Railcare Health provides free, mobile health care

The organization operates clinics in shuttle buses

By Carolina Wills

While taking the train to visit family, Kathy Minardi often saw pieces of abandoned train cars on the way. It led her to wonder if those materials could be used for good. Minardi told her grandson, Kevin Travia, a medical student at East Carolina University.

"The idea was to take one of these abandoned train cars, buses or things she saw on the side of the rails to repurpose it for some of the communities she would either see on the railroad going through rural America or for various purposes that anyone would need," Travia said.

That idea became the foundation for Railcare Health, a nonprofit organization that operates mobile health clinics in shuttle buses, providing free health care to underserved communities in North Carolina.

The CEO of Railcare Health, Alekhyaa Majety, who is a junior at UNC, said she got involved in the organization during her first year. For Majety, the most impactful experience has been helping to provide primary care to North Carolina migrant workers, including testing blood pressure and blood glucose levels.

"This was a really great opportunity because it felt like we were actually able to help these people and give them some reassurance versus fear that they might be in trouble but have nowhere to go," she said.

Railcare Health has two branches, one in Chapel Hill and the other in Greenville. Majety said one of Railcare Health’s goals for this year is to expand the Greenville branch.

"This is a new branch, started about a year ago, because we noticed we were having some trouble reaching eastern North Carolina," she said.

Travia said another one of Railcare Health’s goals for this year is to expand its dental care services.

"Something that can be easily forgotten when we think about health care and rural America is dental care," Travia said.

See NONPROFIT PAGE 7

Cultural centers form UNC Alliance

The group is accepting proposals for its first project until Feb. 15

By Natalie Varma

Four cultural centers on campus are collaborating to examine crucial issues of equity and justice through a new partnership called the UNC Alliance.

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History, the Asian American Center, the Carolina Latino Center and the American Indian Center came together to launch the collaborative group and put out a call for student grant proposals in January.

Krupal Amin, associate director of the AAC, said that the UNC Alliance is a new way to connect the cultural centers to each other.

"The Alliance is mostly just an umbrella organization to help these four centers have dialogue more efficiently," Amin said.

She said some of the main priorities of the Alliance are cross-cultural unity and education when it comes to race and ethnicity and how they relate to social categories and movements.

"When we talk about race or ethnicity or experiences of marginalized groups, we do them in silos," Amin said. "And I think it’s really important to acknowledge that some of these histories run really parallel to each other. Some of the impacts are very similar for different groups."

Intersectional Student Projects

The Alliance’s first project, Intersectional Student Projects, is supported by a grant from an anonymous donor and aims to establish deeper relationships between the cultural centers.

The goals of the ISP are to form relationships and generate projects that build solidarity between the

See UNC ALLIANCE PAGE 5

NONPROFIT WORK

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SafeWalk helps students use the buddy system

Walkers make use of the buddy system

Teams of two can be found outside Davis Library or called at night

By Collin Tadlock
Staff Writer
university@dailytarheel.com

Whether they are spending time with friends or studying in the library, many students take advantage of burning the midnight oil on campus, causing them to remain late and stretch into the night hours. For Tar Heels who are trying to get home safely at night, SafeWalk provides a free walk with UNC students, who are trained by the N.C. Department of Public Safety, as escorts.

Operating through the Office of Student Life and Leadership, the SafeWalk program is managed by UNC students and sponsored by the University.

“The idea is just like a late-night buddy system that provides students that don’t have other means of transportation a way to get home,” senior Nick Chappell, SafeWalk director, said.

The program, which operates Sunday through Thursday from 9 p.m. to 12 a.m., stretches to locations both on and off campus, including the Lark and Union apartment complexes.

There are three ways for UNC community members to request SafeWalk’s services. Individuals can call 919-962-SAFE (7233), reserve a walk through the organization’s Calendar, or applying to SafeWalk team outside Davis Library.

During nights of operations, two SafeWalk walkers in bright blue and yellow safety vests stand outside Davis and ask students if they need a walk home.

When students approach walkers, they should provide their PID and destination and the walk will begin. The Calendar is for students who would like to make a reservation for their walks. These students will need to wait for walkers to return from other walks.

Chappell said SafeWalk also has a student dispatcher that answers phone calls and emails from students requesting a walk. During their shifts, employees have access to equipment such as bicycles and umbrellas, if they are needed at any point.

“The past two years, we’ve seen record numbers in terms of students using the program,” he said. “I think we’ve been averaging pretty consistently right about nine walks a night and that’s just with one pair of walkers.”

Junior Raphina Shaw is in his second semester working with SafeWalk. He said the paid position has benefits both for night owls like himself who enjoy the exercise and for students who are on campus late at night.

“We’ve had people definitely tell us that they feel safer when we’re walking them home,” Shaw said. “It’s nice to have someone to talk to, it’s nice to have someone to be with and it’s nice to have a little bit of company as we go back.”

Junior Sophia Raspati, who has also been a walker with SafeWalk this semester, said she also appreciates the added safety the program brings to campus, as well as the program’s healthy work environment.

“I really like how much positivity it brings to the campus environment, and just the idea that students are looking out for other students,” she said.

During the height of the pandemic, Chappell said COVID-19 safety protocols altered how walks were available for students. Instead of walking with students in person, SafeWalk provided phone call services, talking to students who needed a walk home over the phone.

The program also had to scale back its hours during the pandemic, but this past semester, SafeWalk has returned to a schedule similar to their pre-pandemic hours. Each SafeWalk employee is required to wear a mask while working their shift, whether in the office or on campus.

“Whatever’s most proud of bringing this program back to what it used to be,” Chappell said. “A lot of times, people will think it is a burden for us to walk them even though we get paid to do this, and we enjoy doing it.”

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Contact Editorial Managing Editor Heidi Perez-Moreno at: managing.editor@dailytarheel.com with inaccurate information published as in the Opinion Page have corrections.

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PUBLIC EDUCATION

The books focus on themes including racism and gender identity
By Ian Walniuk
city@dailytarheel.com

The Orange County Schools Board of Education voted on Monday to keep three books — which focus on themes including racism, segregation and gender identity and include sexually explicit content — in its high school libraries' circulation.

The vote came after a complaint was filed in October and subsequently reviewed by school and district-level committees over the past few months for each of three books — "Gender Queer" by Maia Kobabe; "Lawn Boy" by Ashley Hope Pérez; and "Out of Darkness" by Ashley Hope Pérez.

The county plans for the MOD program to eventually offer services Monday through Friday in the evenings and all day Saturday.

But Letman said the county is working with CHT to develop a plan that will allow MOD to go as far as Chapel Hill Transit has routes.

At its meeting Tuesday, the Orange County Assembly of Governments discussed expanding the Mobility on Demand (MOD) project, which provides low-cost, door-to-door transportation to community members.

The Assembly of Governments meeting included Chapel Hill Town Council, Carrboro Town Council, Orange County Board of Commissioners and Hillsborough Board of Commissioners.

One of several transportation initiatives in Orange County, the MOD project has created an Uber-style ride service for residents.

The MOD project provides rides on Fridays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The program costs $5 a ride, and users can expect cars to take 10 to 15 minutes to arrive, he said.

Previously, the county required booking two days in advance for rides.

But now, residents can book rides through the MOD app or website, allowing for more flexible transportation options.

The values in the plan include equity, environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, affordability and transit access for all. To ensure that the new plan is implemented effectively, Orange County is working with a consulting team.

The Policy Steering Committee reviewed the recommendations from the consulting team and has authorized staff to obtain community engagement. The recommendations and feedback will be combined into a final plan, which will be up for approval later this spring.

Twitter: @IanWalniuk

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The board unanimously voted in favor of keeping each book in the school district's libraries. These same books, and others that include themes of race, sexual orientation and gender identity, have been challenged in school districts across the country for months.

"Gender Queer" is a memoir that features Kobabe's experiences from adolescence to adulthood and finding acceptance for her identity as a non-binary and transgender individual who also serves as a guide on gender identity.

"Lawn Boy" is about a 12-year-old Mexican-American and his journey to figure out who he is while grappling with his sexuality and racism in America.

"Out of Darkness" is a work that fuses facts about the 1937 New London school explosion with broader themes of racism, segregation and the importance of family.

"It's troubling that all of the challenges that are coming forth are coming to these very distinct groups, and of course, I'm a part of that, and it's not a good feeling," Smylie said.

Twitter: @k8e_mack
Understanding well-being checks at UNC

Police can conduct checks at the request of a concerned individual

By Liv Beall
Assistant University Editor
university@dailytarheel.com

Content warning: This article contains mention of suicide and self-harm.

UNC's community faced increased mental health concerns last semester and has continued conversations about student well-being this spring.

For mental health support, students have access to brief individual therapy through UNC Counseling and Psychological Services or student-run agencies in order to make contact with local providers.

A well-being check is another way for the University to provide a student with a safety resource, according to UNC Media Relations. Law enforcement can contact an individual in the community for any reason, including for mental health concerns.

“A wellness check is a public safety tactic utilized by all law enforcement agencies when making contact with an individual for various reasons,” Media Relations Manager Pace Sagester said in a statement to The Daily Tar Heel last fall.

The UNC Police Department will respond to a well-being check at the request of a medical personnel or concerned individual, Sagester said.

Checks are also conducted if there is no answer to a Carolina Housing knock, a student is unable to be reached by a staff member for at least three days or the student is showing signs of self-harm or suicide, he said.

“Concerns about alcohol and other drug prevention/mental health awareness and stigma reduction programs coordinator for UNC Student Wellness, said in an email that signs vary for every individual, but common risk factors include aggressive behavior, substance misuse and self-harm, new or unusual effects of substance use and severe psychiatric states.

Interim CAPS Director Avery Cook said CAPS is prepared for brief individual therapy needs.

“The job is to get the person connected to the folks that can offer that support,” Cook said. “We never want students to feel responsible for anyone else’s health or safety.”

Though a CAPS is a resource to students, a well-being check will allow increased authoritative figures to check for warning signs after a request is made, Sagester said.

Campus Police will conduct well-being checks by knocking on the door of the student and keying in, if necessary. A member of Carolina Housing will check that the student is present for most well-being checks.

Sagester said.

If guidance for students is necessary before a well-being check is requested or a mental health crisis is occurring, CAPS is accessible 24/7 for support.

“We want folks to come in and see us so that we can help,” Cook said. “That’s the biggest thing. We’re never here. I mean, sometimes we’re not here, but then we’re on the phone.”

All questions about Carolina Housing were referred to UNC Media Relations, according to Media Relations, Sagester’s statement applies to Carolina Housing as well.

If there is an immediate concern for the health or safety of another person, Media Relations said to call 911 immediately. For non-urgent situations, the University recommends submitting a Care Request Form through the Office of the Dean of Students.

Senior Writer Kelly Kendall contributed reporting.

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ON CAMPUS CARE

Understanding well-being checks at UNC

The side of a Chapel Hill police car reads “Call 911” on Sept. 22, 2021.

Students can help peers struggling with mental health

By Valeria Cline
Senior Writer
university@dailytarheel.com

Content warning: This article contains mention of suicide and self-harm.

Avery Cook, the interim director of Counseling and Psychological Services, spoke about how to help a friend, peer or someone who might be in danger of harming themselves.

They said the main CAPS encourages folks to look out for big changes in behavior that seem concerning or unusual on their own. Someone who is typically active and is suddenly slacking off, or someone who is usually quiet but now seems abruptly withdrawn.

“So when you notice sort of a change in how someone is behaving or functioning — that becomes a really good time just to check in and sort of ask about the things that you’re noticing and express some care and concern,” Cook said.

Alicia Freeman, alcoholic and other drug prevention/mental health awareness and stigma reduction programs coordinator for UNC Student Wellness, said in an email that signs vary for every individual, but common risk factors include aggressive behavior, substance misuse and self-harm, new or unusual effects of substance use and severe psychiatric states.

Interim CAPS Director Avery Cook said CAPS is prepared for brief individual therapy needs.

“If a peer is in imminent danger, like the person is about to or has taken any action to harm themselves, CAPS encourages folks to call 911,” Cook said.

“If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, is available 24/7. It’s free and confidential.

Additional resources and the full version of this article can be found online at www.dailytarheel.com.
UNC research program studies COVID-19 variants

By Emily Shih
Senior Writer
universitydailytarheel.com

While a COVID-19 PCR test indicates whether or not there is genetic viral material in an individual sample, the technique does not reveal the specific variant of coronavirus that made a person sick. Once a test is determined positive, the test sample is sent to a lab for sequencing to determine the specific variant of COVID-19.

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"More studies should be in the interest of the entire campus, according to the alliance website, and respond to challenges faced by marginalized communities.

"Project examples include events, screenings, publications and service partnerships. However, students can propose anything that they see the need for," Amin said. She said this could look like anything from a piece of DNA, the sample is collected.

"If they reach out to us, we can help facilitate those bridges," Perez said. Partners involved in the alliance will come together to evaluate the submitted proposals, analyzing factors like the budget, feasibility, research design and potential significance.

"The alliance doesn't have an exact number of how many proposals will be chosen to receive funds, Perez said. Looking forward

"Current, 188 is the only instance they try to recruits by the alliance, but Amin said there will be another grant directed toward faculty and staff.

"The goal of creating separate projects was to minimize the competition, Amin said, so that students felt empowered to bring questions or drafts of proposals.

"We want students to feel like they really have agency, and really manifest what they have," Perez said. "We are working on new projects, but we are only able to reach out and give their ideas as well.

"We have, some, what we think, are big ideas, but we are open to student input", Perez said.

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The NCDHHS received more than $838M from the program

By Brian Rosenzweig
Senior Writer
city@dailytarheel.com

As of early January, more than 650 residential customers in Chapel Hill and Carrboro had overdue water bills, according to Blake Hodge, according to a spokesperson for Orange County Water and Sewer Authority. The average accumulated cost of these bills was $455.

“We know that the need is large,” Hodge said. “We know that there are burdens to shoulder on top of everything else that’s been going on the last couple of years.”

But a new N.C. Department of Health and Human Services program is working to improve water accessibility across the state. The Low-Income Water and Sewer Assistance Program provides funding for households struggling to pay water bills.

The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, which was expanded in January to include households with current water bills, to access and complete an application. The program through Sep. 30, 2023, or until statewide funds are exhausted. Since the beginning of the pandemic, OWASA has avoided shutting off anyone’s water because of nonpayment. In March 2020, OWASA enacted a service disconnection moratorium that prevented customers from having their water shut off due to nonpayment in response to COVID-19-related issues. The moratorium remains in place but only provides for the continuation of service. Residents are still responsible for overdue bills.

“Water is a basic human need, but since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many have struggled to afford it. As of early January, more than 650 local residential customers in Chapel Hill and Carrboro have overdue water bills, according to Blake Hodge, according to a spokesperson for Orange County Water and Sewer Authority. The average accumulated cost of these bills was $455. “We know that the need is large,” Hodge said. “We know that there are burdens to shoulder on top of everything else that’s been going on the last couple of years.” But a new N.C. Department of Health and Human Services program is working to improve water accessibility across the state. The Low-Income Water and Sewer Assistance Program provides funding for households struggling to pay water bills.

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Recent crashes raise traffic safety concerns

A crash on Franklin Street last week left one cyclist in critical condition, and a December crash on Estes Drive left two middle school students seriously injured. According to a March report from the Governors Highway Safety Association, there was an 11 percent increase in pedestrian traffic fatalities across North Carolina, as well as a 4.8 percent increase nationwide from 2019 to 2020.

The report also found that North Carolina had the fifth-highest number of pedestrian fatalities in the country during the same period.

Pedestrians in danger

Heidi Perry, a Carrboro Biking Coalition founding member and BikeWalk NC board member, has first-hand experience of the growing danger on roads.

“I was actually hit on my bike by a driver — not hurt because I steered away from a full-force impact — and the driver admitted to me that he was overwhelmed with pandemic issues and that he just wasn’t paying attention,” she said in an email.

Randy Smith, a Chapel Hill community member, said he has also seen a decrease in pedestrian safety, specifically on Estes Drive.

He said the recent accident on Estes was very unfortunate, especially because he knows one of the teenagers who were struck.

“One of them was close to my heart,” he said. “So that breaks a lot of us in the community.”

He also said the accident was something that could have been prevented with better safety measures in place, such as a traffic light or stop sign.

Katharine Kollins, who lives near Estes Drive, said she rarely sees drivers respect the school zone speed limit when she walks her children to school.

“The crosswalk where the accident was is particularly egregious,” she said. “I have stood there before I’m trying to go out for a jog, and I will stand at one side of that crosswalk and have 15 cars blow by me before even one sees that somebody is waiting to cross the road.”

Protecting pedestrians

Alex Carrasquillo, public information officer for Chapel Hill Police & Fire, said in an email that Road to Zero Initiative is one way Chapel Hill is working to limit the number of pedestrian crashes.

“The initiative is a program through the National Safety Council and aims to eliminate traffic-related pedestrian fatalities by 2050. "The Town’s Pedestrian Safety Action plan is a key part of this goal," he said. "It lays out strategies to address pedestrian safety concerns through policy, infrastructure, and programming.”

Carrasquillo also said the Chapel Hill Police Department conducts regular speed and pedestrian safety enforcement operations to monitor traffic safety. Six of these operations are scheduled for February.

Nonprofit brings free testing, primary care to rural N.C.

Railcare Health has a focus on serving communities that experience health inequities, including migrant farm workers and rural communities, who have seen several hospital closures over the last decade. Eleven rural hospitals in North Carolina have closed since 2005, according to data from the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research. During the pandemic, Majety said Railcare Health also provided testing and vaccines to migrant workers.

"These communities are really susceptible to COVID, and they are often not really provided any resources to help keep them safe," she said. "So, our goal was to try and educate them, test them and try to limit the amount of exposure people were getting.”

Railcare Health has two branches, one in Chapel Hill and the other in Greenville. Majety said one of Railcare Health’s goals for this year is to expand the Greenville branch.

"Now that we have a new branch, we are hoping to provide more care to people because we have two locations that are able to travel a couple hours from those areas,” she said.

William Munn, a senior policy analyst for the Health Advocacy Project, said Railcare Health has been helpful in addressing a lack of hospitals in the eastern part of North Carolina.

"I hope that initiatives like that are able to get funded and get more support, particularly from state and local governments,” he said.

Twitter: @carolinawillots3

Twitter: @drickman27

Continued from Page 1

"During high school, I always tried to work within the homeless community and marginalized communities in general," she said. "I wanted to find a way to expand that in my college experience as well, so that’s why I wanted to get more involved.”

Railcare Health has a focus on involving pedestrians and bicyclists in Chapel Hill, some community members have expressed concern over pedestrian safety.

Students cross South Road on UNC’s campus on Jan. 25.

Due to recent accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists in Chapel Hill, some community members have expressed concern over pedestrian safety.

Press on.

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The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services recently announced a plan to improve job access for individuals with disabilities. The department is committed to building an inclusive workforce where individuals with and without disabilities work together, build community and thrive, Kinsley wrote. Under a microscope, a grain of salt looks like a circular shape. A team of researchers working on this project was established by the Center for Career and Employment Development. The team was led by Dr. Brianne Tomaszewski, an assistant professor of psychology who specializes in working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.

The plan hopes to help those with disabilities find opportunities to work and be fully integrated into their communities, an NCDHHS spokesperson wrote in an email. In addition, it aims to provide those with disabilities with on-the-job assessments, career development planning, counseling and other employment services.

The plan was announced to improve job access for individuals with disabilities and local governments are working to provide better opportunities for those with disabilities.

The department is committed to building an inclusive workforce where individuals with and without disabilities work together, build community and thrive, Kinsley wrote. Under a microscope, a grain of salt looks like a circular shape. A team of researchers working on this project was established by the Center for Career and Employment Development. The team was led by Dr. Brianne Tomaszewski, an assistant professor of psychology who specializes in working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.

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While in school, Cathey said he had a passion for doodling and was inspired by video games and graphic novels. He said it is important for artists to reference other cultural phenomena, like ‘Not all who wander are lost.’

Kinsley also said he views art as a means of understanding what it means to be human. There are thoughts, ideas and feelings that transcend words, he said. ‘A person could argue that before we give our thoughts form in language, we see and we experience,’ Kinsley said.

“It is crucial that we make sure individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities have a leading role in this work,” she said in an email.

“Heritage cooking would be something very traditional to Mexican food, which is using very organic natural ingredients to make special and delicious foods,” Cathey said. Smith said the exhibit celebrates not only one’s heritage, but family as well. “It is nice to take a moment to celebrate family and to celebrate the traditions that they have been handed down,” she said. “Tasting and enjoying and sharing anytime you sit down to a meal is such a bonding, uniting experience.”

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UNC senior bakes passion into business

Chancellor’s committee considers renaming buildings

Azaria Woods has grown Cupcake Craze since she was 11 years old.

When she first began her business, Woods only sold cupcakes. Now, she offers a wide variety of treats including dipped pretzels, cookies and cake pops.

For Sturkey, teaching history and revising historical narratives, like taking the name of slave owner Thomas Ruffin Jr. from a University building, is central to his work. “We have always known that the history of the country has had a lot to do with educating the young.”

The students are involved in the restructuring of the student affairs building. As Sturkey explained, “We have always known that the history of the country has had a lot to do with educating the young.”

Azaria Acres

Azaria Acres is a small business in Mississippi that highlights the history of Mississippi’s black communities. "I’m not saying that the history of Mississippi’s black communities is the same as the history of the United States, but it is important to recognize the contributions that black people have made to this country. Azaria Acres is a way for me to do that."

During her time at UNC, Sturkey taught courses on African American history and diaspora studies. His classes were packed and he was known for his engaging lectures. "He was super knowledgeable and always willing to answer questions and explain things in depth," said Green. "I got to see the world through the lens of a university, to understand what it is that we're doing and the impact it has on the community."
First-gen students give advice to first-years

Nearly 20 percent of UNC undergrads are first-generation students

By Nayeli Jaramillo-Plata

When Melanie Godinez-Cedillo began college, she realized she was starting at a different point than her peers. As the first member of her family to attend college, the senior said she had a tough time adapting academically and socially when she first started at UNC. She wasn’t able to talk to her parents about her residence hall or financial aid, and she had to learn the systems on her own.

“I even thought about transferring out,” Godinez-Cedillo, a political science and public policy major, said. “I had no real support system at home because my parents did not know what college was.”

First-generation students make up nearly 20 percent of the undergraduate student body at UNC. Students are considered first-generation if their parents did not complete a four-year college or university degree.

“To me, a first-generation student is somebody who is breaking barriers,” Godinez-Cedillo said. “Kind of building roots in the US for their family and for those to come.

Sophomore Andrea Hojas said that she also had a challenging time navigating college as a first-generation student. She felt a lot of pressure but realized it was unfair to compare herself to other students because she did not have the same opportunities, resources and connections.

Hojas said the pandemic caused her to miss being in person for her first year of college, so it was hard to get involved in activities on campus.

“I still feel like I haven’t found a group of people that I can relate to,” she said. “It is hard because it feels like everyone already knows what they are doing and what they want.

As a first-generation student, senior and is set to open Feb. 9. We started with zero — different experiences to send to other students — first-years specifically — that college might seem really, really difficult,” she said. “But if you lean on each other and stay rooted to who you are as a person, you will be able to succeed in whatever you pursue.”

Twitter: @njrap17

I would tell first-generation college students — first-years specifically — that college might seem really, really difficult,” she said. “But if you lean on each other and stay rooted to who you are as a person, you will be able to succeed in whatever you pursue.”

Twitter: @njrap17

Chapel Hill poet laureate seeks to uplift other artists

Chapel Hill Poet Laureate CJ Suitt poses for a portrait.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CJ SUITT

CJ Suitt has used his work to bring people to shape and to lift people up. He’s been a vocal advocate for Latinx businesses in Chapel Hill.

Suitt said he hopes the next poet laureate recognizes that poetry is not just for the wealthy, upper-class people.

“I think the poet laureate appointment is for somebody who wants to and is willing to be out in the public, in front of people and sharing poetry and highlighting and uplifting not only themselves, but other artists in the community,” Suitt said.

While Suitt’s position as poet laureate is nearing its end, he hopes to continue the work he’s started.

“As profoundly powerful and moving everything that CJ has done already is, I dearly believe that the best is yet to come,” Irwin said.

Twitter: @cje_mack

English teacher, Michael Irwin, Suitt performed once at his school’s Black History Month celebration.

“It was wild to me that I could be so grateful for something and then feel how I felt,” Suitt said.

With his poems, Suitt began to use his voice to highlight people who aren’t often given a platform.

“I care about people who grew up like me, outside the rural buffer in Chapel Hill... and more often than not, those people are low-income or they are Black or brown,” Suitt said.

Now, Suitt is in his second year as Chapel Hill’s first poet laureate — a role he assumed in 2019.

“I am very honored and grateful to stand on the shoulders of Zora Neale Hurston, who taught at UNC, and George Moses Horton, who was the first Black published poet in the South, who bought back his time from Franklin Street and that Chapel Hill is not just UNC’s campus,” Suitt said.

“I feel it’s really important to me particularly to have students understand that their university, or their university experience, is not just Franklin Street and that Chapel Hill is not just UNC’s campus,” Suitt said.

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First-generation first-year students discuss navigating college academically, socially and emotionally.

First-generation students — more than half of enrolled Covenant scholars are also the first in their family to attend college. Since first-generation students’ parents may be unsure of how to assist them with the transition to college, students should reach out to upperclassmen who were once in their shoes, Godinez-Cedillo said.

ALL UP IN YOUR BUSINESS

New restaurant hopes to bring good vibes to Chapel Hill

Buena Vista specializes in Caribbean cuisine and is open to Feb. 9

By Samuel Long

Buena Vista, a new restaurant and bar specializing in Caribbean cuisine, is set to open in Chapel Hill on Feb. 9.

The restaurant is about bringing positive energy to the community — and its name translates to “good vibes” in Spanish, co-owner Jaime Reanos said.

“The location on East Rosemary Street features a beach theme with vibrant colors, plant life and lighting. We are trying to bring something different to Chapel Hill,” Reanos said. “We want people coming over here to feel comfortable. Anyone can come in and relax with a drink or food.”

Co-owner Carla Solarzano, who is Reanos’ spouse, said she’s excited for the restaurant to open. She said Buena Vista will feature an assortment of food, from empanadas and Caribbean dishes.

“I know that Chapel Hill has a different culture,” she said. “They like to try to know different cultures from other countries.”

Reanos said that while opening a restaurant is a lot of hard work with many sacrifices and sleepless nights, it’s a dream that both he and his wife believe in.

“This is important for us because when everything comes together, we can start to enjoy and be happy with it,” he said.

Both Solarzano and Reanos are from Honduras. The two knew each other as teenagers in high school and eventually married in 2002.

“We started with zero — different place, different work, but I have the motivation,” Reanos said. “If I work hard here, I change my life.”

Solarzano said Reanos now reside in Hollis Springs, UNC junior Gabriela Duncan, who identifies as a first-generation student, is excited for the opening of Buena Vista.

“There is a pretty significant Latinx population here at UNC,” Duncan, whose family is from Colombia, said. “I feel like it’s going to be a really nice place where we can embrace our culture and listen to artists that come from where we come from.”

Mariale Torres-Cervantes, assistant director of the Carolina Latinx Center, said having Latinx businesses in Chapel Hill will encourage people to move vessels of what Latinx identity can be.

“I think having more opportunities to try food, cuisine and fusion is really exciting,” she said. “We’re hopeful to see what menu the restaurant will have so far that can partner with them intentionally.”

Torres-Cervantes said, among the community, showing up and letting others know about what they enjoyed will expose Latinx-owned businesses and encourage people to try things that they wouldn’t have tried otherwise.

“Having a restaurant that will hopefully have more music, food and access is something we’re really looking forward to,” she said. “We’re excited overall.”

Twitter: @sam_long16

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CJ SUITT

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Finding long-term mental health care
Caitlyn Yeade
Assistant Opinion Editor

As I'm writing this, I received my first final exam results for the semester this week alone. The dread I'm not accepting my clients' mess is a topic of discussion once I find myself able to begin counseling. My experience is not unique. In a community of students navigating their mental health worsened by the pandemic, finding quality long-term therapy is an inaccessible and inaccessible feat.

The shortcomings of on-campus mental health resources are the first obstacles to this mental health journey. UNC's Counseling and Psychological Services offers a short-term care in the form of initial consultations and group therapy, as well as individual counseling and referrals. Missing from this menu is long-term care, a service that CAPS lacks the capacity for and has no intention to provide in the future. Roughly 30 to 40 staff members work for the program, including interns, psychologists, and counselors.

These numbers seem minuscule when compared to the nearly 20,000 undergraduate students at UNC who might rely on CAPS at some point during their academic careers. Knowing its pitfalls, my search for a therapist began on Psychology Today, a website recommended to everyone, and I regret waiting until starting the search for a therapist. My initial consultation isn't for another two weeks, and I'm dreading another two weeks, and I'm dreading the dread of academic expectations. As with classrooms full of anxieties of the pandemic, but they have benefitted Black and Hispanic students. This thinking challenges the inherent merit and ability of these students.

Secondly, it assumes that Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately advantageous under advocated care, relative to white students. In reality, students of color tend to attain equal standing with their white counterparts, especially at predominantly white institutions like UNC. As of last semester, UNC's student body was only 6.7 percent Black and 10.2 percent African American. Furthermore, newly admitted students of Asian descent are more likely to attend institutions with higher proportions of Asian students, but as these needs grow, there have to be more accessible and affordable care for students to address their needs. Students not only grapple with the anxieties of the pandemic, but they handle issues like the surge in school shootings and trauma from suicides and sexual assault. While these crises shake our reality, there are also everyday stresses, from social media pressures to relationship problems to the pressures of academic expectations.CAPS is designed with the hopes of addressing the diverse needs of students, but as these needs grow, many feel like they can no longer rely solely on CAPS.

Since the start of the pandemic, college students have been experiencing increased symptoms of loneliness, anxiety, laziness, depression and a general lack of focus. The transition to online learning has caused many to struggle with social interaction and immersion into the school environment, but this introduces even more anxiety surrounding contracting COVID-19. And other issues still remain.

The Daily Tar Heel

Editorial Board

Opinion

COLUMNS

Finding long-term mental health care
Caitlyn Yeade
Assistant Opinion Editor

Last week, UNC — alongside Harvard University — made national headlines after the Supreme Court agreed to reconsider the universities' affirmative action policy. According to the ACLU, affirmative action is a policy that allows factors like race and gender to be taken into account, in order to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for minority students and women. The lawsuit, which will appear before the Court in October, states that these admissions practices have benefitted Asian American and Hispanic students here at UNC. The case against Harvard's affirmative action policy rests on the idea that Asian American students are unjustly penalized.

This thinking relies on research from a 2009 book, "No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal" by Princeton sociologists. The result was framed in a way that forever changed the legal definition of affirmative action. White and Asian students are "penalized" for their standardized testing performances, while Black and Hispanic students receive "bonus" points to their access. White opponents to affirmative action have long exploited this way of thinking.

In reality, affirmative actions policies are more nuanced than this framework leads us to believe. This way of thinking also perpetuates the idea that colleges are manufacturing artificial hierarchies of achievement that unjustly situate Black and Hispanic students at the top, leading White and Asian students lower on the totem pole. The first and perhaps most obvious way in which this thinking is dangerous is because it assumes that — in absence of affirmative action — White and Asian students would "naturally" rise above other minority students. While systemic racism in education impacts achievement for many students of color, this thinking challenges the inherent merit and ability of these students.

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In-person learning

By Nick Hatcher

COLUMN

The announcement of Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer’s retirement, President Joe Biden has a chance to fulfill at least one campaign promise: appointing the first Black woman to the highest court in the country. Breyer’s retirement won’t change the political balance of the court, which has a Republican-appointed majority. Naturally, the political right has already launched into a frenzy, deriding the announcement — first made back in 2020 on the campaign trail — as “identity politics” and an “affirmative action” hire. At the heart of these extemporized assumptions that Black women are somehow less qualified” for a role, and specifically opportunity to reflect on and question a white man backing it. It’s an assumption. White men remained that Black women are somehow less “affirmative action” hire. At the heart of these extemporized assumptions that Black women are somehow less qualified” for a role, and specifically opportunity to reflect on and question a white man backing it. It’s an assumption. White men remained that Black women are somehow less

“Snowstorm 2000” reigns supreme

By Michael Bureauard

COLUMN

If you are looking for a typical winter wonderland, North Carolina is not the place for you. Sometimes it gets very cold, and sometimes it gets snow. But many times it gets snow. But many times

“Zooming down streets on sleds, throwing snowballs and building snow bubbles, students have reveled in the transformation of the University from an institution of higher learning into a winter playground.”

The first month of the new millennium started off with a bang, with Chapel Hill experiencing 66-degree weather. Yet later in the year, temperatures would drop to 74 degrees on Jan. 4. Even as late as Jan. 14, the temperature was a balmy 40 degrees in Florida. But while the first half of the month was mostly sunny, the last two weeks of January were undoubtedly windy. The temperatures dropped dramatically, with daily highs in the 40s and 30s, and nightly lows in the 20s in Florida.

In addition, North Carolina also experienced some wintry weather. The National Weather Service reports Chapel Hill saw around 6 inches of snowfall on Jan. 18 and another half of an inch over Jan. 24, a low-pressure system built up over Florida, but despite the heavy snowfall, Chapel Hill remained blanketed with snow as students once again left their residence halls to take part in snowball fights and sledding.

The long-awaited return to normalcy for UNC classes might not be so long awaited. While many are looking forward to returning to the classroom, UNC has made an important new policy that strips professors, particularly those in a position of able to make their own health decisions in the pandemic.

“Perhaps then most exciting things are the upcoming student government elections. Undergraduate students get involved with campus and academic life, while changes in leadership are exciting and unpredictable.”

Due to the pandemic, many students who planned on studying abroad earlier in their college careers had their plans rescheduled. As a result, many students are currently exploring the possibility of traveling abroad this summer.

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UNC gymnastics welcomes 12-year-old to team

By Lindsey Ware

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

UNC gymnastics welcomes 12-year-old to team

By Lindsey Ware

If you were present at last Saturday’s UNC gymnastics meet, you might have noticed a new face: honorary member Thea Weinert.

Thea Weinert recently celebrated her birthday with the Tar Heels

By Lindsey Ware

SEASON PREVIEW

UNC baseball’s opening day is set for Feb. 18 at home against Seton Hall

By J Banzet V

The UNC baseball team’s 2021 season ended abruptly in Lubbock, Texas, in the regional round of the NCAA Tournament with a 12-2 loss to UCLA in June.

Despite the defeat, the team is ready to earn its place back at the top

By Riya Jayanthi

Tar Heels seek redemption after semifinals loss

By Riya Jayanthi

SEASON PREVIEW

Diamond Heels look to build off last year’s success

By J Banzet V

The UNC baseball team’s 2021 season ended abruptly in Lubbock, Texas, in the regional round of the NCAA Tournament with a 12-2 loss to UCLA in June.

Featuring an outstanding outfield with three draft picks, an all-Region pitcher and a power-hitting first baseman with a .465 slugging percentage, the Tar Heels managed to sweep Clemson and Louisville, take down a highly ranked BCU team and beat their rivals from Durham, the Duke Blue Devils, 21-8.

Head coach Scott Forbes, now in his second season, faces the task of replacing those talented players with a combination of transfers, in-house options and incoming freshmen, as the season is set to start in about a couple weeks.

“For us, if you just focus on the first year, you’ll really pretty much learn the most of any year,” Forbes said. “We were happy with the way things went, being able to get into the regional, but that’s not our ultimate goal.”

On the mound pitching this season, sophomore right-hander Max Carlson, junior left-hander Brandon Schaeffer and senior right-hander Gage Gillian should command most of the workload, but also expect graduate Shadon Peavyhouse, sophomore Darius Palermo, senior Corey O’Brien and sophomore Connor Bovarie to provide relief from the bullpen or spot starters throughout the season.

Forbes has not announced his weekend starters yet, so the UNC pitching rotation is up in the air. He plans to start the season.

“Last season we had a lot of talent, and I think that’s the same case this year,” O’Brien said. “If we can stay healthy, we’ve always had a chip on our shoulder, that people are always coming out to see and prove people wrong, I think that will help us a lot.”

Sophomore catcher Thomas Rick returns after starting 52 of 53 games last year, bringing strong defensive ability and an added level of experience behind the plate. He threw out 34.8 percent of base stealers a season ago, so expect that number to only go up in 2022.

As for the infield, junior shortstop Danny Serretti returns following a strong end to last season. The North Carolina native has a .309 batting average with one home run and five RBIs. He also had 20 steals in 25 attempts.

Second baseman is the only position in question, but the two leading candidates for the spot are sophomore Colby Wilkerson and Patrick Abreu. Though Serretti is academically a junior, this will be his last season in a Tar Heel uniform, and he’s expected to be the leader of this team that hopes to improve on last year’s regional finish.

Last season’s best group was its outfielders, with Justice Thompson and Caleb Roberts in center and right, respectively. Angel Zarate, sophomore outfielder in the clean-up spot in right and will be in charge of the scoring speedy freshman Vance Honeycutt to center and sophomore Tyler Caupsey — who started 19 games at shortstop — to left. Other outfielders to keep an eye on are sophomore Will Stewart and first-year Reece Hollbrook.

Opening Day is Feb. 18 at home against Seton Hall at 3 p.m.
Women’s hoops to face another in-state rival

Wake Forest knocked UNC out of the ACC Tournament in 2021
By Nia Satterfield Brown
Staff Writer
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After outings against Duke University and No. 3 N.C. State University, the No. 24 North Carolina women’s basketball team is looking to build on its competitive showings as it faces the Demon Deacons at Wake Forest on Thursday.

The last time the two teams met, Wake Forest knocked the Tar Heels out of the 2021 ACC Tournament with an 82-71 victory. Despite this outcome, last season’s UNC team looked very different than the current one, and on paper, North Carolina is poised for a better showing.

The Demon Deacons are 12-9 and 2-8 in ACC play compared to North Carolina’s 16-4 record and 6-4 record in conference play. While the Tar Heels are ranked higher in ACC standings, they could clean up in several areas that will not only propel their game but better position them as contenders for the ACC championship game later in the season.

Learning from its performance against N.C. State
While a clash of the blues at Cameron Indoor Stadium resulted in the Tar Heels beating the Blue Devils in a relatively one-sided game, Sunday’s game against No. 3 N.C. State told a different story.

The team was handed its first home loss against the Wolfpack on Sunday, 66-58. While the Tar Heels led during the first half, the Wolfpack worked themselves up during the third quarter and outscored the team 23-11 to overcome the Tar Heels and eventually hang on for the victory.

Despite making 11 of their 14 free-throw attempts, the Tar Heels shot 32.3 percent from the field and were 5-23 from 3-point range against the Wolfpack.

To secure a win against Wake Forest, the team must display a more consistent shooting effort throughout the entirety of the game.

Production of Kennedy Todd-Williams
Sophomore guard Kennedy Todd-Williams will be crucial in cleaning up the team’s shooting. Her versatility as a player has allowed her to be efficient on both sides of the ball whether that was through fast breaks or clean, focused ball handling.

She matched her career high of 15 points for the second game in a row, a clear indication of the impact she has on the ball. Todd-Williams’ ability to show up and produce each game will be needed when she comes face-to-face with Wake Forest guard Jewel Spear in Thursday’s game.

Spear is the team’s leading scorer, with 19.3 points per game and serves as the only double-digit scorer on the Demon Deacons’ roster. The sophomore’s scoring abilities, however, are unlikely to be enough to topple North Carolina’s defense which has given opponents problems throughout the season.

Todd-Williams will need help from her teammates in order to solidify a win against their in-state rival. This support includes guard Deja Kelly, who has struggled with her scoring in the last couple of games. She scored just seven points against Duke and zero during Sunday’s game.

Sophomore guard Alyssa Ustby has also played well the last two games. She played 37 minutes of passionate ball against N.C. State and led the team in scoring against Duke, where she put up 20 points. Her 13.2 scoring average is telling of her potential, but she will need to put in a more consistent effort and help lead the team to future success in ACC play.

Graduate transfer guard Carlie Littlefield has also been an important contributor this season, scoring 12 points against the Wolfpack.

The basketball team already has a fiery, competitive spirit, and with the addition of smooth shooting and assistance from each player, the Tar Heels will prove themselves deserving of being ranked well and best their state rival.

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Women's Tennis

UNC bags 4-0 win against Tulsa at ITA Kickoff

This marks the squad’s sixth-straight win of the season so far.

By Ben Evum

The No. 2 Tar Heels showed up in a big way with a 4-0 win over a Tulsa team that had been undefeated heading into the matchup. With its sixth-straight win of the season, North Carolina once again notched an important victory, this time with a title bid on the line.

“We have a pretty young team and a lot of great players,” senior Alle Sanford said. “It’s the beginning of the season, and we’re building our identity.”

The identity of the Tar Heels was successfully reflected by Sanford and her doubles partner, sophomore Reilly Tran, as they helped the team earn the doubles point with a 6-0 win in their match.

“Their doubles partner is a really good player, so we knew it was going to be a tough doubles match,” Tran said.

Sanford and Tran’s shutout win did not stand alone as sophomore Fiona Crawley and junior Elizabeth Scotty — the No. 1 doubles team in the country — replicated the dominant performance with a 6-0 doubles win of their own. Overall, the Tar Heels have only given up one set between all three of their doubles matches.

Sanford credited her stoud doubles play not only to her chemistry with Tran, but also to the team as a whole. The team even showed some synchronization — as Sanford and Tran and took a 3-0 lead in their match, so did Scotty and Crawley.

“Knowing that we have two other really great doubles teams playing next to us is also really nice to know,” Sanford said. “It’s a lot of energy bouncing off of each other.”

The unity and teamwork involved with doubles play — as well as how the energy from that play fuels the rest of the competition — showed itself for the Tar Heels on Saturday.

“It’s really cool to be able to problem solve together,” Sanford said. “It feels like even when you’re playing singles, you’re playing doubles, just because you’re so close to your teammate.”

Kathleen Kalbas has her coaching record at UNC is now 469-98, on top of six ACC Championship wins and five ITA National Team Indoor Championship titles.

Energy and the attitude that he has instilled in the team has led him to become one of the top competitors not only in ACC women’s tennis history as he continues to make a standing mark as a season coach as a college head coach.

Kalbas said he asks his team to play for a value, and he believes the values the Tar Heels keep in mind when they hit the courts has led them to many years of success.

“It’s been the best five years ever,” Sanford said.

The Tar Heels’ next dual match will come on the road at Michigan on Jan. 28. The Tar Heels won 4-0 on Saturday, Feb. 5.

Then the team will attempt to win its third straight ITA National Team Indoor Championship from Feb. 11 to Feb. 14 in Madison, Wis., where they will face against 16 of the best teams in the country.

When Kalbas had to pick a value to best describe the team’s performance this season, there was really only one word he could use, one word that signifies the hunger that leads to that many years of winning, the passion they’ll use to defend their trophy:

“Competitiveness.”

Women’s Basketball

Todd-Williams stands out despite N.C. State loss

Sophomore guard Kennedy Todd-Williams (3) has the ball hit from her hand during the Jan. 30 women’s basketball game against N.C. State.

By Asheebo Rojas

Todd-Williams stands out despite N.C. State loss

Some people like to analyze with numbers. Some like to use the eye-test. Regardless of how you watch basketball, if you watched the North Carolina women’s basketball team on Sunday night, you definitely noticed the play of sophomore guard Kennedy Todd-Williams.

As a team, the Tar Heels definitely had their struggles against their rival N.C. State — shooting just 32.3 percent from the field and 21.7 percent from three in a 66-58 loss.

Their shooting struggles came back to haunt them in the second half as the Wolfpack caught fire from beyond the arc — quickly turning a halftime lead into a deficit that the Tar Heels could not overcome.

Despite the unfavorable outcome, UNC kept its competitive between itself and the No. 5 team in the country — thanks to Todd-Williams’ presence.

“There’s no bigger Kennedy Todd-Williams moment than this,” UNC women’s tennis team’s head coach Courtney Banghart said.

For the eye-test watchers, Todd-Williams was everywhere on the court. One moment, she’s in the face of the defender, doing a little dance for a loose ball. And in the blink of an eye, she’s going coast-to-coast on a fast break.

“It was just a different mindset coming into this game,” Todd-Williams said. “I think we did a really good job of being more aggressive at the defensive end, so we can convert on the offensive end.”

From watching Todd-Williams, it was obvious that her formula — turning defense into easy points — wasn’t as clear for those who looked at the game as just one steal, but her deflections and disruptions made an impact in Sunday’s game.

Go back to the fourth quarter with 1:44 to go. The Tar Heels were down 65-56 and closing the gap on an 8-3 run.

Todd-Williams jumped in front of a high pass — and right before she was called for a controversial foul, the crowd exploded and all of the momentum seemed to swing in the direction of the home team.

Energy shifting moments like that, from the perspective of graduate guard Carla Littlefield, are contagious and fuel the team’s competitiveness.

“Having somebody else on the backcourt who really gets excited about defending makes it so much easier to get up in those passing lanes to go for steals because, you know, (Todd-Williams) has our back — she’s really everywhere flying around,” Littlefield said. “Even if we go for a gamble, go for a ball, she’s going to be there to have our back.”

From looking at her stats, Todd-Williams’ offensive impact is just as undeniable.

Todd-Williams was the leading scorer for UNC and, once again, matched her career high of 15 points on Sunday afternoon — one game after reaching the same feat in the Tar Heels’ previous match-up against Duke.

Todd-Williams stepped up for her team against a top-25 rival on their court and did it again against three team that dominated the Tar Heels in their first meeting.

Despite the pressure in these match-ups, for Todd-Williams, it’s still about having fun and playing as a team.

“Playing with these girls, you know. I’m just having fun and obviously I know I need to step up in my role, and everybody will do the same,” Williams said. “Everybody brings their piece, you know. We can connect it together, and it showed tonight.”

UNC-Chapel Hill junior Elizabeth Scotty and first-year Lindsay Zink compete in a meet on Jan. 28. The Tar Heels won 4-0.

Women’s Gymnastics

First-years lead team to first-place finish at home meet

UNC's Courtney Cefvelson and drivers perform a balance beam routine on Jan. 28.

By Lindsey Ware

The program shows potential under its new leadership

North Carolina hosted its third home meet of the season a few days ago, when they faced off against EAGL conference opponents Pitt and Towson.

Head coach Danae Durante wanted the UNC gymnasts to start where they left off at the end of the first half of the UNC Quad Meet last weekend — where they had a close second-place finish behind Missouri — and build from there.

North Carolina, the fifth-ranked EAGL team, did just that. They put up a strong, consistent performance that allowed them to stay above Pitt throughout the entirety of the match and kept them in a close battle with Towson — ranked sixth and second in the EAGL, respectively.

The fight for first place between the Tar Heels and the Tigers was so close that it came down to the final performance of the final rotation to determine a winner.

North Carolina’s final rotation was floor, which was led by first-year Julia Kalbas. When Kalbas entered the floor, she went into floor having also led the team in its second-to-last rotation at beam.

Her high-energy performance and clean execution allowed her to score a 9.900 on the floor routine.

This secured the UNC victory and served as the highest score on floor for any Tar Heel gymnast this season.

“Going into that last routine, I wasn’t nervous at all,” Knower said. “I knew my team believed in me and my coaches believed in me. I just wanted to leave it all on the floor.”

Knower’s performance contributed to UNC’s 49.225 total points on floor, as numbers, as she only recorded was also the initial individual event for Knower, who scored a 9.750 on vault, a 9.860 on bars and a 9.725 on beam.

It was this rotation that allowed North Carolina to overtake Pitt and Towson, who had led the whole meet, and win first place.

“Knowing that everyone is doing their best, that’s what we expected her to do,” Durante said.

The 39.325 total points that Knower accumulated at the meet allowed her to finish second all around. Her follow floor routine came with a 9.875 and secured third for Pitt with 39.450 total points, just .125 more than Knower. This win is a partially due to Dekanoidze’s matched career-best vault score of 9.90. It was the second all-around title Dekanoidze has won this season.

“I just love to help out the team and be there for everyone,” Dekanoidze said.

“The team is a really big part of me doing well in all-around.”

The impressive thing about Knower’s performances, as well as strong performances and support from their teammates, is that the North Carolina women’s gymnastics program has demonstrated the potential with a few home meets under their new leadership.

“Having somebody else on the backcourt who really gets excited about defending makes it so much easier to get up in those passing lanes to go for steals because, you know, (Todd-Williams) has our back — she’s really everywhere flying around,” Littlefield said. “Even if we go for a gamble, go for a ball, she’s going to be there to have our back.”

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First-years lead team to first-place finish at home meet