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University searches for unique fit for dean position

By Aaron Dahlstrom
Asheville News Editor

The office of the dean of admissions currently sits empty as UNC Asheville conducts its search for a new dean, a four-month hunt university members hope will pay off in the end.

"We are looking for a candidate that fits the institution," said Laura Beth Payne, senior history major and member of the university's search committee. "Someone who is passionate about the liberal arts system because there are not a lot of public liberal arts universities out there. That makes us unique, and that makes our process unique."

The dean of admissions recruits the incoming class of freshman and transfer students, according to Kathy Whatley, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs. The position requires traveling and speaking with students, high schools, counselors and families.

Selling UNC Asheville's liberal arts focus to potential students is a crucial skill for anyone who takes the position, Whatley said.

"The admissions office is the gateway to the university. The dean of admissions needs to be able to talk to lots of different kinds of groups about the value of a liberal arts education" she said. "They need to be able to talk about why UNC Asheville is so unique and why a person would want to

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We are talking about diversity in a variety of forms. Not only ethnic diversity...but we also want economic diversity.

KATHY WHATLEY
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

come here as opposed to another liberal arts institution. It needs to be something other than the fact it is cheap and close."

In June, Scott Schaefer resigned as director of admissions, taking a position at Lutheran College in

Iowa. Since announcing the position opening, the school received some 40 applications. They narrowed the candidates down to 10 and conducted phone interviews before inviting two finalists to come to campus, according to Whatley.

Applicant Alison Jesse currently

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LAURA BETH PAYNE
Student Member,
University Search
Committee

works in the admissions office of Kenan Flagler School of Business at Chapel Hill serving as their senior director of MBA Admissions.

Applicant Rhett Brown currently serves as the director of admissions at Wingate University, a private liberal arts school in Wingate, N.C.

"They both have experience in admissions, which is really important," Whatley said. "They both have a real commitment to undergraduate liberal arts education. Both have internalized a support for liberal arts education and are very good at articulating why it is important for a student and what value it has for families."

The university assembled a committee of nine faculty members and one student for the search. The addition of a student in the decision process shows UNC Asheville cares about student input, according to Payne.

"I feel that at a larger institution, there might not be as much input from students. All the students who enter this university go through the admissions office. It shows me that they care about how students feel about the admissions office," Payne said. "There are things that we are concerned about, things that we feel could be done differently. It gives students a chance to be in on that."

Diversity remains a key issue in



Kathy Whatley, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, sits outside Phillips Hall. Whatley is part of a search committee looking to hire a new dean of admissions to replace former dean Scott Schaefer, who resigned to take a position at Lutheran College in Iowa. Nine faculty members and one student make up the committee, assembled by the university, and they are currently have two finalists for the position.

the dean search because of the constant concern among students and faculty, according to Whatley.

"We are talking about diversity in a variety of forms. Not only ethnic and racial diversity,"

"The high before that was around 10 percent. So it has significantly improved, although it is not our goal. Our goal is much higher than that. So we are making progress," she said.

Despite the efforts of the university, the lack of diversity remains.

"When people describe the school, one of the details usually included is that we are a predominantly white school," said Sophomore Sheila Steelman,

who is one-fourth Paraguayan. "It is not like the students here are racist. It seems like a negative thing to say about the students on campus, that we are all white. It would just be nice to know why that is and what could be done to fix it."

With a college education growing more crucial every day, colleges compete for the best and brightest students. A good dean of admissions gives the university a better chance at attracting a larger and more diverse body of students, according to Whatley.

"It is a competitive market right now, and we want to get the best students we can get," she said. "We are really looking at matching the students who apply with our mission and our goals. If we can do that, I think we can not only get more students to apply, but also improve retention."

The university hopes to make their recommendation to the chancellor within the next few weeks, but is taking their time with the decision, according to Payne.

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KATHY WHATLEY
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

process. It is sort of a catch-22 in that way," Payne said. "You want to fill the position quickly so the admissions office can run well, but you don't want to rush the process. When you rush, there it is not a good fit for the university."

NCCCR

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focused on lifelong learning. The center is one of only six international programs invited to attend the forum, which is sponsored by the Taiwan Ministry of Education. Taiwanese students, educators and policy makers will attend, according to Manheimer.

"Taiwan is anticipating a high percentage of retirement age people in the coming years," Manheimer said. "They are developing programs for them to participate in. Several Taiwanese universities even have graduate programs in teaching older people."

One of over 400 lifelong learning institutes in the United States and Canada, NCCCR already has over 1,300 members this fall. More than 900 are taking one of over 100 courses offered through various programs such as College for Seniors, Blue Ridge Naturalist and Leadership Asheville Seniors this semester.

Only one-third of the NCCCR's funding comes from state assistance, with the other two-thirds raised through minimal membership and course fees. It emerged out of a movement that began in the 1970s, which was intended to engage active seniors, and to foster a greater sense of connection.

Although the average age of NCCCR members is 67, the center hopes student involvement will rise this year more than any before, according to Manheimer.

"It has been a challenge over the years to figure out how to do that," Manheimer said. "But students are very welcome here."

Alumnus

long-term water needs."

Individual rights, especially the right to protest, are a main topic in Meredith's campaign. The local government in Asheville infringes on these rights, according to Meredith.

"The city council has a very direct impact on such things as the protest movement," Meredith said. "As the Iraq war moves into its sixth or seventh year, a lot of efforts have been made to stifle war protesters, including the construction at the Vance monument, which is just an underhanded way of shortchanging the protesters of the most visible protest spot in this city. It is a blatant disregard of the rights of the people."

The city has a strong need to switch to alternative methods of energy, and doing so would be a major benefit to the community, according to Meredith. Government incentives for people to use alternative energy would be the best method to accomplish this.

"Duke Power and Progress Energy have projected that within the next five years they will no

longer be able to generate the electricity needed by the citizens of North Carolina," Meredith said. "This means that we will soon be purchasing energy from outside states, which is a horrible position to be in. To remedy this, the government should offer green incentives for home owners, such as tax breaks for reducing energy consumption by using micro generation capability."

Robin Cape, Asheville City Council member, said she believes alternative energy is a major concern.

"I believe the most important issues facing all of us, here and in the whole world, are issues about how we can learn to live sustainably and responsibly on this planet," Cape said. "I am working specifically on issues of how we can encourage and support reducing the energy footprint of buildings and the overall operational aspects of living together in a city."

Meredith said new homeowners and developers should put alternative energy sources into affect when building in Asheville. If

electd he would push for giving developers incentives to build with environmentally conscious methods, he said.

"I love this city, and I respect it's environment and uniqueness," Meredith said. "However, that uniqueness is a double-edged sword because it draws people

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WILLIAM C. MEREDITH
UNC Asheville Alumnus

here that want to live here, bring their money here and build here. You can't stop this kind of development, but I would demand that this new development would be green, environmentally-friendly growth. Development should have a positive impact on the community."

Asheville City Council member Jan Davis said he agrees new construction in Asheville is of primary concern.

"Obviously, developmental problems are our most pressing issue," Davis said. "It is the Council's responsibility to direct staff in crafting rules responsive to public need and demand. Issues like the height of buildings, density, transit and sustainability are examples of what is being affected by our decision making."

Meredith, a Libertarian, said the lack of choice when voting for local government is hurting the citizens of Asheville.

"The more choices you have in government, the better your democratic republic works," Meredith said. "To shut out more choices is ethically and morally wrong. The Libertarian party in North Carolina has been de-certified, so every year we have to fight to get back on the ballot because the Republicans and Democrats are trying to shut us out."

Getting people involved in the political process is one of his main goals and voter apathy is of major

concern, Meredith said.

"I encourage more people to get involved with government," Meredith said. "So many people that I've talked to tell me they don't vote because they don't feel it makes a difference, and it really disappoints me that so many of my fellow citizens think so little of voting. I think that the system is so obviously rigged that people have completely lost faith that their vote matters. When we come to that point in this country, we're really in a crisis."

Access to local government is also a big priority, and Meredith said he would welcome anyone to come and talk to him. He will be on campus most Tuesdays from now to Oct. 9, registering voters in front of the University Dining Hall.

"A big part of my platform is local access to government for purposes of complaint," Meredith said. "I would have an open door policy as a city council member. That is the job of a city council member, being the first level of governmental access."

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