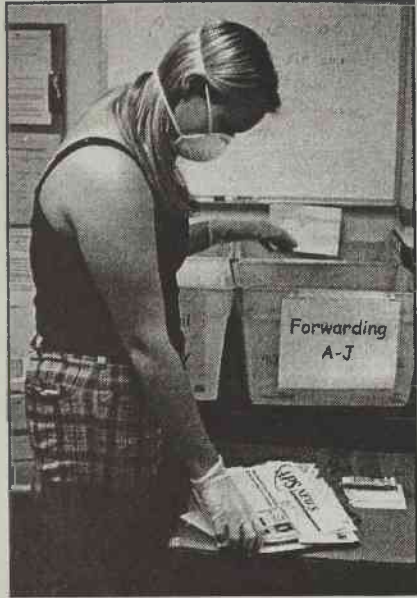


# NEWS

## Campus mail: better safe than sorry



MIRIAM BARLOW/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Since the recent anthrax cases in the United States, UNCA mail handlers have been on the alert.

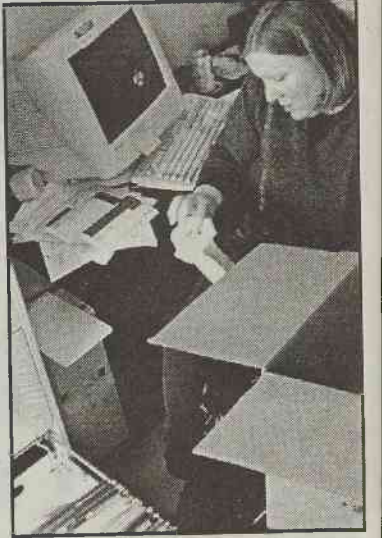


MIRIAM BARLOW/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mail handler Dawn Pickett sorts on-campus mail while wearing a protective mask.

*"We've gotten a lot of pamphlets and papers showing what we should look for, such as packages with stains, any kind of oily or powdery residue or no return address."*

-Bethany McElreath,  
mail worker



WALTER FYLER/PHOTO EDITOR

Meg Dutnell, associate director of student life, checks files as she moves out of her office.

### Student mail services use new precautions against infection of anthrax

Alison McKone  
Staff Reporter

UNCA has implemented procedures to help screen for suspicious items, due to recent events with the presence of anthrax in the mail.

UNCA's department of public safety has instructed the mail services staff and student workers on safety precautions and mail screening, according to a posting on the public safety Web site.

"We all joined the mail services staff for a workshop immediately when the first case (of anthrax) was detected," said Susan McCracken, supervisor of student mail distribution. "That workshop was held at mail services and public safety conducted that with information that they've been receiving from the authorities. I'm very concerned at keeping an eye on that, and I am trusting that the people at the levels above us are also concerned and careful about what is going on."

Mail workers on campus and across the country have been told what suspicious signs to look for. This information has also been

posted on public safety's Web site. Mail handling guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the United States Postal Service tell people to be alert and check letters and packages for:

- any powdery substance on the outside
- handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- misspellings of common words
- incorrect or non-existent departments or position titles
- excessive postage
- oily stains, discolorations or strange odors
- no return address, or one that cannot be verified as legitimate
- restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential."

"We've gotten a lot of pamphlets and papers showing what we should look for, such as packages with stains, any kind of oily or powdery residue or no return address. We also have gloves available. If we feel really

threatened, we can use those, and we have masks available in the mail room as well," said Bethany McElreath, an undeclared junior and mail worker on campus.

Most of the student mail workers do not seem overly concerned about the threat of anthrax. But there have been some instances where students were very concerned with the possibility of anthrax appearing at UNCA.

"Mail services gets the mail first, and they sort it for campus, then they bring all the student mail here," said McElreath. "They are trained to look at it as well, so I feel like we're at a lower risk. If something came through, I really believe they would notice it first. Before mail services see the mail, there's post office on Merrimon, they go through it, too. I am not extremely concerned about it," McElreath said.

Mail services is trying to do everything they can to keep their workers informed and out of

danger, according to Danny Fouts, assistant director of support services and the direct supervisor of the mail room.

"It's on everyone's mind, and we're trying to do whatever we can to make it a safe workplace," Fouts said.

According to Fouts, mail services had a meeting with Public Safety Director Lou Caliendo in September, not long after the attacks and the anthrax scare. Now they are keeping up to date with any information from the Federal Post Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said Fouts.

Fouts also said that they have made disposable rubber gloves and respirators available to anyone who would like to wear them in the main mail room.

"We're real careful. We know what to look for. We look at it before we just start reaching in and grabbing for stuff, like we used to. We take a little more precaution, but I think it's pretty well taken care of at Gray Station (the post office on Merrimon Avenue). They're trying to install a new machine that puts radiation through packages," McElreath said.

"I feel a strong responsibility for the student employees more so than permanent employees, who sometimes have more of a choice about what they're doing and the student employees trust us to look out for their welfare," said McCracken.

The first instance of anthrax being detected in a university mail room has been reported at Howard University, recently. So far, only one student mail employee at UNCA has taken a leave of absence due to concern about anthrax.

Most of the employees still feel confident about the precautions taken at levels above UNCA, as well as here on campus.

"We are very fortunate to have two people in our mail room that are retired postal workers. They have 70 years experience between them and one was a post master. They work directly with the students and we are very lucky have this, most universities do not," Fouts said.

### Highsmith closes down

Lana Coffey  
Staff Reporter

The Highsmith University Center closed Nov. 14 in order to prepare the center for major renovations, but will not be torn down until March 2002, according to Kevan Frazier, director of student life.

"The resident population of the campus has probably more than doubled since the building was built," said Stephen Baxley, director of facilities management and planning. "Everybody here is excited that we're going to have an opportunity to finally get this. This project has been in the planning phase since 1995. Finally, we have a chance to make it a reality."

All the offices that are currently in Highsmith Center will move to the top floor of the two story parking deck below the dining hall, according to Baxley. They will remain there until the new student center is complete.

The construction will probably start in March or April of 2002, according to Baxley. It could take up to two years to complete.

"The construction may be the bulk of some students' careers, but as far as the students that are coming in, (the new center) will be a very nice thing," said Baxley.

The bookstore will be the first space to close, according to Frazier. It will reopen in its new location Nov. 26.

While the temporary location for the student center will have less room than the current Highsmith Center, it will be worth it once the new center opens, according to Baxley.

"Most of the old Highsmith will be torn down. The existing floor gets rebuilt, and there's a story put on top of that so it will be two stories, where now it's one story," said Baxley. "It approximately doubles the square footage of the Highsmith Center now."

The bookstore will be larger and there will be more than just one place to choose from when eating, according to Baxley.

There will also be more meeting rooms and a mail room, according to Baxley.

"The Student Government Association will have better operations, the student affairs staff will have better offices, and the career center will move from Weizenblatt and be much more accessible to the students," said Baxley.

There may be some limited use of the old Highsmith Center, according to Frazier. Until construction begins, it will be open as a pass to get to Founders Hall.

Frazier said he hoped that there could be "some kind of final hurrah" before the center went under construction.

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