How COVID-19 changed UNC and NC over a month

The pandemic has shaken the status quo of the University and Orange County.

By Maeve Sheehy and Michael Taffe

The pandemic has dramatically changed life in Chapel Hill.

By Niharika Vattikonda

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many problems for students.

By Emily Holter

This new syllabus is unprecedented.

DTH PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/ ANGELINA KATSANIS

Schools work for equitable remote education

OCS and CHCCS are working to mitigate education disparities due to COVID-19.

By Niharika Vattikonda

Staff Writer

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools have been working to keep up with the state after Gov. Roy Cooper’s announcement to extend school closures until May 15.

Parents of elementary school students received packets containing various options for remote learning and were given the option of choosing between online or offline activities for their students to complete, said Jeff Nash, a spokesperson for the district.

For middle and high school students, he said, remote learning will take place online as part of a district-wide initiative launched this year.

“We issued every middle and high school a Chromebook, and for those who need Internet access at home, we’ve got the MiFi,” Nash said.

Nash said the district has begun surveying students in upper elementary grades to find out if they have Internet access and a device at home to access materials online. He said the district just ordered a couple hundred more digital hotspot devices, or MiFis, to provide to homes.

OCS will be closed for spring break next week, but students have been participating in online enrichment.

Online classroom instruction is set to begin on April 6.

Remote Schooling, Page 7

Adjusted online syllabus goes viral

A UNC professor’s syllabus gained some attention with new principles and flexibility.

By Emily Holter

Staff Writer

For students in professor Brandon Rayne’s Religion in America class, the first principle of their revised spring 2020 syllabus is simply: “Students should be signed up for this class.

By “this,” Rayne is referring to the COVID-19 outbreak and how the pandemic has affected academic institutions all over the country.

The pandemic has caused UNC to transition to almost all remote classes.

“Typically, a course is available online (my students) could’ve taken this class online if they had wanted to, but that’s not what they signed up for,” Rayne said.

“Students who are taking a class online, and I didn’t sign up to teach online, so we’re just having to be flexible.”

The new syllabus, which has over a thousand shares solely from Rayne’s Facebook page, introduces a new set of principles for his students. These principles stray from a traditional course syllabus by never mentioning attendance policies or grading scales, but rather highlighting the prioritization of self-care and supporting one another during this unprecedented time.

Professor Hugo Méndez, Rayne’s colleague in UNC’s Department of Religious Studies, said the new syllabus addresses the difficult task of answering the question: What is the right way to handle this?

“I think what’s really unique and really beautiful about Brandon’s particular statement is how it encapsulated what so many of us are feeling,” Méndez said. “It kind of captures the true north and the moral compass we want to have at this time, which is to really prioritize the humanity of our students.”

Rayne said that he wrote the syllabus after sending a poll to his students, asking them to provide information about their online learning capabilities and what they were willing to do in order to support one another.

“Really, we’re just trying to be flexible and responsive and do the right thing by our students,” Rayne said.

DTH PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/ ANGELINA KATSANIS

Students are now completing schoolwork at home due to the closure of all N.C. public schools until May 15, 2020 as ordered by Gov. Roy Cooper in March.

Jamye Carr, a science teacher at Cedar Ridge High School, said the district has been prioritizing making sure students are fed and safe over academics.

“We delivered a Google document with the school keeping track of which kids we’ve made contact with, which kids we haven’t been able to get a hold of,” Carr said.

They have Internet access and a device at home to access materials online. He said the district just ordered a couple hundred more digital hotspot devices, or MiFis, to provide to homes.

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REMOTE SCHOOLING, PAGE 7

Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise again.

VICTOR HUGO, LES MISÉRABLES

SEE ADJUSTED SYLLABUS, PAGE 7
More than 500 people have co-signed a letter written by a group of resident advisers that expresses concerns about compensation in response to a March 18 email in which Carolina Housing terminated them, effective April 1. A RA who contributed to the letter, and asked to remain anonymous due to future employment concerns, said she started planning the response after receiving the March 18 email. The email stated that her position had been terminated and left questions about compensation.

She said the goal of the letter is for Carolina Housing to acknowledge the concerns of student staff and pay the remainder of their stipend.

The letter said RA and Carolina Housing leadership team members rely on the monthly stipend and factor this additional income into their financial plans. It was clear, she said, that these are unprecedented times, the RAs said in the letter. “However, to leave us completely in the dark about whether we will continue to be paid or not is very concerning,” the letter said.

The RA letter of appointment states that RAs are at-will employees and ‘will be terminated at the sole discretion of Carolina Housing administration,” not that RAs or other student staff will continue after their terminate date.

Former student staff are still answering messages from former residents and were asked to provide advice, the RAs said in the letter. It also cited specific tasks that staff had assisted with, such as managing express check out mailboxes or helping residents reside in their building if they forgot their keys.

“We have been on the frontline of this unprecedented event, working tirelessly to ensure that there is some level of connection to our residents,” the RAs said in the letter. “Although our official termination begins April 1, it must be considered that the semester does not end April 1.”

Emily Ashton, a former resident adviser mentor, said she especially resonated with this part of the letter. “Just because we can’t fulfill a lot of what we are expected to do in our job descriptions, we’re still doing the most important part of the job, I think, which is supporting residents,” Ashton said.

The letter contributed to the RAs said she was shocked at the outcome of the staff support from the wider community.

“It just shows the people who we are trying to convince to pay us that people who aren’t even affected by this can’t see a lot about the care about what happens to us,” she said.

UNC sophomore Megan Schneider received the letter in a GroupMe for her floor in Morehead Residence Hall. In the March 23 email, Schneider described the problems that staff had faced, and she found the points in the letter compelling, leading her to sign up to help. Schneider also said her relationship with her own RA contributed to her decision to sign the letter.

“I have a lot of respect for her,” Schneider said. “And she’s really kind and cares about what she does.”

The RA who contributed to the letter said she was recently appointed as Carolina Housing’s senior director for residential education. J. Kala Bullett, and its executive director, Allian Blattner, the afternoon of March 23. She said she sent the letter a few hours after receiving an email from Bullett and Blattner addressed to Carolina Housing students staff, to clarify earlier communications.

In the email, Bullett and Blattner first apologized for the confusion that arose from the email sent to student staff on March 18.

“I want to apologize for the emotional turmoil this situation may have caused. I will respond with the utmost clarity and answer questions about student employees’ status beyond March 31 but was ‘based upon guidance that has changed’,” Bullett and Blattner said, in a change from the initial decision, that ‘No decisions have been made at this time regarding pay for student employees after March 31, 2020.’ They added, ‘When Carolina Housing receives guidance from the UNC System, we will update the initial decision that “No RAs going forward. In order to provide a solution that is “equitable and student-focused,” they said Carolina Housing will await guidance from the UNC System.

Ashton said this part of the email made her question if other schools in the UNC System have already made the decision to continue paying RAs.

The response letter written by student staff cited other universities such as UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, which are part of the UNC System, that are continuing to pay RAs.

Fred Hartman, executive director of university relations for NC State, confirmed in an email that RAs at NC State will be paid through the semester. They have been assigned some remote work to help assist housing in communicating with students and checking in with their residents throughout the semester,” Hartman said in an email.

Ashton said she appreciated that UNC did not ‘fully understand the changes’ but she said, “I still don’t know what the next step is, and now it’s just kind of a waiting game.”
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- Please type. Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- Signed and date. No more than two people should sign letters.
- Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
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**The good, the bad and ugly of UNC’s COVID-19 response**

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**EDITORIAL**

A questionable medical advice circulates widely on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media platforms, and rumors of a national lockdown have spread across group chats on social media. The new coronavirus has exposed Americans to a second crisis, it can lead to further harm.

An Arizona man died after ingesting chlorine dioxide, believing it would protect him from becoming infected with the new coronavirus. The man’s wife told NBC News she’d watched televised briefings during which President Trump talked about the potential benefits of chlorine dioxide. Trump has minimized the risk the coronavirus poses to the country for weeks, even calling it a hoax overspread by Democrats.

There are a variety of things that can be done to curb the spread of fake news, especially when misinformation can have a responsibility to fight back — especially when misinformation can have life-and-death consequences.

In addition, it threatens extending the containment by early summer (at the earliest). However, for this to even be possible, employers, it could pose a dangerous threat to public health and safety. President Trump has been consistent in his attempts to reopen the economy.

Economists predict unemployment rates could even reach 30 percent, and with many individuals depending on health insurance through their employers, it could pose a dangerous threat to public health and safety. The new coronavirus has exposed Americans to a second crisis, it can lead to further harm.

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A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If the federal government has proven anything, it has been exactly that. The virus, known as COVID-19, has revealed the inherent bureaucratic system in the United States: in legislative and governmental development, and in how public health officials have handled the pandemic.

State and local governments have largely been forced to take leadership in decisions regarding the course of the virus. In North Carolina, this has led to decisions of non-essential business, state-wide stay-at-home orders and the encouragement of indefinite social distancing. The question that everyone is asking is, ‘when is this crisis over?’

There are two things that are going to mark the end of social distancing. One, enough of the population will have been tested and developed immunity against the virus, and two, a vaccine will have been developed and available to the public. Although the first option would likely result in the end of social distancing, the second option isn’t exactly the go-to answer of this pandemic.

Scientists have come to the general consensus that a vaccine for the virus likely wouldn’t be available until the summer of 2021 at the earliest, even with the efforts of pharmaceutical companies leading their own efforts. Although the process could theoretically be accelerated, there have been previous cases in which drugs have been rushed to market without adequate testing.

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President Trump has been consistent in his attempts to reopen the economy. The current administration has been largely incompetent in this aspect, it’s not about to change. Local governments must take the lead in enforcing stay-at-home orders across the country, and not just in certain states and counties with a large number of cases.

Traditional testing and tracing has been inadequate. By testing individuals in areas with a large number of cases, it makes it possible to identify and isolate someone who could potentially be infected before they even present symptoms. This can allow for better containment of the virus. The virus, known as COVID-19, has revealed the inherent bureaucratic system in the United States: in legislative and governmental development, and in how public health officials have handled the pandemic.

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Traditional testing and tracing has been inadequate. By testing individuals in areas with a large number of cases, it makes it possible to identify and isolate someone who could potentially be infected before they even present symptoms. This can allow for better containment of the virus.
The first round of submissions could be about anything from recipes, songs, jokes, family histories or feelings and experiences about the quarantine that community members want to share.

"I'm really interested in how people are spending their time in new and maybe unusual ways," Associate Producer Mandella Younge said.

Younge said she hopes to give people who don't usually have a place to share their experiences in a fairly unfettered setting.

Lucy said this new project has already been part of the plan for Re/Collecting Chapel Hill. But the sudden mandatory stay-at-home orders virtually caused by COVID-19 helped make the goal a reality.

"A lot of people are looking for outlets right now," Lucy said. "We've always wanted to get to the point where we could do a season where our voices could come through the noise."

Lucy said the new project has already been part of the plan for Re/Collecting Chapel Hill. But the sudden mandatory stay-at-home orders virtually caused by COVID-19 helped make the goal a reality.

"What do people do on the other side of this as incomes are gone, and what financial resources are we going to have as a community to help people because of this?" Carrington said.

For now, nothing is certain. Mayer said he believes this as an opportunity where he'll sleep while his work is in doubt.

"Wednesday, I get my last check," Rich said. "I'm going to spend a little bit and get a storage unit, get a hotel room for a night and save up to have money to do something for the rest of the month of April."
NCAA allows extra year of eligibility after COVID-19 cancellations

By Ryan Wilcox
Sports Editor

The NCAA’s Division I Council voted to allow schools to give spring sport athletes an extra year of eligibility on Monday, according to a press release.

The remainder of all spring and winter sports seasons were canceled earlier this month due to the spread of COVID-19. Now, schools including North Carolina will have the option to grant its seniors another chance at competition.

The NCAA will adjust its financial aid rules to allow teams to have more players on scholarship, accounting for the influx of incoming recruits and the return of seniors who decide to compete another year. And “in a nod to the financial uncertainty faced by higher education,” schools will be allowed to have last-year players return next season “without requiring that athletics aid be provided at the same level awarded for 2019-20.” Schools will also have the option to use the NCAA Student Assistance Fund to pay for scholarships for athletes who decide to return.

Winter sports were not included in the decision, according to the release, and Council members declined to provide the extra eligibility option to those athletes.

“We respect the NCAA Division I Council’s decision regarding the extension of eligibility for spring sport student-athletes, and we appreciate the flexibility given to each campus to make its own individual decisions,” UNC athletic director Bubba Cunningham said regarding the NCAA’s decision. “We will carefully consider all of our options at Carolina. We are waiting for guidance from the ACC, and we will consult with University leadership to determine what’s best for our current and future student-athletes, our 28-sport program, and our University.”

Here’s how parts of UNC athletics reacted to originally-canceled seasons:

Maddie Hoffer
is a women’s lacrosse athlete. She said hope was high among the team.

“Everyone that was there as a team was upset about it.”

Tony Ramos
is the associate head coach for wrestling. He feels for his team.

“It was a tough thing for me to sit there and watch him tell these guys their season is over.”

Austin O’Connor
is a wrestling athlete. He said that the cancellations were heartbreaking.

“I did make it worse on some level because we really had high hopes for how the season was going.”

Austin O’Connor
is a women’s tennis athlete. Jones said UNC is home for her.

“If I could get more time here, I would take it in an absolute heartbeat.”

Emma Cole
is a UNC swim and dive athlete. She said that the team’s work isn’t gone.

“Regionalis was a real goal that we had, and it was looking feasible for us.”

Derek Galvin
is the gymnastics head coach. He is glad the team was able to have a final big meet.

“That was their final big meet, something the entire team shared.”

Caroline Wakefield
is a UNC women’s lacrosse athlete. She said her team’s chemistry is built solid.

“We all just have so much love and passion for the game, so it’s something that’s so hard to let go.”

Tony Ramos
is the associate head coach for wrestling. He feels for his team.

“It’s not like we’re having to start over next year. It’s just going to be a kind of different transition.”

Mikayla Robinson
is a UNC gymnastics athlete. She hopes the cancellations will be motivating.

“Regionalis was a real goal that we had, and it was looking feasible for us.”

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WHERE THEY FROZE: HOW UNC TEAMS FARED BEFORE CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS

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Community faces additional COVID-19 challenges

By Praveena Somanudaram

An email from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs on March 12 encouraged students to remain at their permanent place of residence or other off-campus locations until another update from the University regarding COVID-19.

“We know that you are eager to return to campus to reconnect with friends or to resume activities, but we need to pause those plans as the health and well-being of the entire Carolina community,” the email stated.

This notice left many students, like sophomore Jessica Reid, feeling unprepared for the transition to online classes, which will start next week and continue indefinitely.

“I feel like it’s difficult because from their perspective everything happened really rapidly,” Reid said. “I know for me when I left school for spring break on that Friday, I was not expecting school to be presumably canceled for the rest of the semester.”

The notice prompted some to return to campus and pack additional items to take home.

“My study abroad top this summer got canceled because of COVID-19,” sophomore Michael Thompson said. “So I figured if they were canceling everything far ahead into summer, that’s a decent indicator that I can come back and at least get a majority of my things.”

However, transportation to campus was difficult for Thompson, who lives three hours away in Marion, North Carolina. She packed only clothes, rather than moving out completely.

“Moving out is such a long and tedious process,” Thompson said. “And it’s difficult since I don’t have my car, I have to rely on my parents and since they work, it’s just like I can just pack up the drop of a hat when they say Okay you guys can move out now. So, it’s a little bit difficult to come across that decision.”

Thompson said she would have wanted an update sooner from the University about its considerations in response to COVID-19.

“We went home thinking, ‘Well, we’re going to do online classes’ and now we’re kind of stuck at home and we’re being strongly advised not to return to the University,” Thompson said.

I guess it’s just difficult to anticipate how much our professors are going to be looking out of us whenever we may or may not have all of our school materials.”

The UNC System sent a press release on Tuesday announcing that it would be instructing students to return to their permanent address unless granted an expectation to remain in university housing. UNC-Chapel Hill had not yet sent a specific update about the closing of its dorms at this time.

“It just sucks because UNC’s not the best year yet, so it was kind of sad for it to end,” Haugle said.

The group released an album, “Ignite,” at the end of January. Haugle said it’s one of Tar Heel Voices’ best albums to date. It’s available on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon and Google Play.

“We would love for people to look us up and see what we’re working on, because we’ve listed our latest videos on our website. We are really proud of it,” Guthikonda said.

Photo courtesy of Anoova Guthikonda

COVID-19 complicates on-campus move-out

By Mary King

Staff Writer

When spring break came around, UNC’s dance and music organizations had concerts and gigs on the horizon. Members parted ways confidently that once they returned, they’d hit the ground running.

However, they didn’t know that after spring break, there would be no campus. CDC advice was to cancel large gatherings and move to online classes, which will start next week and continue indefinitely.

“What I think will end up happening is that if things settle down this summer, we might all come back together, find a space somewhere in Chapel Hill to hold our concerts, the way we normally do,” said Pokemon’s public relations chair and captain-elect Aurij Puriot.

The group earned acceptance to Bhangra Blowout, the collegiate championship this spring.

But she said she’s disappointed she’ll no longer have spontaneous opportunities to build personal relationships with the dancers.

“I’m definitely going to miss the late-night, 11 p.m. practices where we are all absolutely deliciously and just dancing around the SRC, crazy and in a time crunch trying to learn new choreography for the routine,” she said.

The UNC Chapel Hill community faces additional COVID-19 challenges

By Praveena Somanudaram

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“It just sucks because UNC’s not the best at sending out emails so it’s kind of hard not knowing what’s happening,” sophomore Urvi Patel said. “The news knows, but students are kind of still in the dark.”

The announcement from the UNC System has brought up concerns about refunds for campus housing. An announcement from UNC-Chapel Hill was expected Tuesday evening, giving students options for the dorms and some of the things that would have come along with living on campus like meal plans. “I understand that it’s a tough economic situation right now and that it’s probably not their biggest priority when we’re so worried about saving lives, but I do hope that that’s something that might be considered as we go along in this crisis,” said University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.
REMOTE SCHOOLING
FROM PAGE 1

of what families have what resources, which families are picking up food so we can get them class materials when they need them," she said.

All OCS students in grades 4-12 are eligible to receive Chromebooks. However, even with this technology, Board of County Commissioners Chairperson Penny Rich said access to reliable Wi-Fi is a large problem for families who live in rural areas.

"We don’t have the ability to provide reliable broadband out in the county because large cell companies do not want to work with rural populations," she said. "We do have a grant with open broadband to try and get that up to speed on its services. It’s happening, but happening way slower than we thought.

Spectrum is offering free broadband and Wi-Fi to households with K-12 or college students for the next 60 days, according to the OCS website. The district also lists several public Wi-Fi sites at county community centers, but since the centers have closed, students will have to access the services on parking areas.

Carr said there are teachers concerned because unlike CHCCS, teachers in OCS have been told by the district that they cannot provide, test or grade students on new material. Instead, they only provide enrichment, which she said has a particular impact on students in honors, IB and AP courses.

But Carr said she believes the district will change this to allow students that have not been out of school for a longer period of time. "We can’t hold onto presenting new material until May 15,” she said.

Cooper’s decision to extend school closures has raised questions on how districts are going to handle an extended period without in-person classes.

A state law requires all schools to complete a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction, and some school boards have raised concerns that schools won’t be able to meet this requirement due to school closures. Cooper’s representative, Chris Morgan (D-Caswell, Orange), who is serving in the education working group for the N.C. House Select Committee on COVID-19, said he thinks that governmental bodies will have to alter the calendar law for this school year. The General Assembly previously created flexibility in instructional hour requirements due to Hurricane Florence school closings.

At a virtual education town hall on Tuesday, Morgan said it is possible the General Assembly will have a special session in order to allow communities across the state before they are set to reconvene on April 28.

Until then, the state is working on other virtual resources to assist with remote learning.

ADJUSTED SYLLABUS
FROM PAGE 1

family considerations and had diverse access to technology and course materials," Bayne said. "Paired with the two hurricanes, the two water main over-ﬂow issues and the ongoing controversies over Silent Sam that have shaped their time at UNC, I wanted to let them know that we use as a faculty what we have achieved and are in this together with them."

Bayne-Doran is a student in Bayne’s Religion in America class. She said that initially receiving a survey — as opposed to a new syllabus — differed from the emails she received from other instructors.

"That was helpful to get an initial read on things," Donnolo

said. "I know it’s frustrating for absolutely everyone involved in this situation, but he was more taking it as an opportunity to check in on everybody, which I think is great. It was very nice that at a lot a during the semester. He really cared a lot about people.

Bayne said he created a syllabus by using the original document to his students, he followed up with a syllabus of new syllabus that outlines specifics for how his Religion in America class is going to operate under the circumstances. Along with thanks and questions from students, Bayne said he received a lot of support.

"The main thing that I’ve been getting from teaching and being in this subject is asking me if I’m OK," Bayne said.

"The syllabus has really been amazing. They know that I started out the semester rough, and that I have already been going through it."

At the beginning of this semester, Bayne suddenly lost his mother to an aggressive form of cancer. He spent many hours of travel to his hometown and care for her before she passed, and grieves for a period of time he said. This experience inspired one of the principles behind his new syllabus: "We are going to prioritize each other as humans."

"I want to ask my students to see me as a human, and not just as their professor who is running late. Now, he said, he received a lot of support.

Bayne’s syllabus circulated far past his Religion in America class. He said he has received countless emails from educators at UNC and all over the world, many of whom he has never met in person. Méndez said the syllabus has gone “totally viral” in the world of academia. Méndez said and many others used Bayne’s document as inspiration for their own revised syllabus.

"It goes back to what that document does very well,” Méndez said. “It captures a feeling, a moral instinct, an impulse, a set of principles that I translate that into the classroom, that is the most important thing for me. Now, he said, it’s understandable to see other people latch onto it."

Méndez said Bayne serves as a leader to all of the junior faculty in the Religious Studies department. He described Bayne as a friend, a mentor and somebody who everyone can depend on. He also said Bayne’s attentiveness to the “minority case” in his everyday life — as a teacher and a person — shines through in his syllabus.

Bayne said that he did not intend for the syllabus to be shared as widely as it has been. He said he initially wrote down the principles in the syllabus as guidelines for himself while dealing with the fallout of the coronavirus. What Méndez referred to as “the loop” in his syllabus took him only a few minutes to express. "I said ‘Let’s go to a colleague of mine that this only took me about 10 or 15 minutes to write,’" Bayne said. "But this colleague said ‘Yeah, but I took you 45 years to become the kind of person that would write it.'"

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