

Opinions

The Blue Banner

Editorial

School's out for summer?

In case you hadn't realized, and many on the newspaper staff hadn't, the next fall semester will begin in the first couple of weeks in August. Whatever happened to summer vacation? Sure, classes will end in early May, but does that really justify such an early start back to the fall semester?

Most colleges and universities start their fall semesters in middle to late August, if not after Labor Day entirely. So how does this affect students' plans to find summer jobs if they have to leave in late July? Would you want to hire someone who had to return back to school in two and a half months, right after they had just been fully trained for the position?

Speaking of summer, what gives with the new summer schedule? How feasible is the intense three-week session unless you have breaks every fifteen minutes. There is such a thing as brain overload. Imagine a three-hour humanities lecture. Need we say more?

So when exactly do we go back to school in the fall? In the official schedules published earlier in the year, the end of all summer terms is July 31, but in order to fit the requisite number days into the schedule (to please the North Carolina university system), it seems as though the new summer schedule will end early so the fall semester can start a week or so ahead of plan.

Have we thought about how this revised schedule will affect people's summer plans for family vacations, trips and the aforementioned summer jobs? Some of us are able to come back to school *only* because of summer jobs. Pretty soon we'll be in college year-round, joining the many elementary, middle and high schools across the country.

What ever happened to the exciting "school's out for summer"? Simply put, we need more of a break than two months. And many professors are bound to feel the same way. They work hard and need breaks, too.

On top of that, what are they thinking about this new snow policy? Again, not only students will be affected, but faculty and staff as well. Asking us to drive on dangerous roads to try and save a little class time is completely absurd.

Combining these two new, frankly ridiculous, policies only results in double discontent with the university. Not only do we have to risk driving in icy conditions, we have to spend hours at a time in classes in the middle of summer whether we enrolled in summer school or not.

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The Blue Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville. We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Carmichael Hall, Room 208-A.

Our telephone number is (704) 251-6586. Our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. We're on-line, too. The address is <http://www.unca.edu/banner/>

Nothing in our editorial or opinions sections necessarily reflects the opinion of the entire Blue Banner editorial board, the faculty advisor, or the university faculty, administration or staff.

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of the Blue Banner editorial board. Letters, columns, cartoons and reviews represent only the opinions of their respective authors.

The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and content and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste, and timeliness.

Letters must be typed, double-spaced, and must not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters and classifieds is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to The Blue Banner, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville NC 28804

So many tests, so little motivat . . . ah, forget it

Nate Conroy

Columnist

Is the semester over already? I never knew 15 weeks could go by so . . . slowly.

Back in August, your classes were all new. Now you're probably a pro at beating the system in your classes.

Or maybe you never ever ever want to see a polynomial again and you plan to burn your math book in effigy at the end of the year because those jerks in front of the book store won't give you s--- for it anyway

and, man, that class was too hard and caused more stress than you thought you could take, and you studied like hell but still got a 59 (at least it's an F+) thank God it's almost over, yeah, almost over, just one more week and. . . Oh.

It's time to pop your knuckles, toes, and whatever other joints you need to pop to get through exam week. Let's get down to business.

Um, but first there are a few things to do.

9:00 - I'll sleep in. I need to be rested for a day of disciplined study.

10:30 - All right, I'm up at the crack of noon and ready to go. Today's an extra hard work day. Need a long, relaxing shower.

11:00 - Work time! . . . Oh, Loni is on Springer. I'll look over humanities while I watch.

11:45 - Not getting anything done because of the madcap hilarity on Springer. I'll just put my notes away and watch.

I can take 15 minutes to reward myself for all the hard work I'm about to do.

12:05 - I'm hungry. I'll run over to the caf and grab a snack.

12:45 - All right! Got a belly full of Zuni Stew, French fries, and watered-down ketchup, and a mind on humanities.

Nothing like a good meal to get you going.

12:47 - Here comes my friend Bill. I gotta go, but I can't let him eat by himself during exam week.

1:40 - OK! Now my mind is moving from our stimulating conversation on who the hottest cartoon characters are (Betty Rubble, Daphne, Pebbles when she grew up, Lady Jaye—strong yet sexy. . .), I'm ready to STUDY!

1:41 - Bill went back for more ice cream. I thought he was getting up to leave.

1:47 - Bill's done with his ice cream. Now's he's complaining that he's cold. What a tool.

1:55 - The caf employees have turned on the worst music I've ever heard and the cleaning

guy is asking us if we've stayed to help him clean up. I guess it's time to go.

2:03 - Check my mail before I go back. . . none as usual.

2:05 - Gotta go to the bathroom do the after lunch "paperwork."

2:20 - Man, this bathroom is nasty. My roommates are sick to let it get this bad. Where's the Greased Lightning™?

4:00 - Cleaned the toilet, sink, shower, mopped the floor, and

scrubbed between the wall tiles (used my roommate Chris's toothbrush, heh heh heh). Really feel like I've accomplished something.

4:02 - Can't start work yet, I'm kind of tired. I'll just lie down for a minute.

5:30 - S---, fell asleep. Not enough time to do work before dinner. I'll just go eat. I work best in the evening anyway.

5:55 - All done with my Shrimp Foo Yon and it's time to go. . . Here comes Bill again with his ice cream.

5:59 - "No, no, Bill, I don't want to talk about the sexy cartoon women again. No, I don't like Gadget from Rescue Rangers."

6:05 - "Look, I gotta study, all right? Yeah, the Geology test might be hard. No, I don't know what's going to be on it. . . uh, yeah, he'll probably really test us on that stuff we went over in class. Yeah. See ya." Why is he wasting time with those stupid questions? Am I the only one with any kind of work ethic around here?

6:15 - I'll just straighten up my work area and get going.

6:30 - Ooh, the "Timmy O'Toole" Simpsons episode is coming on. I love that one. I'll watch that and Jeopardy to get my brain going. . . they're both really intellectual shows.

7:30 - Man, what a coincidence. The final Jeopardy topic was "Roman Government" and I've been studying humanities all day.

7:35 - Still can't get over that Jeopardy coincidence. Gee whiz.

7:40 - Okay, time to study. Maybe it would help if I typed my notes up on WordPerfect. I'll start up the computer.

7:43 - Hmm. . . Really need to reorganize the files on my hard drive.

8:43 - All right, files are all organized into folders and backed up onto 27 floppy disks. Nice, organized study environment.

8:45 - Lemme check my email real quick. . .

8:47 - Dammit, everyone's tying up the phone lines. Why won't these people get a life? Don't they have exams? Re-dial time.

9:10 - Finally! . . . Connect 300 baud? What the hell? This is supposed to be a 28.8 modem! I'll hang up and try again.

9:12 - DAMN! Busy again!

9:30 - Forget email. It ain't gonna work. . . well, maybe if I try a few more times.

9:55 - Yes! Finally a good connection. What? Shutdown in five minutes? Damn, forgot it was Thursday.

10:05 - I'm hungry, I need a snack. I'll eat a banana-nut muffin from the exam pack my parents sent me.

10:10 - I should thank my parents for sending me this. I'll call them.

10:13 - "What do you mean my ACUS is turned off?"

10:30 - I can't deal with this stress. I'm going to sleep so I can get up early to study.

New course would give users a necessary boost

James Hertsch

Columnist

How many times have you gone into the computer lab in Rhoades-Robinson, looked down the rows of machines, and not had any idea what to run to write your paper? To format a disk? To perform, um, research, over the Internet?

In the years I've been here, I've seen too many instances where a novice computer user will come into a computer lab to work on a research paper (usually about three hours before it's due), and have no idea how to use, for example, WordPerfect or Microsoft Windows.

Meanwhile, students who arrive at this campus (theoretically) learn how to use the library via the library research course, and can more easily find their way around D. Hiden Ramsey than they can around the computer lab.

Make no mistake: I think the freshman-level library research course is a Good Thing(TM), but I don't think it's enough to truly prepare a freshman for UNCA life.

To this end, I suggest that two new one-hour courses be implemented: CU 101 and CU 102.

Computer Use 101 and 102, in which freshmen would learn the basics of computing in the

modern ages, and a few things about the UNCA system in particular.

What I have in mind is this: basic word processing and use of windowed operating environments; a basic introduction to Internet services, such as e-mail and the World Wide Web; a basic rundown of where what

petency" test to the initial battery freshmen get; if a freshman were to score as "competent," he could exempt out of CU 101.

Like any proposal, this one is not without its problems. Chief among these I would say is the possibility of overburdening the system with the number of people trying to take the course.

If you're computer illiterate, being able to quote Shakespeare isn't going to help you get a job in the professional world.

computer labs (PCs, Macs, laser printers, etc.); and some basic computing vocabulary.

In CU 101, you'd have a weekly class, similar to Library Research 101, in which you'd be taken through these basics via a lesson plan. You take it for a grade, get your grade, and voila! You're prepared for computing at UNCA.

CU 102 would bear the same relationship to CU 101 that LR 102 bears to LR 101. To wit, CU 102 would be the "independent study" course, in which you show up, take your exam (on the computer, of course), leave, and boom! You get either a "p" or an "F" on your report card.

Heck, to forestall overcrowding, it might even be a good idea to add a "computer com-

To remedy this, I'd suggest making the course a half-semester deal; This gives between a month and a half and two months to cram in the basics; there's no need for the course to go into horrendous detail; students simply need to be able to work with the computers, not be experts with them.

The next problem comes in finding instructors. Should this course series be introduced, I would hope that the Computer Center and the computer science department could work out some sort of mutually beneficial arrangement.

But despite these pitfalls, I think the program has merits. If we're sending students out of here computer illiterate, it's the equivalent of a high school turning out students who aren't able

to read.

In the modern professional world, the ability to use a computer effectively is one of the "must-haves," and possession or lack of such skills can make the difference between getting a job and losing a job.

After all, many of us are here to learn a trade, whether that trade be political science, computer science, communication, or literary analysis. And, if you're computer illiterate, being able to quote Shakespeare isn't going to help you get a job in the professional world; but being computer literate will.

Side note of the week: Isn't it funny how it's hard to imagine things being any different than they are right now?

My freshman year, we had a tin sculpture at the Highsmith steps, Ramsey library was permanently "undergoing renovation," Dante's was decorated with portraits of various luminaries, and Southridge and the new cafe were somewhere over the horizon.

Now, the tin (excuse me, aluminum) sculpture is gone, all of the library is open, Dante's decor is boring, and Southridge and the new cafe are brick-and-mortar realities.

But sometimes I have trouble remembering how this campus looked when everything was different.