

UNCA part of new council to improve choices for undergrads

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Staff Writer

UNCA, along with several other universities and colleges have created a new council called Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (CoPLAC). This council is designed to improve options for undergraduates at state funded colleges and universities, according to a press release.

"The objective of this new consortium is to assist universities which are seeking to combine the traditional advantages of outstanding liberal arts colleges with the special mission and responsibilities of public campuses," said UNCA Interim Chancellor Lauren Wilson. "We are helping foster a major new development in higher education. UNCA conceived and hosted the first meeting of this group, and we are proud of our continuing leadership role," according to the press release.

Other members of CoPLAC are the College of Charleston in South Carolina, Evergreen State College in Washington, Keene State College in New Hampshire,

Mary Washington College in Virginia, Northeast Missouri State University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, University of Maine-Farmington and University of Minnesota-Morris, according to the press release.

"CoPLAC is a voluntary consortium which we have helped to form in order to help educate individuals in the wider community about some of the advantages of a public liberal arts university," said Tom Byers, special assistant to the chancellor. "So we've joined forces with some other campuses around the nation that, we feel, share some goals and characteristics in common with UNCA," said Byers.

The members of CoPLAC "are strongly committed to the principles of liberal education," Wilson said. UNCA has been designated a Liberal Arts University by the University of North Carolina, the only one of its 16 campuses to be singled out in this way, and several other CoPLAC members have achieved or are seeking similar designation from their respective states," according to the press release.

The idea of CoPLAC began about six years ago, said Byers. During that time, founding members of this council have met on the campuses that CoPLAC belongs to.

"So what has occurred at this point is that the group has decided it has sufficiently defined itself and agreed upon its goals that it has been officially created," said Byers. "But the concept, and even the group, is not at all brand-new. This has evolved through a process of discussion and reflection over a fairly extensive period of time," said Byers.

"CoPLAC really exists for the purpose of helping us spread the word about the kinds of advantages that institutions, like ours, are interested in making available," said Byers.

Byers said that CoPLAC will look at the benefits that a public institution with a liberal arts curriculum offers. "Why such an institution ought to have a lot of appeal for many students might offer students some distinct advantages, and CoPLAC is designed to help share that word, you might say, with the world," said Byers.

"No other professional association addresses the distinctive needs of

public liberal arts institutions, Wilson said. "We are focusing on issues such as refining the liberal arts curriculum in a public context, promoting active learning, strengthening the academic community, and achieving optimum educational benefits with the strong but limited resources of public universities," according to the press release.

The growth of CoPLAC members is not the main focus.

"We believe that the core group, as it exists right now, is a rather sound one, and I would say that UNCA's view is that we would actually want to be rather cautious as the group is expanded so that the basic character of the CoPLAC organization is maintained. In other words, the quality of the group is far more important to us than the quantity of members," said Byers.

UNCA and its curriculum, as compared to other UNC schools, is significant, "in that this campus, for a long time, has been dedicated to a rather exclusive focus on undergraduate education in the liberal arts and sciences," said Byers.

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most vulnerable in a society. He said the thinking involved here is that "If I'm out, [and] I don't deserve this... then somebody must be to blame." He said that people who feel out of control of their lives often have a sense of desperation and confusion, which leads them to destruction.

Ratner showed examples of hate mail he has received directly to his home. These included letters with swastikas and phrases such as "Go back to Israel, Jew scum!" painted on them. Other phrases written on his hate mail included statements like "The Holocaust never happened" and "Adolf Hitler was right."

"There is no end to all this. It is around us on all sides," said Ratner. He said this existence of hate causes much anxiety to the victims and confronts them with a question as to how they should react.

He said that the debate on how to react causes division within the targeted communities because some feel they should ignore the hate, while others want to speak out. "Hating does work. It does get to you after awhile," said Ratner.

Smith, a native of Asheville, then spoke on the local politics of hate and racial/ethnic division. "Hate groups do exist, and they exist in our community, and they exist in our schools," he said. "They may be small, but I watch them."

Smith said that not many people understand what hate is about, and that a lot of the principles and school leaders do not take it seriously. "Racism is here. It is alive and well." He compared it to having high blood pressure—it's always there, but you just take a pill everyday to control it, he said.

He said that the best action for a community to take is to support its members when they are being victimized by hate groups. "Don't let folks be alone and be victims," he said. Communities must "rally around" their members, he said.

Smith said that haters often use violence to gain respect, to prove a point, or to instill fear in a community. Supporting each other breaks this intention, he said. "A lot of times, people who are not effected have to join ranks with those of us who are."

He then discussed specifically the relations between African-Americans and Jews. He said these two groups must acknowledge their differences and "love" each other anyhow. "We need each other, and we need to respect each other," he said.

Smith said that these two communities can find a common bond in their histories of suffering, but, aside from that, must move forward and discuss the current issues. "Let's try to resolve [our] differences," he said.

We have some difficult issues out there, and if they hold us back, then they need to be discussed, he said. "I think the hard work is still to reach out to each other." It is "real important that these" discussion are happening, he said.

In a forum discussion following the session, Smith said that the issues which need to be talked about are the day-to-day comments and incidents which break down the community. He said we must ask the right questions and be concerned about the answers.

This session followed last week's discussion of assimilation and separatism within these two communities, and began by addressing some of the questions which arose at the previous meeting. Edward Katz, assistant professor of literature, opened the session by reviewing the statements commonly made by members of these communities—"Why, always, is it the Jews? Why, always, is it the Blacks? Why, always, is it us?"

Katz then reviewed what sociologist Alan Saxe had said about racists. Saxe had commented that haters tend to assume that "the world" they see is the same one as others see. He said this notion is what helps them ground their "irrational fears." Saxe said there is a "dark security" in this level of existence, where victims find that change is unlikely.

Katz posed the question asked by many victims of hate, "who will listen?" He said that our obsession with hatemongers prevents us from making a change.

Task force, continued from page one

Academic Policy Committee.

"I asked that each of the chairpersons to review the report and its findings with their committees and if they had any recommendations or responses to bring those back to the senate," said Shirley Browning, chair of the faculty senate.

"Two of the committees have reported back, and Yearout's committee recommended that a task force look at specific academic issues," he said.

"The report is so large and broad based," said Robert Yearout, chair of the Academic Policy Committee. "We felt we needed to look at specifics within the report that dealt with academic policy and its affects on students."

"In the statistical report, it appears that there is disproportionate representation of certain minority groups and women in certain academic areas," said Yearout. "This is true nation-wide, but is this what we want UNCA to be?"

RSPCW states that "since 1983 the philosophy department has not had one African-American major and six other departments (art, chemistry, classics, foreign languages, mathematics and physics) have each had a total of only one to three African-American majors."

RSPCW also states that "in half of UNCA's 24 departments, majors study predominantly with other students of the same gender."

"The gender issues are troublesome," said Mullen. "But not necessarily in the same way racial issues are troublesome."

"For example, the reasons why female students may not be majoring in certain academic areas may differ very dramatically from why African-Americans are not majoring in those departments."

Mullen believes that there are steps that can be taken to increase the diversity of the student population at UNCA

"The pool is much larger than we are targeting," said Mullen. "We are not

locked into having everybody on campus having over a 1000 SAT or be in the top 25 percent of their class.

"This has been a general guideline on this campus," he said. "But its not etched in stone."

Part of the review done by the task force will include reviewing admissions criteria, according to Mullen.

"You don't necessarily need to be in a college bound track [at the high school level] to meet the state regulations in terms of admissions to the UNC system," said Mullen.

Mullen said the question is if a student meets the state requirements, but doesn't have as high an SAT score, what are their chances of being admitted at UNCA?

Lauren Wilson, interim chancellor, acknowledged to the faculty senate that UNCA has had some difficulty enrolling minorities, according to minutes from a December 1993 Senate meeting.

During this meeting Wilson stressed that institutionally UNCA has to ask, "What is the extent of our commitment, and how hard are we willing to work to bring about diversity? How much are we willing to pay for it?" according to meeting minutes.

Mullen said that the task force plans to submit its recommendations to the faculty senate in April.

"This gives us time to give some type of guidance for next year's faculty senate to follow up on," said Mullen.

"We hope to have some type of objective-oriented guidelines. I doubt that the mechanism will be in place, but we will have something to put on the new chancellor's desk," he said.

Information Highway, continued from page one

ATM switches can be thought of as high-speed railroad switches. Nine locations across the state will be the switching sites, including UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Wilmington, and UNCA.

SONET is the worldwide standard for transmission over fiber-optic cable. The system will be of particular interest to students doing undergraduate research.

"At first, access to the NCIH at UNCA will be provided in the Steelcase Teleconference Center in Robinson Hall," said Video and Facilities Manager Greg Dillingham.

Director of University Computing

Kern Parker said he would like to see the entire university, from Ramsey Library to individual dormitory rooms, online to the NCIH. Dillingham agrees.

"It would otherwise be like saying 'Here's your condo in Maui, but you can only use it for 1 hour out of the year,'" said Dillingham.

"But there is already strong support within university management to network the entire campus, top to bottom," said Parker. "The biggest obstacles are immediate needs for funding."

Students will be able to use the

system in Robinson Hall. There will be no fees for usage for the first year. Southern Bell is picking up the connection charges.

Even after the first year, Parker said he does not anticipate there ever being any student usage fees.

There also will be no additional fees added to tuition payments to pay for the initial installation and acquisition of equipment.

It is unclear as to whether additional fees would be needed to connect the dorm rooms to the system, a decision not yet made university management.

The NCIH will not be available for

home use for quite some time. Home telephone lines are provided through copper cable.

Fiber optics must be run to each house to transmit video, a venture not yet cost effective enough for area telephone companies.

Possible applications of the state agency system outside of university use might be long distance medical diagnosis, video conference court procedures between a judge and a prisoner, on-site record tracking by police officers making a traffic stop, and advanced curriculum capabilities at remote secondary schools.

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shift, but unfortunately on the weekends right now we do.

"We've been very fortunate that we have not had a serious occurrence where student safety has been jeopardized to a major extent and hopefully that won't happen," he said.

Regardless of the size of the security staff, Van Slyke said, individuals need to remain cautious when it comes to protecting themselves on campus. Students must react responsibly and be aware of their surroundings, he said.

"Nobody's immune to being a victim of a crime. Everybody has to be conscience of crime and take precautions to ensure that they are safe," he said. "Clearly it's just not practical to assume we can be right there 24 hours a day."

To help with safety, the Public Safety Department will soon install an emergency telephone call box in the lobby of the campus security office. The box will enable persons to get in touch with an officer through a dispatcher when nobody is in the office.

Citizens for Media Literacy will sponsor a screening of "Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media" at 7:30 p.m. on March 3-5 in Lipinsky Auditorium.

The film is the first film made about Noam Chomsky, media critic and dissident MIT professor whom the *New York Times* called "arguably the most important intellectual alive."

For more information call 255-0182.

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