torres' roles is to bring the art supplies, she is always present to facilitate conversations or have discussions with the kids, even though it is not a therapy group.

To expand the space even more, Torres invited multiple queer guest artists to discuss and teach about their experiences in creative spaces.

Jason Lord, one of the guests, is an interdisciplinary artist. Lord facilitated a workshop with the teens on the history of collage, particularly the Dada movement, which was a response to World War I. Dadaists created absurd art to challenge norms and react to the horrors of war.

"We talked about art as a means of resistance in a way of pushing against systems that are designed to harm you," Lord said.

Lord said as young queer artists, it is important to spend time with those you share experiences with.

"They have an excuse to come together and see each other and be reminded that they're not the only ones in the world," Lord said.

The guest artists are a way for the teens to make connections and understand that there are queer people who survive, thrive and make a joy-filled life of art, Lord said.

The success of the teen space prompted Torres to start a new Tween Arts Collective to support the younger children of the community.

"We were getting parents reaching out, wondering if we had a group for younger kiddos," Torres said. "So it really seemed to be a need in the community."

The tween collective is also completely free, supported by a grant from Anita Mills and Andrea Selch.

Katie Murray, the director of the Orange County Arts Commission, said that the most important

aspect of both the tween and teen collectives is for the youth to find a place of belonging.

"I think anybody that has a reason to feel 'other than' oftentimes struggles with finding their community and finding their crew of people that they feel like they can be themselves around," Murray said. "That is totally what programs like this provide."

The space has also prompted the kids to show off their art in unique ways.

"They have an excuse to come together and see each other and be reminded that they're not the only ones in the world."

Jason Lord  
Guest artist

After Hurricane Helene, the teens brought their own art to a First Friday at the Mill event, which opens an exhibit for a featured artist, and raised over \$500 for BeLoved Asheville. They plan to join with the tweens for an art show in June and July with a chosen theme of monochrome.

"It's such a beautiful, caring, loving group of kids that just wants to give back to the community," Torres said.

Murray said that she has loved watching the ripple effect of programs like these, spreading positivity and camaraderie beyond a Tuesday evening.

Parents of the teens and tweens have also found company amongst each other. Torres said that navigating the world with

an LGBTQIA+ teen can be isolating and the connections that the parents make while dropping off their children is just as special as the connections made within the collective.

"If we can provide a safe, welcoming, judgement free space for people to come and make new friends and find their social circle, then I think it's life changing," Murray said.

X: @dthlifestyle

# Opinion

## The Daily Tar Heel

COLUMN

### Take a shot on women's basketball – rivalry week isn't just for the men

By Cooper Hall

Columnist

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The UNC-Duke rivalry is arguably the most iconic in all of sports. There's a buzz in the air the week leading up to a men's basketball game between the two. You can't sit on Polk Place without being asked by an interviewer to describe Duke basketball in one word. You can't step onto Franklin Street without seeing signs decorated for the occasion. You can't scroll through Instagram without seeing stories proclaiming that Carolina Blue is the best blue. You can't walk through campus without escaping rivalry week.

On the day of the game, home or away, music from parties fills the air, students get decked out in UNC merch, watch parties are held for those without tickets and, if all goes well, we rush Franklin.

UNC as a community pours everything possible into preparing for, watching and celebrating a UNC-Duke men's basketball game. What we don't do is extend this love, support and dedication to our women's team.

The women's basketball team played Duke in early January this year. Before the game, that buzz was totally absent. There was no flood of Carolina Blue on social media, no interviews on the Quad and, apart from Carolina Fever signs around campus promising free hats, practically no talk about the upcoming matchup.

The women's team upset Duke 53-46 in overtime in that game, a

far more competitive effort than the 17-point blowout that was the men's loss. The women's win was largely overlooked compared to last year's reaction to the win over Duke on the men's side. Franklin continued to operate as usual and there was little social attention on the victory. What's more? The women's team is ranked in the top 10 ahead of the second Duke game on Thursday, while the men's team has struggled to remain a bubble team.

More than just having a real chance to win the game, we rave about how much fun rivalry week is. We thrive on the feud. Why wouldn't we want to get to experience that four times a season instead of two?

Admittedly, a lot of problems that hinder equal social attention on the men's and women's basketball teams stem from institutional barriers. The women's UNC-Duke game earlier this semester was on a Thursday night, whereas the men's was on a Saturday. Students can't spend the day partying on a weekday and are less likely to spend the night at a basketball game when they have an 8 a.m. class the next day. The timeline for a week of preparation doesn't run as smoothly when the game falls in the middle of the week.

While, individually, we can't do much about unequal scheduling – not to mention inequities in media coverage or facilities – we can change the way that we interact with women's basketball on a social level. As sports fans, we



DTH FILE/VIYADA SOUKTHAVONE

UNC graduate guard Lexi Donarski (20) shoots the ball during the game against Duke on Jan. 9 in Carmichael Arena.

have the power and responsibility to provoke a shift.

The sports world is moving toward equality in lots of ways. Equal pay, female coaches and well-known female athletes are more common. Moments like this, where male sports are given more societal attention than female sports, are salient reminders of the road left to travel. Of course, there's historical reason to support the men's team: they've won more national championships, produced Michael Jordan and

existed as male athletes in a time when the patriarchy openly drove the sports world.

UNC is a basketball school, and that's true for men and women. Placing equal value on how we discuss, celebrate and watch men's and women's UNC-Duke basketball games is a step toward a more inclusive sports world that we can actively choose to take. If not, we're sitting idly by and watching as women's basketball continues to be swept under the rug.

The quote, "If you build it, they will come," is often applied to women's sports, advocating for institutional change which will lead to social change. This can work both ways. If we show up for women's basketball in all the ways we do for men's – selling out venues, rushing Franklin, buying jerseys – we will force the dynamic to shift, first socially and then institutionally. If we come, they will build it.

X: @dthopinion

## QuickHits

SNL 50

SNL's 50th Anniversary Special graced us with familiar faces like Eddie Murphy and Tina Fey, along with the botoxed faces of Kim Kardashian and Cher. One of TV's biggest nights for comedy and pop culture resurrected iconic sketches, from Black Jeopardy to Debby Downer to Dooneese. Oh, and, of course, Domingo.

Spring Break Eve

It's t-minus 10 days until spring break. You can't tell if your heart is palpitating out of anticipatory excitement or the three coffees you just drank just so you could study. Whether you're preparing to go home or to Cabo, please lock in. As Remy from "Ratatouille" said: "Anyone can cook."

Roberts' Performance

The UNC Men's Basketball team played N.C. State last week, and the initial boos for Lee Roberts quickly erupted into cheers for a second snow day. But the snow has melted, Lee. And so has the short-lasting student fervor from your attempt for approval.

COLUMN

### And when I die, I'll be a Tar Heel dead

By Cogan McMichaels

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I once wanted nothing more than to leave this place behind. I've lived in Chapel Hill for 20 years, grown tired of and frustrated by it, and I trusted entirely that a change in environment would be the solution to my cyclical despondency. Since my first day on this campus as a student, I'd kept the idea of transferring at bay, but finally, I was ready to actually do it.

The spring of my first year I spent abroad in Limerick, Ireland. It was the longest I had ever been away from home, and the experience was gratifying insofar as it confirmed my belief that I'd be happier anywhere but Chapel Hill. Entering the fall semester, I registered myself for an ACT test (I was sure I needed to lift my score of 31 to be competitive), submitted an application to Honors Carolina (again, to be "competitive") and secured a letter of recommendation from my marketing professor back in Ireland.

The point is, I've worked diligently to escape Chapel Hill and all it represents. But the deadline to submit my application for transfer is a week away – and I've decided not to submit it.

Chapel Hill isn't to blame for my misery. It was one of those clichéd "it's not you, it's me" moments. My childhood cynicism, coupled with a disdain for happy people, led me to believe that UNC was some pocket of evil, that everyone here was out to get me. And I wondered why I didn't make many friends.



DTH FILE/MASON MILLER

A student walks by the Morehead-Patterson Bell Tower on Jan. 9.

It didn't help that I went to Chapel Hill High School. Every day, to get to school, my younger brother and I drove past the pompous Lake Hogan Farms, the HOA community where our richest, snobbiest classmates dwelled. I scoffed at the irony of these peers – steadfast in their liberal values yet, in my mind, utterly oblivious to the real world. The sporty kids were insolent and the artsy ones were insufferable.

Coming to UNC, I was met with more of the same. My

generalizations carried over, and I soon hated this batch of people. I would never even consider going out to party, because that's what empty-headed people do. And I couldn't chase my dreams here; surely, nobody else enjoyed making music as much as I did, so why would I bother looking?

Last semester, I took Psychology 101: General Psychology and went to office hours to air my concerns and find some confirmation of how I felt. But I didn't get what I

wanted. On that rainy day, I left my professor's office with something I mulled over for a long time.

"Are you chasing something or running away from something else?"

It wasn't the "Good Will Hunting" response I'd hoped for. The thing is, life is what you make it. I realized that, rather than running away from this place I've come to resent, I should challenge myself to embrace it. And ever since I took on that perspective I've been much more appreciative of Chapel Hill.

Sure, it's got its problems. There's a coal plant on West Cameron Avenue that sucks for plenty of reasons, but the Town of Chapel Hill has been receptive to complaints and even held a public hearing last month. And as for the people – many are entitled, rich doofuses, but just as many are not.

It's easy to overlook what's wonderful in turbulent times, but it's worth making the effort to recognize the good.

Cosmic Cantina is open until 3 a.m. most nights. UNC is one of the top five public schools in the country. We just destroyed N.C. State in basketball, 97-73. Springtime in Chapel Hill is beautiful. Plus, we get hot summers and snowy winters. The town is historic, the trees are tall and the people are passionate. Chapel Hill may not be perfect, but there's so much to be grateful for.

And at the end of the day, nothing beats a Carolina sunset.

X: @dthopinion

## SATIRE

# LinkedIn update: I'm doing cool things

By Sydney Baker

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My academic advisor and career coaches recently told me I need to be posting about my accomplishments more, as it's obvious I'm lagging behind some of my peers' LinkedIn post frequencies. So, I've compiled an inventory of what I've been working on — try to not get too jealous.

First, I'm really just humbled to announce that this week, I was called on in two of my classes.

I also wanted to share this three-page essay I worked extremely hard on for my intro political science class, as well as some other discussion posts I've been up to in my philosophy course. I've grown exponentially as a thinker and Canvas user. I'm super excited to see where this takes me!

It is with even greater honor that I share that I was accepted into Lenoir Dining Hall this week. I want to thank CDS and the University for making this happen. I'm looking forward to collaborating with the dining hall workers and growing as both a student and eater. I've long lived by the inspirational quote: "You are what you eat." I cannot wait to be an under-seasoned slice of meatloaf finding its way in the thick gravy of academia.

I've been carefully weaving my spider web of connections all across campus, networking with the dogs from Hugs & Pups and having raw, insightful dialogues with the Pit preachers. Also in terms of networking, I've ghosted and emotionally scarred 12 men in the past two weeks in order to recruit more members for my upcoming mental health nonprofit.

I'm incredibly blessed to report that as a pre-advertising/public relations major, I've honed my skills on Yik Yak. Basically acting as an unannounced intern, I've practiced social media management by creating vile, problematic posts and then reposting them as if I'm a totally different, more moral user.

This has been a lucrative experience for my interest in public relations as well as a good introduction to the cutthroat marketing world. One day, I hope to make crazy amounts of money in the industry, but for now I'll bask in my 20,000 Yakarma.

For my second major, pre-business, I'm thrilled to publicize that I started my own professional club: Carolina Blondes in Consulting. It seeks to join like-minded blondes of all types — dark ash, platinum, old money, ice, honey — together in their passion for consulting. You can be a fake blonde or a dirty blonde or a real blonde. We do not discriminate. I also casually founded a few other groups, including Rho Rho Rho, a pre-professional sorority for boat appreciators, Mu Mu Mu, a pre-professional fraternity for cow lovers, and another pre-professional sorority for students who are just really exhausted, Psi Psi Psi.

After not getting into the Honors Abroad fall semester program I wanted, I'm incredibly exhilarated to trumpet that I decided to do a September semester in the Forest Theater, where I met squirrels and beetles of all backgrounds and ethnicities. I learned the exotic, beautiful language of the grubs, worms and other bugs that I had profound conversations with. I've greatly immersed myself in foreign culture and learned more about the vast world overseas or, in this case, overbees.

For spring break, I'm galvanized to promulgate that I plan on furthering my passion for travel by participating in the career trek from South Campus to Granville Towers. I'm truly electrified to immerse myself in UNC's dazzling brick architecture and learn more about the relative strength of my quads and calves. This trek is fully funded by my scholarship program, which is funded by my parents.

While all these accomplishments and future endeavors greatly excite me, there is one thing that I look forward to above all else — my next LinkedIn post.

X: @sydneyj\_baker

## COLUMN

# Many use ChatGPT to stave off burnout, but that can snowball to extremes

By Jaden Miller

Columnist  
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A study by the UNC-Chapel Hill Mental Health Task Force in 2019 found that over 90 percent of UNC undergraduates reported feeling overwhelmed. Sixty percent of these reported having overwhelming feelings of anxiety. Using the information highlighted in this study and guidelines provided by the National Institutes of Health, it can be derived that most UNC students have, at one point or another, qualified for what is scientifically known as "burnout."

Every college student will likely feel some sense of burnout in their four years, but in the case of our University, this burnout persists rather than fades away. From semester to semester, nothing changes for Chapel Hill students: never-ending assignments, midterms and finals weighted three times as much as anything else in the class, a culture of double majors or double minors, master's and doctorate degrees — it's easy to feel that stress is incessant.

This leads students to wonder how they can save themselves from the torment that is to be a well-educated and dignified UNC student. The most prevalent answer? Generative AI.

From 2019, the year of the Mental Health Task Force study, to now, the use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT have increased drastically, with some studies reporting that almost all students at some point in their college career will use AI at least once.

UNC has tried to balance this new tool within the limits and regulations of academia, but the result seems to be the same. College students do not seem to care about the implications generative AI tools may have on their education.



DTH DESIGN/ANNABELLE HENDERSON

To this majority feeling anxiety and burnout, AI has been a savior allowing them to tackle their education with new reinvigorated energy. However, I might suggest that AI has been an academic Lucifer in disguise.

In an ongoing study of 505 Chinese university students, it has been found that the excessive use of ChatGPT and other AI tools led to diminished critical thinking skills, less engagement with course material and, you guessed it, increased feelings of burnout.

This idea, while formalized, is not exactly new to us. Everyone's had times when they were behind in class and needed a quick study guide or had a long reading due in an hour and only really needed the main points. It has become so much a manner of life that many students would rather figure out a way to have ChatGPT read a PDF than read it themselves.

You might begin to ask yourself what the point of ever doing your work is if AI can do it all for you. Then you find that the more you use generative AI, the less it becomes a fallback when you forgot to do your assignment due in an hour.

You might find yourself "getting ahead" by simply having AI take all your notes for you. Eventually you might cease to do any homework at all, and by this point, even the easy things have become much harder.

So while generative AI has ostensibly offered itself up to aspiring college students as a knight in shining armor, a last resort to the battles of an overwhelmed individual, it really has amplified feelings that hinder our ability to function and enjoy life.

Keeping all of this in mind, I encourage those who might read this that when it comes to that annotated bibliography, chemistry lab research paper or analysis of that sculpture from who knows when, close the ChatGPT tab on your computer. Clear your mind, take a breath of fresh air and allow yourself to think a little. Though burnout can get to all of us, our generation must turn away from AI as our greatest tool and look for healthier and sustainable options.

X: @dthopinion

## COLUMN

# Off-campus students should linger on campus

By Ryan Pham

Columnist  
opinion@dailytarheel.com

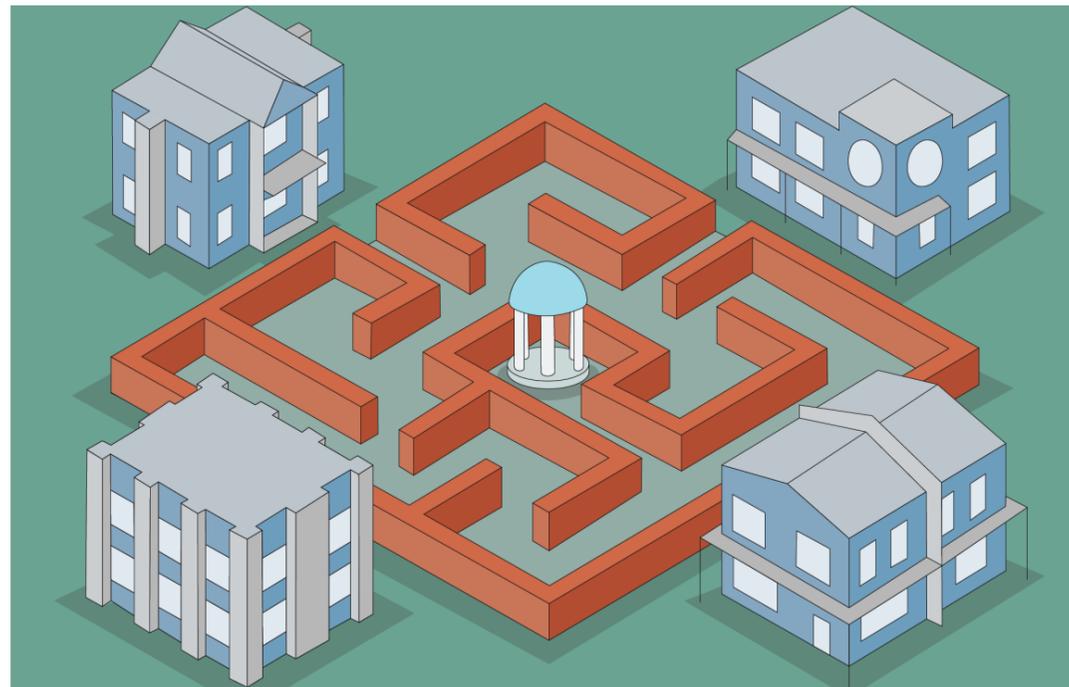
With every first-year student required to live on campus, excluding those in Granville Towers, the on-campus experience is a rite of passage into UNC student life. However, as the years go by, they eventually face a daunting decision: whether or not to stay on campus.

With classic residence hall experiences like sharing small rooms, broken laundry machines, and dealing with noisy roommates, on-campus living is, for most students, a fleeting chapter in their college years.

So, you finally leave. You pack up your bags filled with your remaining dignity, Target decorations, free merchandise and leftover memories from the years, and you head to some questionable but affordable off-campus option. Or, in many cases, a pricey option that you try to justify.

Great, so you're finally off campus in your own home without (too many) cockroaches or fire alarm drills at 2 a.m. You bask in the glory of off-campus life, enjoying somewhat delicious home-cooked meals, newfound independence and, most importantly, your own room.

But the honeymoon phase of off-campus living only lasts a little longer than the average college relationship — inevitably, it fades. You realize the only people you see are your roommates, your neighbors and the three peers you never stick



DTH DESIGN/NICK LOTZ

around long enough to talk to outside of class.

You notice that you never remain on campus anymore, disappearing the second your daily obligations end. Your world starts closing in as you realize your old friends have drifted away, you keep missing out on the on-campus shenanigans and meeting new people feels like a distant memory.

I don't have a doctorate, but I coin this common college phenomenon the

"off-campus effect." This effect occurs when students leave the confines of Carolina Housing to explore off-campus life, only to find themselves growing apart from the University and campus community as a whole.

I've seen this effect play out too many times with my friends and peers. They move off campus and then completely disappear off the face of the Earth. I never see them in the dining halls, the library, on the way

to class — nowhere, really. Honestly, I don't see them again unless I'm the one pressing them to grab lunch.

On top of that, they complain about seeing their friends less, falling out of touch, always playing catch-up on campus happenings and feeling disconnected from their UNC roots. I wonder why?

My solution is simple, easy and familiar. Off-campus students should make a greater effort to spend time on

campus, taking advantage of university life while they're still physically at UNC. Go back to your roots, relive the good old days and have fun doing college things on campus for once. Let the spirit of student gatherings, the buzz of campus activities and the spontaneous moments between classes remind you why you chose to be part of this community in the first place.

Too many off-campus students fall into the habit of treating their UNC classes and off-campus housing as two separate lives: school and regular life. They go to and from class with only one thought in mind: getting back home as soon as possible.

But in reality, the best part of college is how school and everyday life naturally intertwine to create a complete experience. That's why off-campus students need to take a lesson from The Cranberries and just linger on campus.

As a sophomore still living on campus, I feel connected to the UNC community — whether it's roaming around and enjoying student life, constantly seeing familiar faces or simply being part of the campus atmosphere. Staying on campus offers far more social exposure and opportunities to connect with others.

So before you rush back to your off-campus sanctuary, pause, soak in the memories and enjoy the places that shaped your college journey. Once these years slip away, you'll wish you had stayed just a little longer.

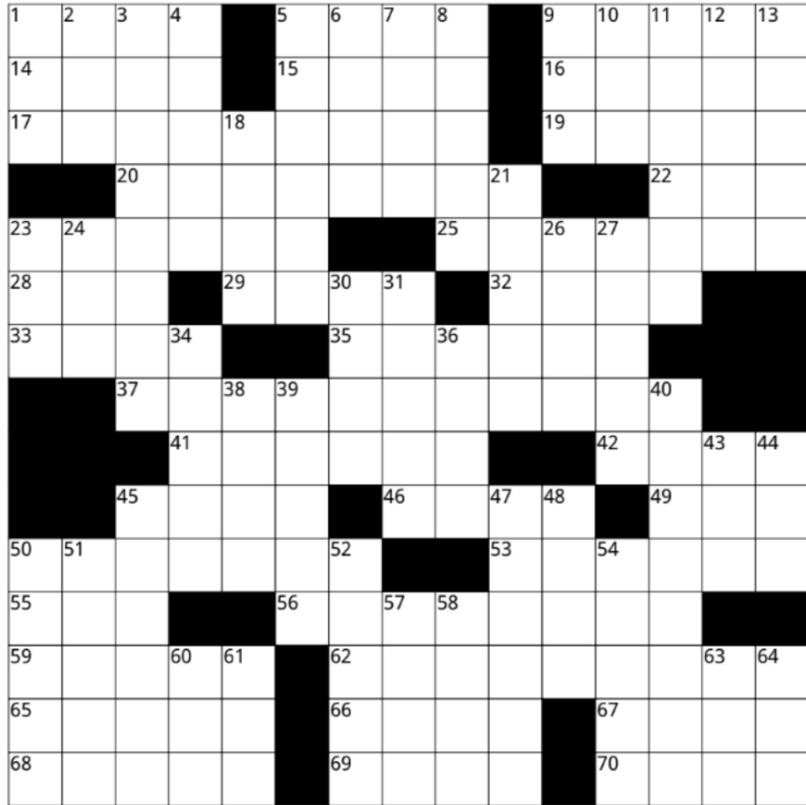
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“Turns of Fate”

This week’s crossword was created by a new creator Aidan Lockhart, who is also a special projects reporter.

Across

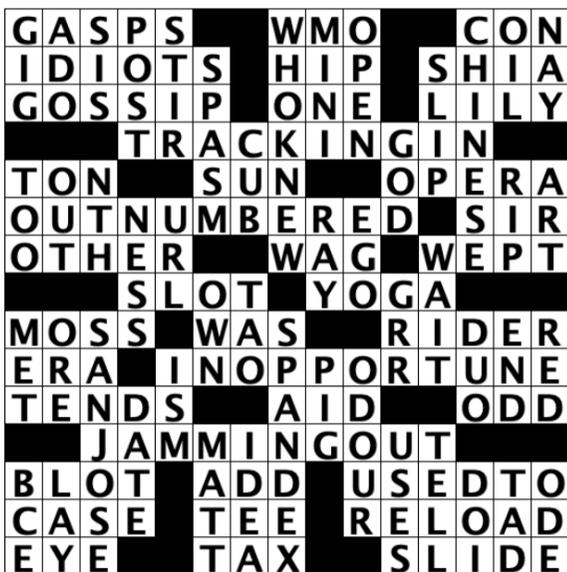
- 1 A young sheep
- 5 Leg, eg.
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Bin Ladin, target of Operation Neptune Spear
- 14 Sinful
- 15 Pelvic Bones
- 16 Insurance company which uses fowl advertising?
- 17 Preludes to many board-game turns
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Ball (rubber toy with stretchy strands)
- 20 Put in, again
- 22 Gardening aid
- 23 Steinbeck’s companion in “Travels With Charley”, eg.
- 25 Something worn on a 5-across
- 28 Post-op location
- 29 Site of Napoleon’s exile
- 32 What some painters use
- 33 Veteran’s affliction, for short
- 35 Graduates
- 37 Preludes to some kisses

Down

- 1 Bulb variety
- 2 Bird-related prefix
- 41 Intense
- 42 Parker or Ehringhaus
- 45 Ammo for some shooters
- 46 Sand, on a golf course
- 49 Short-lived trend
- 50 Did some drawing
- 53 Shreds, as cheese
- 55 Light switch positions
- 56 R.J. Davis and Ian Jackson, for two
- 59 Overalls fabric
- 62 They result in heads or tails
- 65 Overweight
- 66 Difficult
- 67 Garfield’s canine companion
- 68 The Turn of The \_\_\_\_\_, Henry James novel
- 69 Spot
- 70 Durable drinkware company

- 3 Small charger type
- 4 Show your cards, accidentally
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Messi, 2022 world cup victor
- 6 Afflictions
- 7 A marathon contains 26
- 8 Iraqi Port City
- 9 Sturdy tree which may be white or red
- 10 NorCal airport, for short
- 11 Hellos, in Maui
- 12 Type of jar
- 13 Felt the effects of a workout
- 18 Bother
- 21 Trudge
- 23 Great Expectations protagonist
- 24 Halloween mo.
- 26 Bite-sized
- 27 Lead-in to date or auction
- 30 Hay unit
- 31 Ready for action, perhaps
- 34 Medicated
- 36 Phone app customer
- 38 Shade between blue and green
- 39 Its controlled by a remote
- 40 Kinder portion of someone’s personality
- 43 Issa \_\_\_\_\_, “Insecure” star
- 44 Prescription writers
- 45 Mike \_\_\_\_\_ who sang “Cooler Than Me”
- 47 Hidden motive
- 48 Novel intro.
- 50 Fools, slangily
- 51 First year?
- 52 Russian Villa
- 54 Metal mixture
- 57 Crowd sound
- 58 Bring in
- 60 Ending of expert or advert
- 61 Kitten’s communication
- 63 UNC’s prime spot for tabling
- 64 Six, in Rome

Answers to “Bop-osites”



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**NAME CHANGE:** I, MaKaylia McIver, 5032 Valley View Dr, Sanford, Nc, authorized the change of my son’s name from Kai Harris to Kai McIver, age 19 months.

Horoscopes

To get the advantage, check the day’s rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

- ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 19)**  
 Today is a 7 — Share what you’re learning with your friends. All may not be as it seems; consider and speculate. Envision and articulate. Find solutions in conversation.
- TAURUS (APRIL 20 - MAY 20)**  
 Today is a 7 — Your work is attracting attention. Prepare for a performance or presentation. Get your ducks in a row. Expect the unexpected and make backup plans.
- GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUNE 20)**  
 Today is an 8 — Travel entices. Expect deviations and changes. Stick to reliable routes, transport and connections. Advance preparation beats spontaneity now. Study and research your options.
- CANCER (JUNE 21 - JULY 22)**  
 Today is an 8 — Manage financial responsibilities with your partner. Confirm intuition with data to adapt around changes. Revise budgets for current conditions. Guard extra for unexpected expenses.

- LEO (JULY 23 - AUG. 22)**  
 Today is an 8 — Listen to discover your partner’s ideas. Share fantasies and dreams. Collaboration lightens the load and is more fun. Love makes everything seem possible.
- VIRGO (AUG. 23 - SEPT. 22)**  
 Today is a 9 — Profit from attention to details. Practice your technique and moves. Stretch to grow stronger. Focus on sidestepping obstacles. Rest deeply and well when done.
- LIBRA (SEPT. 23 - OCT. 22)**  
 Today is a 7 — Relax and have fun. Reconnect with someone who shares a passion. A flexible attitude adapts around changes. Keep an open mind and heart.
- SCORPIO (OCT. 23 - NOV. 21)**  
 Today is an 8 — Adapt your home around domestic changes. Make repairs and renovations. Listen to your family to discover their priorities. Stick to practical, durable solutions.

- SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22 - DEC. 21)**  
 Today is an 8 — Resolve details with creative projects. Facts can dispel old fears. Research and write your discoveries. Adapt your message around the latest news and share.
- CAPRICORN (DEC. 22 - JAN. 19)**  
 Today is an 8 — Profitable opportunities come together. Sign contracts and send invoices. Get your old stuff appraised. Buy and sell. Stay on budget despite changing conditions.
- AQUARIUS (JAN. 20 - FEB. 18)**  
 Today is a 9 — Get into a fun personal project. Tune and adjust around a changing situation. Use your confidence and talents for a satisfying purpose. Invent exciting possibilities.
- PISCES (FEB. 19 - MARCH 20)**  
 Today is a 6 — Quiet time soothes your spirit. Meditate on upcoming plans. What’s missing? Notice opportunities hiding under changes. Reduce stress with peaceful fun. Relax and consider.

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# Sports

## The Daily Tar Heel

BASEBALL | WEEKEND SERIES

### Batting order changes push Diamond Heels to ECU win

Tar Heels end home run drought as offense gains momentum

By Harry Crowther

Senior Writer

sports@dailytarheel.com

Scott Forbes is not afraid to change things up.

Yes, his Tar Heels were undefeated in 2025 entering game two of their series against East Carolina. But the head coach is not one to think he shouldn't make adjustments just because there is a zero in the loss column.

"I'm always thinking and talking to my staff," Forbes said. "Is there something that's going to make us better and give us a chance to score more runs?"

Forbes and company made major changes to the lineup for the first time this season on Sunday, resulting in now-No. 5 North Carolina's series-clinching 11-6 victory over ECU at Boshamer Stadium. It's the first time UNC has won its annual series against the Pirates since 2022.

"We hit pretty good," graduate outfielder Tyson Bass said. "It was a good decision by them."

The Tar Heels tallied a season-high 13 hits, 11 of which came from the top five in the batting order. Graduate first baseman Hunter Stokely had four of them; all were singles, three were also RBIs. Junior center fielder Kane Kepley, sophomore catcher Luke Stevenson and Bass each had two hits. The trio totaled six RBIs and four extra-base hits. The Tar Heels walked nine times to only five strikeouts.

While North Carolina shut out ECU in game one of the series, the Tar Heels scored only two runs on five hits. Neither run came on a homer, leaving UNC still without a big fly after five games.

Assistant coaches Jesse Wierzbicki and Scott Jackson both came up with the same lineup ahead of Sunday's game. Though his was a little different, Forbes went with Wierzbicki and Jackson's. He moved graduate shortstop Alex Madera from sixth up to the two because of his on-base ability. Bass moved from there down to the cleanup spot at fourth. Stokely moved up to fifth on the card.

As opposed to a right/left pattern, four of the first five batters were lefties.

"We felt like our left-handers matched up good against their [right-handed] starter," Forbes said. "We wanted to stack them, and our

lefties have been doing a good job of hitting lefties."

The lineup wasn't the only pregame adjustment.

Forbes felt like the East Carolina arms overpowered the Tar Heels with fastballs on Saturday. He said his team faced a lot of high velocity early in the season. UNC hitters took batting practice against a machine on Sunday, something they don't do very often, to work on being on time for the fastball. The machine makes batting practice harder and more uncomfortable.

"It's different," Bass said. "Sometimes you get caught in the trap in BP of just swinging, not being productive or having the intent. And the machine, you have to be intentional or you're gonna swing and miss or pop up in the cage every time."

The adjustments paid dividends early. In the bottom of the first, Stevenson lined a hanging breaking ball 105 mph off the bat and just over the right-field fence for a three-run homer. It broke the home run drought in UNC's 194th plate appearance of the season.

The Tar Heels fell behind in the middle innings after getting out to the 3-0 lead. The bats were resilient and



DTH/CONNOR RUESCH

UNC graduate infielder Alex Madera (1) swings at the ball during the baseball game against ECU on Sunday, Feb. 23 at Boshamer Stadium.

found a way to shift the momentum back in North Carolina's favor.

UNC trailed by one when Madera led off the bottom of the sixth inning with a single. Bass drove him in to tie the game with a double down the right-field line. With the ECU infield in, Stokely poked one the other way into left to plate Bass. The Tar Heels had the lead and would not surrender it. They

scored four runs of insurance in the eighth, highlighted by a Kepley two-RBI triple.

Forbes pushed the right buttons. Pitching has been a bright spot early in the season but on Sunday, it was the offense's turn.

"Man," Forbes said. "We got some big hits throughout the lineup."

X: @dthsports

### Haugh 'worked his tail off' to achieve career-high 10 strikeouts

Continued from Page 1

over ECU at Clark-LeClair Stadium on Monday evening. The pitcher's 17 called strikes and 20 whiffs on 99 pitches helped seal UNC's first weekend series sweep of the Pirates in program history. It's the most strikeouts recorded by a UNC pitcher since Max Carlson struck out 11 against Miami in March 2022, and it pushed UNC to its best start since the 2017 season.

"That was a big step for him," Forbes said.

Last season, Haugh worked his

way into a different role after injuries plagued the bullpen. In April, the pitcher's role changed from reliever to Sunday starter 36 games into the year. Short outings turned into four- and five-inning performances.

Following the jump, he struggled with his command. His pitches lacked variety. He walked 15 batters and gave up 37 hits following that April start.

After being selected in the 16th round of the MLB Draft, Haugh decided to come back to UNC. In the offseason, he worked to develop the things that stifled him throughout the year.

"I really just worked on confidence in all the pitches," Haugh said.

And on Monday, the things plaguing Haugh last season seemed to return.

On his third pitch of the game in the bottom of the first, ECU's Alex Peltier singled to left center. Then, the next batter singled down the left field line. Pirates' Austin Irby grounded out to second base to plate Peltier. Three batters in and the Tar Heels were already down by one.

But this is what Haugh used the offseason for. He had better command and more variety. He needed to settle in and forget about the early run.

"If you try to think about it, then you're going to make the same mistake," Haugh said. "It's really just forgetting about the last pitch and focusing on the next one."

With one out and one runner on second, Haugh worked to dig himself out of the small hole. The senior sent an ECU batter down looking on the next at-bat. Then, to get out of the inning, Haugh recorded the final out on a 2-2 count with a slider.

He made that mental shift, and he didn't look back.

Haugh recorded two strikeouts in the second and then three in the

third. After striking out two more in the fourth, he told Forbes to let him back out there for the fifth — an inning Forbes said he deserved.

"He's worked his tail off," Forbes said. "He held his stuff, and at the end, he was reaching back and letting it be and he made some really good pitches."

Haugh's time at North Carolina has been defined by adjustments and settling into his roles. Monday's outing was a culmination of that.

X: @\_emmahmoon

#### SOFTBALL

### Pitching duo lead Tar Heels to undefeated weekend

Dark and Harris combined for three shutouts and a no-hitter

By Beckett Brantley

Senior Writer

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A double. One walk. Two walks. Bases loaded.

Three walks. A run scores.

Four. Then five. Six. Seven, eight walks.

The end of UNC softball's stand-alone game against No. 24 South Carolina last week was a pitching struggle that saw three pitchers face the last eight batters and walk all of them. The Gamecocks scored six runs. North Carolina fell, 11-3.

But, after several weather delays pushed UNC's first game in the 2025 Carolina Classic to Saturday, the starting duo of junior pitcher Kenna Raye Dark and sophomore pitcher Nikki Harris snapped back into form. They combined for three shutouts and a no-hitter that propelled North Carolina to a 3-0 record in the Carolina Classic at Anderson Softball Stadium.



DTH/AVA HOLLAND

UNC junior pitcher Kenna Raye Dark (22) prepares to pitch during the softball game against Maryland on Saturday, Feb. 22 at Anderson Stadium.

"Tuesday was a tough outing for our pitching staff, and very easily this weekend it could have shaken their confidence or maybe made them a little bit hesitant and none

of them did that," head coach Megan Smith Lyon said. "Kenna and Nikki both went out and they attacked hitters. They pounded the zone."

Dark pitched all seven innings of Saturday's game against Maryland and Sunday night's game against Queens. Since last season, she has worked on being unfazed in the pitcher's circle. Lyon says her confidence and determination is what has earned her a regular starting role.

"I don't even think about it," Harris said. "I'm just like 'Next batter. Let's get this one done. Let's finish it out.'"

And she did, drawing one final swing to send her teammates pouring out of the dugout.

North Carolina has relied on Dark and Harris this season. With only six pitchers on the roster, the pair have started 10 combined games, and in some cases have relieved each other. If either had needed to be relieved this weekend, there would be no clear choice for a replacement. But the hours of work they put in during practice built up the endurance required to pitch an entire game.

And together, at the top of the pitching pecking order, the pair has become a daunting dynamic duo.

"Me and her work very well with each other," Dark said. "Her being a lefty and me being a righty. Her being an up pitcher, me being a down pitcher. Us together, we really pull the game together. We really throw off batters."

While Dark attended a funeral during the earlier game against Wagner, Harris started in the circle. It was the first time she had pitched since being replaced in the sixth inning at South Carolina.

In the top of the fifth inning, down 11-0, Wagner searched for runs that would save them from the eight-run mercy rule. A fly out and a ground out, and Harris

was one batter away from UNC's 57th no-hitter, and its second of the season.

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X: @beckettbrant

## BRANDING

## Old Well Management facilitates NIL deals for athletes

Division connects players across 28 sports to businesses

By Jack Morris

Staff Writer  
sports@dailytarheel.com

Drake Powell has his own pasta. The Town Hall Grill, a neighborhood-focused restaurant in Chapel Hill, serves “Drake Powell’s Cajun Pasta,” a featured menu item crafted by and named after the guard.

Partnerships like these display the possibilities that the new college landscape provides, with the assistance of organizations such as Old Well Management.

In August 2024, Carolina Athletics launched Carolina NIL, the comprehensive collective support system of name, image and likeness for UNC’s athletes, which includes Old Well Management. It consolidated and rebranded the Secondary Break Club and Heels4Life — former representatives of basketball and football NIL, respectively — under one umbrella. The organization now represents all 28 varsity sports.

“We’re there to communicate with local, regional and national brands about the power and influence of associating with UNC athletes,” Kevin Rice, executive director of Old Well Management, said.

Debuting this academic year, Old Well Management connects UNC athletes with local and national businesses to facilitate NIL deals. The branch offers success for companies and players by emphasizing the shared value of the Tar Heel community.

Old Well Management works alongside the Rams Club and the North Carolina Hall of Fame, two additional Carolina NIL divisions that market collegiate athletes.

The organization has brokered deals for UNC junior guard Seth Trimble with Powerade and sophomore guard Elliot Cadeau with Marriott Hotels. It also arranges autograph sessions, meet and greets and apparel sales.

“The better your school is at creating and providing those third-party opportunities to student-athletes, the better your competitive advantage will be in recruiting,” Rice said.

Rice said he believes Old Well Management has the ability to be flexible and adaptable to the ever-changing landscape in college athletics.

Rice understands how vital his branch is in upholding UNC’s athletic standard since the NCAA’s NIL policy went into effect on July 1, 2021.

Old Well Management’s efforts range far beyond landing marquee NIL deals. The organization is invested in its ability to connect athletes and businesses, which are often local.

“Whether they’re ultra-local on Franklin Street, in the Triangle or more regional/national focus, [we ask] what may they be looking for from student-athletes and how can we best provide that,” Rice said, later adding, “We’ve got 28 sports, and there’s a way to be involved in NIL at basically every budgetary range from a business perspective.”

UNC teaching assistant professor in sports administration Wayne McDonnell said he believes UNC athletes are in good hands, even with the NIL landscape often taking away the personal touch as athletes earn profit for their name and likeness.

McDonnell said there is a common misconception that people think NIL solely consists of mega deals with major national or international brands.

“Those are wonderful,” McDonnell said. “But there’s something special here in Chapel Hill that you can tap into.”

That special something McDonnell referred to is the consistent originality of UNC’s athletes, on and off the court.

“Old Well Management is uniquely positioned because they have their finger on the pulse of the culture of North Carolina,” McDonnell said.

On the surface, Old Well Management lands players NIL deals at UNC. But behind the scenes, the organization pushes to integrate personality, community and marketability in agreements between all sports and wide-ranging businesses.

For Powell, that’s crafting his own pasta and forging a relationship with the Chapel Hill community.

“We love [the] Tar Heels,” David Sadeghi, owner of Town Hall Grill, said. He later said, “We just get to know them and develop a relationship.”

X: @dthsports

## Q&amp;A

## Bill Belichick discusses transition to college coaching



DTH FILE/CONNOR RUESCH

UNC football head coach Bill Belichick appears at halftime during the men’s basketball game against La Salle.

On Dec. 11, 2024, Bill Belichick was named the new head coach of the UNC football team. The former NFL coach won a total of eight Super Bowls, six of which came as head coach of the New England Patriots.

The Daily Tar Heel Sports desk interviewed Belichick over email in February. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**The Daily Tar Heel:** Considering your pre-existing connection with UNC because of your dad’s history with the football team, how have you honored or thought about him in the two months you’ve been here?

**Bill Belichick:** I have thought about him a lot. I have the programs from when he coached here with pictures of him and the coaching staff. Every time I see the Koman Practice Complex, I think of my dad because he coached Bill Koman for three years at UNC.

**DTH:** Your son, Steve, made the transition from the NFL to college coaching at Washington for the 2024 season. What did you learn from his transition, and how have you implemented that into your own experience?

**Belichick:** There is a significant carryover from the NFL to college

football, but there are many differences, too. Steve has been helpful with his experience at Washington in recruiting, staffing and general planning. I also have several staff members who were in college football last season at major football programs: Louisville, Oregon, LSU, Arizona, Western Kentucky and UNC.

**DTH:** General manager Michael Lombardi said at his press conference that both of you view UNC as the 33rd NFL team. What does that mean to you? What does success look like, on and off the field, for the 33rd NFL team?

**Belichick:** I think what Michael meant by that was that we are operating like an NFL team. Almost everything we do has roots in the NFL, and the college landscape has changed in the last few years. Right now, we are implementing an NFL program, with some modifications that fit UNC.

**DTH:** From attending basketball games and ordering pizza, engaging with students seems to be a priority as you take the helm of the football program. Why was that important to you?

**Belichick:** I grew up around college football for 22 years before I

coached in the NFL — I want to support all of the UNC sports teams, and I want the student body to support the football team. I cannot connect to every student and member of the UNC community, but I can reach out to let them know that I respect the students, the student athletes and the great brand of UNC.

**DTH:** What are your plans heading into spring practice, and what will those weeks look like for the team and coaching staff?

**Belichick:** We will go one step at a time — we will try to have a successful day on day No. 1 and string together multiple productive days. Hopefully, those will accumulate and our team will improve on a regular and consistent basis. We have a long way to go and the team has worked hard in the off-season program to be in condition to practice. The players and staff will work hard together to earn each other’s confidence and trust this spring, so that we can get off to a good start when we begin training camp in August.

X: @dthsports

## MEN’S BASKETBALL

## Jae’Lyn Withers’ double-double lifts UNC past Virginia

Graduate forward recorded 43 points in last three games

By Emma Moon

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Jae’Lyn Withers sees the end.

The graduate forward recognizes it’s his last year of college basketball. He understands his future beyond it is uncertain. By seeing the end he has found perspective, even if it took him 20 odd games to get there.

In the face of a chapter closing, why not give it his all? Why not go back to the player he was recruited to be when he first stepped foot on Roy Williams Court?

And during UNC’s last three games, that’s exactly what he has done.

“It’s the last one,” Withers said. “It’s go big or go home. So [I’m] trying to get everything I can out of it.”

The forward led UNC to an 81-66 win over Virginia on Saturday night in the Dean E. Smith Center. Withers recorded his second double-double of the season, scoring 16 points and grabbing 11 rebounds. His 43 points across the last three games mark his highest three-game scoring stretch.



DTH/EMMA DENMAN

UNC graduate forward Jae’Lyn Withers (24) defends a Virginia player during a basketball game at the Dean E. Smith Center on Saturday, Feb. 22.

Withers went 4-6 from three, tying his career-high and setting a new record in a North Carolina uniform. It’s the first time he has ever led in scoring, a title which he shared with first-year guard Ian Jackson on Saturday.

But it hasn’t been easy to find that perspective.

“As a player, you’re always going to have ups and downs,” head coach Hubert Davis said. “I can’t remember

a time when I played where everything was going great the entire season. You’ve always had to persevere through the ups and downs.”

Withers entered the 2024-25 season in the starting lineup. Eight games into the season, he wasn’t one of the first five on the floor and his minutes started to vary. He averaged 23 minutes in November to just under 10 minutes throughout January. In a two-

game stretch against Boston College and Pittsburgh, Withers saw the court for a combined six minutes.

“It was tough at a certain point throughout the season figuring out what I could do that would keep me on the court and get me on the floor,” Withers said.

So, he started having conversations. He talked to anyone ranging from Davis to his dad, Curtis, about where he belonged.

Withers’ father told him not to take any moment for granted in his last year. Davis told him to use his wisdom on the court to stay out there and to help younger players. And, most importantly, assistant coach Marcus Paige told Withers to be himself without trying to add flare.

“It’s trying to figure out exactly what works for me,” Withers said. “Based off my game, that’s been a tough adjustment for me to really embrace it more.”

Just over three minutes into the game, a 6-foot-9 Withers found himself guarded by Virginia’s 6-foot-4 Isaac McKneely. He used the mismatch to drain a three. He ran back down the court with three fingers over his face.

Junior guard Seth Trimble found him on the wing five minutes later for another triple.

Withers kept finding places where he could contribute.

With eight minutes left to play in the second half, Withers grabbed the offensive board and put the shot back up. He flexed and stomped the court. Less than a minute later, he found another opportunity from behind the arc and drew the foul with it.

“It opens up the floor for a lot of us — for me, for the bigs, for the guards,” junior forward Ven-Allen Lubin said. “To have a forward that can really stretch the floor, knock down shots [and] attack the rim at will. The way he’s playing with confidence is definitely helping us all around.”

And it all came from having those conversations with the people around him and reflecting on an experience that is about to end. The adversity and overcoming it. Firing questionable shots to slowly finding the right ones. Learning to appreciate it all.

“It’s been more so reminding myself,” Withers said. “Just locking into the work that I’ve put in, how much time, reflecting on everything. I think that it kind of brought me back to level ground.”

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## COLUMN

## N.C. State game shows why Smith Center should stay put

By Matthew Maynard  
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Fans flocked down to the Dean E. Smith Center like they typically would on any UNC basketball game day.

Some made the nearly 30-minute walk from Franklin Street. Others made the short journey from on-campus residence halls.

It's a walk fans have made since the Smith Center opened on Jan. 18, 1986.

On Wednesday night, it was different. No cars jammed Skipper Bowles Drive. Only a few dared to make the trek on wheels. UNC students took over the arena.

It's something that might not happen much longer. The University is considering plans to relocate the Smith Center off campus.

But Wednesday's game against N.C. State, where North Carolina dominated, 97-73, showed that UNC should leave the Smith Center exactly where it is.

Due to hazardous road conditions, the University announced that the game — for just the third time in UNC basketball history — would be general admission for those who could “safely walk to the game.”

Snow games like these have played a direct role in making the Smith Center what it is today. In 2000, UNC was slated to play Maryland, but 18 inches of snow postponed the game day. North Carolina opened the doors for general admission.

Students packed the arena. And per a UNC spokesperson, that game directly led to the addition of courtside student risers.

Against N.C. State on Wednesday night, it was no different. Students filled the lower bowl. “Tar” and “Heel” chants echoed through the Smith Center as the Wolfpack starting lineup was announced.

“One of the many reasons why I love the Smith Center [is] because the students can get here,” head coach Hubert Davis said after the game on Tar Heel Sports Network. “They can just come down the hill and come to the game and support their fellow classmates.”

In September 2024, the University's final report on potential new sites for a new basketball arena, completed by UNC's Physical Master Plan Working Group, listed six options: Bowles Parking Lot, Odum Village, Friday Center, Carolina North, renovating the Smith Center or replacing it in the same location.

According to Inside Carolina, the school is leaning toward Carolina North, located on Estes Drive and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

That's 2.7 miles away from South Campus. It would take over an hour for many students to walk that distance.

Sure, the plan calls for a bus system that would transport students — 3,000, to be exact — to the new location. But that takes away from everything that makes having an on-campus basketball arena special:

Dissecting the wins as one climbs up the hill on Skipper Bowles Drive. The somber crawls after a loss. Running to Franklin Street after defeating Duke.

On Wednesday night, the energy from students was clear from the start. And it didn't go unnoticed.

Before tipoff, students around the lower bowl sprang to their feet for “Jump Around.”

Chants of “Cade” boomed as junior forward Cade Tyson checked into the game. The arena popped when he hit back-to-back threes — his first multi-three game since La Salle on Dec. 14.

And when “Swag Surfin” came on? Large pockets of students around the lower bowl swayed back and forth, arms around each other.



DTH/DYLAN THIESSEN

UNC students cheer from the stands during the game against N.C. State at the Dean E. Smith Center on Feb. 19.

Junior guard Seth Trimble said it was one of the top three most fun games he's ever played in.

“It was just a ton of fun,” Trimble said. “I give a bunch of kudos to students for them to come out in the middle of a snowstorm. They might not think that it goes a long way, but that really played a huge role for us today.”

Trimble's sentiment echoed throughout other postgame interviews.

Graduate guard RJ Davis said it felt like “young energy” was gifted to the Tar Heels. Junior forward Ven-Allen Lubin said it was electric and made him feel like the whole world was behind them. First-year guard Ian Jackson noticed the majority student crowd and noted that “they were loud the whole game.”

But should the Carolina North plan come to fruition, nights like these — where students come hell or high water — wouldn't happen. Buses couldn't take students to the game on icy roads. Even in perfect conditions, the energy wouldn't be the same.

“The location of the Dean Dome is perfect for any UNC student,” first-year Reese Sharp, who attended the game against N.C. State, said. “And it doesn't matter if you're a first-year or not and you live close.”

Late in the first half, Chancellor Lee Roberts walked on the court for a brief announcement during a timeout.

He thanked everyone for coming out. Then? “Classes for tomorrow,” he said, taking a long pause, “are cancelled.”

The students inside the Smith Center erupted. The band played “Sweet Caroline” by Neil Diamond and voices signing along reverberated inside the arena.

The moment capped off an already special atmosphere.

If the University administration takes anything away from the game against N.C. State, it should be to renovate the Smith Center at its current location.

“Keep everything within walking distance,” senior Kevin Gomez said. “We're all here to support the Tar Heels, so I mean, keep it close to the students.”

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## ANALYSIS

## What the men's basketball team can learn from other general managers

Hubert Davis declared intentions to hire a GM in early February

By Caroline Wills  
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Over the course of Hubert Davis' four years as head coach of the UNC men's basketball team, the landscape of college sports has changed. His job has changed.

“A head coach is now the owner, the general manager, the fundraiser, the coach [and doing the] recruiting,” Davis said on the Carolina Insider podcast. “It's a lot.”

Following UNC's brutal 87-70 loss on Feb. 1 to then-No. 2 Duke, Davis told Carolina Insider that the old staffing model at North Carolina wasn't working anymore. He needs to expand. He wants to hire a general manager.

And on Tuesday afternoon, Davis made good on his promise, hiring Jim Tanner, a former NBA sports agent, as the team's executive director and general manager.

Meanwhile, two major UNC teams have already adjusted to the demands of this era of collegiate sports.

## Women's basketball

Liz Roberts has served as general manager for the women's team since June 2023.

Roberts was a walk-on turned scholarship player for UNC. She joined head coach Courtney Banghart's staff in 2020, eventually working her way up to director of recruiting management and student-athlete engagement before filling in the new GM role.



DTH FILE/OLIVIA PAUL

Head coach Hubert Davis shouts during the men's basketball game against Pitt in the Dean E. Smith Center on Feb. 8.

“When we're recruiting the next generation of Carolina athletes,” Robert said, “to set them up for success, you need to have an established position that's going to help [players] with all the things that they'll need while they're here, especially in the NIL landscape.”

Roberts partners with players to secure branding opportunities with Carolina NIL — the University's dedicated platform for name, image and likeness services — and with community members. She is in charge of discussing with recruits the opportunities available to them at UNC.

Most coaching staffs have someone with the same responsibilities, whether that be

the head coach or an assistant, but lack the title or have other roles that split their attention. Roberts said creating this specific role has increased UNC's efficiency.

“[Banghart] is working probably harder than she ever imagined she would have to, and she loves it,” Roberts said. “That's one thing that's made us successful. But providing structure and clarity to a role that is able to support our head coaches is critical.”

Banghart's squad is ranked No. 8 in the country and third in the ACC. North Carolina acquired three 2024 recruits all listed in ESPN's top-100. Next year's class features two recruits in the top-25.

## Football

General manager Michael Lombardi, a former NFL executive, joined Bill Belichick in December as the first hire for UNC football's new head coach.

In his first few months on the job, he has mostly focused on recruiting and personnel hiring. With recruiting, his role is aimed toward bringing an alternative view to roster construction.

He said the staff has developed a grading system to evaluate how much money should be allocated from the NIL collective to certain players. For example, starters are valued differently from athletes further down the depth chart.

“Sometimes when you have money involved — because let's be honest, money's involved now — you have to have a subjective way of determining how to handle the money and how to place a value on [players],” Lombardi said.

Team building, according to Lombardi, is more than a one-person job. North Carolina's 2025 transfer class ranks 14th in the nation and 3rd in the ACC.

## Men's basketball

Three ACC men's basketball teams have already hired a general manager: Duke, Syracuse and Wake Forest.

When Duke's head coach Jon Scheyer took the reins following Mike Krzyzewski's retirement, he created a GM position in 2022 and hired Rachel Baker, who has former experience with Nike and the NBA.

Duke boasted the best 2024 recruiting class, and its transfer class ranked 22nd in the nation — the best in the ACC. The Blue Devils sit atop the ACC and at No. 2 in the country.

Meanwhile, little has been easy for Davis and the UNC men's basketball team this year. If the Tar Heels remain on the outside of the NCAA tournament bubble, it will mark the second time in four years that North Carolina has missed the tournament.

The 2025 commitment class is a bright spot, ranking ninth-best in the nation with one top-10 recruit, Caleb Wilson. Davis has yet to add a true center.

But with Tuesday's hire, Davis is already taking a step toward a new future.

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