

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

## Liberal arts education prepares alumni for life

By Neal Brown  
Investigative Reporter

With diverse career choices and destinations of alumni career paths after graduation some of the co-sponsors for the UNC Asheville Career Center Destination Survey are considering the development of a new survey to better understand alumni job trends.

UNC Asheville surveys alumni five, 10 and 15 years after graduation because students have not had a chance to establish themselves, according to Kevan Frazier, associate vice chancellor for alumni relations and alumni affairs.

"The most important thing is to ask the survey questions to people further out after they have graduated," Frazier said. "We want to know what is happening five to 10 to 15 years after they are out."

The career center, alumni office and the office of institutional research co-sponsor the C.C.D.S., which is an annual survey sent out since May of 2005, according to Eileen Buecher, the career center director. The survey is fairly new and so the statistics are not quite ready for the current 2006-2007.

The survey is handed out at graduation practice, then goes out again at six, nine and 12 months after graduation, according to Buecher. It is done through mail and through an online process. It is very effective and accurate, though it is administered early after graduation.

"We collect it in the first year out because there needs to be accountability that the education and the services we provide are preparing students for the job market," Buecher said. "It's very varied, and I think it is a reflection of the diversity in our students' career goals and career paths."

Alumni have gotten jobs within

their field soon after graduation and are confident UNC Asheville prepared them well for life after graduation, according to John Noor, economics and political science alumnus.

"I have a job within my field. I work for the President of the North Carolina University system doing public policy related work," Noor said. "Having worked with graduates from Penn, Harvard and Yale, I feel very confident that UNCA's liberal arts education prepared me for my job, and any job that I will have in the future."

Even alumni who have not yet gotten jobs within their field feel UNC Asheville prepared them for the working world as best as it could, according to Talia Ogle, literature alumna and former volleyball player.

"I don't have a job related to what I studied, but I have a job related to my experience at UNCA," Ogle said. "I don't think anything can really prepare one for the real world besides having to be on their own without parental or outside monetary support. However, I feel like UNCA is a great school and I was as best prepared as could be expected."

The alumni office is interested in demographic information, whether or not alumni are employed, and if they have jobs within a field related to their major. A survey done in conjunction with the one already performed would be very successful, according to Frazier.

"It would be successful and we want it to be successful because we just need to have a better understanding of what our graduates are doing years later to be sure that we as an institution are doing all that we need to do when they are students," Frazier said.

It is also important to look at

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TALIA OGLE  
UNC Asheville Alumna

other schools' models of surveying alumni, and this type of survey is done nation wide, according to Buecher.

"That's standard across the nation. It's actually one of our standards, and if we didn't do it I'd be in conflict with our principles of professional conduct," Buecher said.

Western Carolina's Career Center does not conduct a survey of alumni, but other offices on campus do, according to Mike Despeaux, career services coordinator.

"Its just not something we've done," Despeaux said. "We are always trying to assess what we do and are trying to get better. We are increasing our collaboration with alumni services and affairs and we are doing more so now than ever before."

Surveys, the time frame in which they are done, and the way they are administered are different at every institution, according to Buecher.

"It should be done. I think there's accountability. I've been in the field 17, 18 years, and my first two bosses drummed it in my head to do surveys."

The office of assessment conducts WCU's alumni survey, according to Melissa Wargo, director of the Office of Assessment.

"We administer two types of



Debbie McDowell, UNC Asheville Career Center's office manager, sits at her desk in the Career Center, located in Highsmith Student Union. The Career Center helps place students in jobs after they graduate.

alumni surveys," Wargo said. "One, the Graduating Senior Survey, is administered upon graduation, and the other, the WCU Alumni Survey, is administered to alumni at one and five years out."

WCU administers these surveys on this time frame because it is important to know what alumni are doing long term as well as short term after they have graduated, according to Wargo.

"We chose those because we wanted the perspectives of a new alumnus one year out, because they can most readily assess the impact of a WCU degree on their skills and abilities in entry level positions," Wargo said. "We chose

an alumnus, 5 years out because they could assess the long term impact of their WCU education, but not be so far removed that the curriculum would be entirely different, thus making whatever they say inapplicable."

The survey response rate is pretty good at WCU, according to Wargo.

"Our 2007 Alumni Survey has not been fully tabulated, but early indications are that we will have a response rate of 20 to 25 percent," said Wargo. "We are extremely pleased with this response rate, which is above what many institutions of our type report nationally."

UNC Asheville's survey is fairly new, so while the statistics are valid, they are not fully complete, according to Buecher.

Though the new survey is still in the works it is definitely a priority of the Alumni Affairs Office, according to Frazier.

"For doing a new longer term survey we haven't even begun to do the work at all, we've just begun the conversations," Frazier said. "It's a priority for the year, and that may mean we don't do it this academic year but we are doing the planning and prep work to make it happen next year or in the future."

## Housing

Although this is an election year, no local candidate has visited Pisgah View to hear the opinions of residents over the future of public housing, according to White.

"That's one of the problems we've had," White said. "We've had a lot of people in this community who claim that they're interested on our behalf, but they don't consult us. They come and tell us what they think is best for us."

If they did visit, candidates would hear resident's concerns about Pisgah View being turned into condominiums that current residents could not afford to live in, or a golf course they could not afford to play on, according to White.

"Before I came here, I was homeless," White said. "So, you know, it would be nice to have town houses and condos, and some shops and stuff, but the reality is that I need a place to live. So as long as I have a safe, warm place to live, that's my main priority. The other stuff is political."

Mixed-income redevelopment transforms public housing projects into a variety of housing types, such as rental, homeownership, private, subsidized and public housing, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. New communities are built for residents with a wide range of incomes and are designed to fit into the surrounding community, according to HUD.

Redevelopment is largely funded by Hope VI, a federal program whose budget has been cut by 14 percent over the last five years, according to Bell. The housing authority expects to get Hope VI funding within the next few years to begin redevelopment, which is crucial to the future of Asheville public housing, he said.

"If it doesn't happen within the next five years, then public housing won't look like it does today," Bell said. "We won't be able to afford to keep them open."

Jan Davis, a first-term city councilman



TREY BOUVIER - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Pisgah View Apartments resident Bob White relaxes in his community garden.

who is running for reelection this year, said he agreed redevelopment is the right direction for Asheville to be moving.

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BOB WHITE  
Resident,  
Pisgah View Apartments

"Mixed-income housing is one of the best ways of empowering people and breaking the hopelessness of a stratified low wealth community," Davis said.

Davis is working with Mayor Terry Bellamy and HACA on the creation of a Hope VI model. The current model of public housing has unacceptable rates of unemployment, gang activity, prostitution and drug activity, according to Davis.

"I am encouraged by the administrative staff of the housing authority's compassion and desire to break the failed experi-

ment of public housing," Davis said.

When the East Riverside redevelopment began 40 years ago, some citizens were upset over the city's use of eminent domain to seize their properties, but most Asheville residents were in favor of the redevelopment, according to Seavella.

"We had numerous meetings at night with the residents of the neighborhoods," Scavella said. "There were several people you could always count on to be there, the most outspoken ones. We still had to move on with the program, but we tried to do it as humanely as possible."

As long as redevelopment continues to foster a greater sense of community, like the garden has done so far, it would be beneficial, according to James Cassels, a 38-year-old carpenter who has lived at Pisgah View for three months.

"It sounds like a good idea," he said. "There just needs to be a lot more community togetherness and awareness about everything that's going on."

### Correction:

In the article "Civil union discussion turns into debate," the group sponsoring the forum "Civil Unions, Gay Marriage and Homophobia: A Problem of Moral and Spiritual Development?" was misidentified in last week's issue of *The Blue Banner*. Multicultural Student Programs sponsored the event.

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## Policy

States Senate to stop illegal drug trade, as being unfair and ineffective.

"The war on drugs is a destructive, unwinnable campaign that hurts much more than it helps," Rosenberg said.

In 2005, there were an estimated 1,846,400 arrests for drug abuse violations in the United States, according to information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports. This number has been on the rise since 1980, according to the study.

The report also showed that more than 80 percent of drug law violation arrests were for possession, and since 1996 the number of arrests involving marijuana exceeded that for other types of drugs.

"At the moment, the United States has more prisoners in custody than any other nation on Earth, and the majority of them are nonviolent drug offenders," Rosenberg said. "The best approach we could take to drugs is to minimize the harm they do to the users and minimize violence from the dealers and manufacturers."

SSDP is open to all students on campus, according to Eshelman and Rosenberg. The group meets every

Tuesday at 5 p.m. in the Highsmith dining area.

"I hear people complaining about anti-drug laws all the time, but few people actually want to get involved because they're either afraid or lazy, and that's frustrating to me," Eshelman said. "I know a lot of good, capable students who have been kicked out of the residence halls or expelled from the university because they've been caught with marijuana."

The group's faculty sponsor is Mark Gibney, political science professor. Gibney said he agrees with SDS that the current drug laws are ineffective.

"U.S. drug policy is insane," Gibney said. "I don't think it is possible to devise a system that is more racist, more expensive and more socially counterproductive than the one that we have."

SSDP is the first group of its kind at UNC Asheville, according to Eshelman.

"This is a productive group, and one that I would be interested in joining," said Zach Shitama, senior student. "UNC Asheville should have more political student groups that take a stand."

## Greenfest

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The residence halls also participated in Green Games, a competition to see which dorm can eliminate the most electricity during the week. The winning dorm this year was Governor's Village, who will receive a chocolate fountain party as their reward for reducing energy usage, according to Breckon.

"I was a little more cautious about shutting off the lights, and I turned off my stereo and stuff like that," Breckon said.

SGA hopes a majority of students will think more about their energy consumption as a result of Greenfest, according to Quick.

"I hope that students will be more motivated to change their way of living to be more environmentally friendly," Quick said. "I just hope that students will be more aware of how their actions affect environmental quality and I hope that they will do small things."