

# Perspectives

## Hard work for the 1999-2000 administration

### Student Government Association

By Wiley Cash

The following is taken from a Student Issues interview with SGA President Wiley Cash on Feb. 1, 2000.

SI: SGA's 1999-2000 administration is about to close. Do you think the year has been a successful one?

WC: I think this year has been ten times more successful than I could have ever asked for, not just with SGA, but with the university in general.

SI: What do you mean?

WC: This year has been an excellent one for SGA. Following in the footsteps of Al Donaldson's administration,

we have continued to not be a stereotypical student government. We have tackled much greater issues and made differences in things we originally set out to change.

SI: Are you speaking about original platform issues?

WC: To an extent, but it goes much farther than that. It's amazing. Once you start to knock on a door, a million other doors need to be knocked on as well. Platform issues become broader, spill over into other things and before you know it, you're working on 10 different

projects at once. This semester we have worked with the office of multicultural affairs where Octavia Wright, coordinator of multicultural student programs, is doing an unbelievable job, as is the intern, Rita Martin, a senior psychology major. Rita and I have a few more events in the works for the spring. We have also been working with the admissions office, since they have invited us on many recruitment efforts this spring.

SI: Will the recruitment efforts be geared toward minority enrollment?

WC: Yes, of course. However, the admissions office has greatly increased the staff who are working solely on minority recruitment. Our minority admissions are higher at this time than they were last year, and our overall admissions numbers are up around 70 percent.

SI: To what do you attribute this?

WC: First, UNCA has allowed online admissions this year. However, this success

can most directly be attributed to the hard work of a few people: John Byers, Phil West, John White, Al Donaldson, Mike Matthews and the Reverend Carl Arrington, who is working on minority recruitment in Charlotte.

SI: So why is their such emphasis finally put on minority enrollment?

WC: Because the emphasis should be there. It should have been there years ago. It's simply the right thing to do.

SI: What else has SGA been working on?

WC: This semester, I've been working hard on getting together an honor code and an honor policy for UNCA. We are one of a handful of schools in the country without an academic honor code. Currently, there is no correct system of guidelines to follow if a student or professor is suspected of academic dishonesty. We've also had senators hard at work on issues such as childcare, meal plan adjustment, recycling and other things, be-

ter the student environment.

SI: Speaking of bettering the student environment, why were fees raised again this year?

WC: Historically, students have had this overwhelming fear that fees were being raised to support the athletic department. This year we were very meticulous in deciding exactly where fee increases were going and athletics received one of the lowest increases.

SI: Then what did the increase pay for?

WC: This year the highest increase went to technology. UNCA desperately needs more funding for computer labs and library resources. We could have increased the fees ten times and it still wouldn't have been enough. Another of the highest increases went to the chancellor's office. This new account will help to alleviate some of the burden off groups like AASA or UP in order to get "big name" speakers and performers to visit this campus. UNCA's outdoor life program also got a substantial increase, in hopes that UNCA

can begin a program comparable to that of other Western Carolina universities. We didn't mind raising fees as long as we could point out that they were going to fill a glaring need on this campus.

SI: Do you think the changes on this campus can be attributed to the chancellor?

WC: Most definitely. The morale of this campus is extremely high, and much of that is because of the vision that Dr. Mullen has for UNCA.

SI: What do you mean by vision?

WC: He thinks that UNCA has the potential to be the best liberal arts school in the country. The first step he has taken has been the forming of three committees: minority affairs, retention and community partnerships. These three groups have been working all year and will present their findings to the chancellor and the board of trustees in March. These committees are not groups that were formed simply to sit around and talk.

These people are identifying problems and deciding on solutions.

SI: Since you are a member of the board of trustees, what is your general impression of them?

WC: I cannot count how many times this year I have been sitting in a meeting and heard one of the Trustees say, "But that's not in keeping with our Mission Statement." UNCA would be hard pressing to find another group of people who are more concerned about this university and its success.

SI: What is the one thing you have learned this year through your experience?

WC: It is a hard thing for an organization to keep itself together. It is even harder for that organization to be successful. I am so thankful for everyone that I have worked with this year because every small success that SGA has had can be directly attributed to the extremely hard work of some individual.

Wiley Cash is SGA president.

### Dangerous

Dear Editor,

How convenient it is for white people on this campus to blame minorities for their disposition in life, and at UNCA, on what Jaime Park calls their "addiction" to the joys of victimhood." However, this explanation for racism and human disharmony is rooted in ignorance, and it is dangerous.

Culture is not defined by geography, but by shared experience. Although blacks and whites have shared the same southern American geography, we have not shared the same experiences. Blacks and other minorities have been the victims of unfathomable cruelties of slavery and racism. Minorities today are still the victims of racism and a "justice" system that is borderline genocidal.

To ignore the past and wish for

assimilation into one geographically defined culture is to ignore the past and present inferior status of all men and women that don't fit comfortably into the white, heterosexual, male category. If we choose to ignore the inequality and blinding discrepancies between cultures, we set ourselves up to repeat horrifying mistakes of the past.

I am in awe of the minorities that choose to come to UNCA. What Jaime Park conveniently describes as their "aura of exclusiveness," I choose to interpret as an unwillingness to assimilate. We all come from different walks of life, and to learn about and celebrate these differences would be true diversification.

Assimilation into one culture based on geography, although the easiest solution for the historically culturally elite, abandons what makes us human: our differences. I encourage everyone at UNCA to talk honestly about our differences as well as our prejudices. Although it is more confronting to our personal world

views, we will learn much more about others and ourselves. If we really care about diversification at UNCA, we first have to stop ignoring the differences and inequality of cultures.

Rae LeGrone  
Senior, art

### Support

Dear Editor,

Jaime Clark's letter, "Skin Deep," (Feb. 3) was misguided, poorly executed and insulting. Distinct minority groups do exist, Ms. Clark. The majority of power in this country is held by an exclusive group of white, Christian, heterosexual men. If this sounds like liberal propaganda to you, take a look at Capitol Hill or the Fortune 500. Any individual that is not part of this group

is therefore a member of a power holding minority.

As minorities are unwelcome in the culture of the power holding group, they create their own cultural identities. Geography does not create culture—it is not obvious to you here, Ms. Clark, consider the geographical areas of Kosovo, Northern Ireland or Rwanda. These cultural modes, degradingly labeled "subcultures" by the majority powers, are the source of cultural diversity, contrary to Ms. Clark's confusing notion that monocultures create diversity.

Minority groups "addicted to the joys of victimhood" are NOT the source of division in this country. America's history of discrimination and violence against non-whites, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, non-Christians and women is. Blaming victims for their suffering is just another form of this violence.

Nicolas Holt  
Senior, art

### Adding up

Dear Editor,

(In response to Jaime Park's letter to the editor in the Feb. 3 issue of The Banner.)

"If the 'minorities' on this campus were not so addicted to the joys of victimhood..."

Why is the term minorities put in quotation marks? Is it to indicate that we are not, in fact, a true minority? Let's see, should we look at the presence of full-time non-white faculty members? No, that would DEFINITELY make us a

true minority. Should we look at the representation on non-white influences in our curriculum? No, because the diversity in the curriculum MAY be coming but has not yet arrived. What about considering the long-term preservation of on-campus minority organizations? Don't even try it.

Within the next three years (maybe sooner), if the current environment and retention trends continue, there will not be a sufficient number of non-whites to support all of these organizations. So, no, looking at on-campus non-white organizations would only SUPPORT the fact that I am a true minority.

Last attempt — what if we looked at the sheer number of non-white students, on and off campus? Hmph! That destroys Ms. Park's entire implied argument that we are not 'minorities.'

Parks also mentioned "the joys of victimhood."

Since when did being violated and discriminated come in style? Since when does the person living in the slums voluntarily stay there because they "like the view"? In order for there to be victims, there must be victors, there must be oppressors and perpetrators. This relates her statement "the approach here is inclusiveness instead of the age-old

us versus them mentality." And since she didn't identify herself as one of us, the 'minorities,' I assume she's willing take on the role of perpetrator.

I know she does not speak for the entire white population of UNCA, but that does not weaken the sting of her comments. I will continue to fight for diversity. When you hear me speak about this issue and you detect a tone of anger, frustration and, yes, bitterness, do not think you heard me wrong. You will hear all of this and more.

Tuesday S. Roberts  
Junior, Spanish

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