

## Get it or get out

Mandatory health insurance comes to UNCA

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Beginning fall semester 2008, all full-time UNC Asheville students must either have health insurance or purchase it through the university.

"If students do not have the money to purchase the health insurance and do not have health insurance of their own, they will not be able to register for classes," said Bill Haggard, vice chancellor of Student Affairs at UNC Asheville. "Mandatory student health care is a national trend. The intent is to help with student success and to help students be healthy enough to complete their education."

Vice Chancellor Haggard proposed the mandatory health care requirement to the UNC Asheville Board of Trustees, who approved the measure. The mandatory health care requirement states students who do not have health insurance of their own must purchase it from the school through Pearce & Pearce Inc., a student health insurance provider, at \$611 per year.

"UNC Asheville is able to get the best insurance rate, which is very inexpensive, and breaks down to be about 50 dollars a month," Haggard said. "An average emergency room visit can run from 600 to 1200 dollars, depending on the situation, which is more than the annual premium that this insurance offers."

UNC Asheville needs a mandatory health care plan to protect students who might have to choose between completing their education and paying medical bills, according to Haggard. Janice Brumit, the chair of the UNC Asheville Board of Trustees, said she agreed that requiring mandatory health care protects students from being put in debt for medical emergencies.

"Students without insurance often delay seeking medical care, and what was once a treatable condition becomes a serious illness or medical emergency," said Brumit. "Uninsured students who are in accidents or have serious illnesses accumulate substantial medical bills. We want our students to stay healthy, but if they do become ill or injured, we want them to be able to receive medical care and continue their education."

UNC Asheville Wellness Center



Next week look for a feature on Western North Carolina University's insurance program, which administration says will be similar to the UNCA plan.

Coordinator Linda Pyeritz agreed uninsured students are definitely a problem at UNC Asheville. Pyeritz said she personally knows students who would benefit from seeking medical treatment but can't afford the cost.

"Approximately 40 percent of UNC Asheville students have no health insurance," Pyeritz said. "A major illness or hospitalization could force a student out of college secondary to medical expenses. The real question is, can we afford not to have health insurance?"

Tristyn Card, student body president, said requiring health care is a positive change that will help many students in the long run.

"I really believe this is an incredibly responsible step for the university to take on our behalf," Card said. "The reality is that higher education is not cheap, and although UNC Asheville prides its self on its affordability, it has an obligation to accommodate the needs of its students, and one need is in fact affordable health care."

One difficulty with this new requirement is that some uninsured students may not be able to afford to pay the extra 600 dollars a year for insurance, according to Card. However, she said financial aid may be able to cover students who cannot afford it.

"The truth is that in all likelihood there will be some students for whom this will be a huge financial burden," Card said. "But we have made sure that as a part of the cost of attendance that this additional cost is something that financial aid can cover."

Vice Chancellor Haggard said those students who may have a hard time paying for the mandatory

health care will be worked with on a case-by-case basis, and that most full-needs students would have their insurance costs covered by financial aid.

"If a student is a full-needs student, it is highly likely that they would be able to get a financial aid award to cover the cost of insurance," Haggard said. "If there are cases other than those full-need cases, we will work with them and do what we can. It is not our intent at all to lose any students with this program."

Some students and faculty members, however, think having health insurance is a personal choice that should be left up to individuals to make. Some students without health insurance said this requirement would hinder their ability to pay for school.

"This decision will certainly force me to cut my hours down below 12 and will insure that my academic career is more difficult," said Allison Gaines, senior student. "It is not the school's responsibility to provide me with good health, it is here to provide me with an excellent education. This system, however, will put yet another block between myself and graduation."

Gaines, who said she will not be able to afford health care when the system starts next fall, said this requirement is part of the bigger problem of the US health care system.

"This is only a microcosm of the damage done by the ludicrous health care system in this country," said Gaines. "It should have nothing to do with my well earned right to learn here."

Senior student Maloree Byrd agreed that forcing students to

## University begins search to fill understaffed dorms

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"We have a system worked out. It just means we will have to work a little bit harder. That never killed anybody"

RYAN MOTON  
Founders Hall Community Director

Students living in residence halls may be surprised to find UNC Asheville is searching for community directors to fill a staff shortage officials say exist in dorms.

UNCA has at least two residence halls that are lacking community directors. One of the standing community directors is taking maternity leave and will return, while two of the other community directors are leaving to pursue other work opportunities.

Community directors serve as part of the leadership team for the Department of Residential Education and are responsible for designing and implementing integrated learning strategies to assist students in the achievement of a broad array of co-curricular learning outcomes, according to UNCA officials.

The community director's job involves a 12-month live-in position making a starting salary of \$30,000 a year excluding housing. The potential community directors must obtain a master's degree in college student personnel or in a related field according to Career Center data.

About 1,200 students live on campus out of the some 3,500 undergraduate students. About one third of the students attending UNCA are being affected by this shortage.

Pam Stringer, a junior mass communication student and Founders Hall resident, says she thinks the lack of community directors is not a problem.

"My dorm experience would not see changes if they weren't there because I have zero interaction with them", Stringer said.

After living in the dorms for two years, she does not have a clear idea of what community directors do or even who they are. She said she thought Founders Hall hired a new community director, but she has not had any interaction with them.

"(They) try to give us activities to do, but I don't think any of the residents are really interested in it," she said.

Other students say they share similar opinions.

"I have had no interaction with my community director. I just know that they took up lounge

space in the dorms", Andrew Johnson said, a junior music major living in West Ridge.

Johnson volunteers with the Residential Student Association, planning events for students living on campus.

The reason why there is lacking in residents attendance to events is because of some narrow themed activities and that some students just want to things on their own, Johnson said.

Melanie Rhodarmer, director of Residential Education, is in charge of hiring and training the community directors.

Rhodarmer said one of the duties a community director has is providing programs for the students with assistance from the Residential Student Association.

"We are hoping to make a fairly seamless transition", Rhodarmer said.

She said she believes the directors will achieve this by hiring the temporary positions until they can go through a more permanent search process.

One of the temporary Community Directors Rhodarmer hired is finishing up his master's in Student Personnel at Clemson University.

According to Rhodarmer, the university performs a national search consisting of individuals who hold a master's degree. Along with students, a search committee will be implemented to interview and choose a new community director.

Founders Hall Community Director Ryan Moton said he believes the shortage of community directors may be a change for the better.

"I view it as an opportunity. We, as a staff, get to create a more institutionalized fingerprint so people will know who we are," he said.

Moton said he thinks he has good relationship with the students living in Founders Hall. He says he meets with students to just talk.

"I have had discussions with students about their favorite movie and whether or not the Dalai Lama should be considered

a world class criminal," Moton said.

He said he believes most students who live in Founders Hall knows who is, mainly because his office is in the building.

The community directors are taking this shortage as a way of combining their talents and working together.

Moton said he hopes that in a couple of weeks there will not be a shortage, but more of a collaboration effort.

"We have a system worked out. It just means we will have to work a little bit harder. That never killed anybody," Moton said, referring to how the other directors will make do with the lack of community directors on campus.

Founders Hall resident Patrick Erwin, freshman student, said he has never heard of a community director.

"I see her every once in a while but that's about it," he said when asked about his relationship with the resident assistant on his floor.

Leah Buell, junior history student and resident assistant in West Ridge, thinks the shortage of community directors forces the other resident assistants to rely on one another.

Buell said she does not think this will be a problem considering the extensive training the resident assistants complete. Buell lives in a dorm without a community director.

In order for West Ridge to run smoothly, she said everyone will have to work closely with community directors in other buildings.

For more information, call  
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## Poll: How would you make the dorms better?



RYAN BEIERLEIN  
MILLS HALL

Make the dorms wireless  
Better furniture and beds  
New paint and design



GRACE WELSH  
SOUTH RIDGE

More coin machines in  
South Ridge  
Comfier couches in lounge  
areas



MICHEAL McDERMOTT  
GOVERNORS VILLAGE

Make sustainable dorms.  
There would be a fire pit  
and we would Earth honoring  
serimonies that would  
give back to Pachamama, Mother  
Earth.



SARAH JONES  
MILLS HALL

Better regulate the heating  
and air in the rooms  
Change out the lights from  
being fluorescent  
Put kitchens on more  
floors