

THE BLUE BANNER

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The Blue Banner is UNC Asheville's student newspaper. We publish each Tuesday except during summer sessions, finals week and holiday breaks. Our office is located in Karpen Hall 019.

The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be emailed to the editor-in-chief or the appropriate section editor. Letters should include the writer's name, year in school, and major or other relationship to UNCA. Include a phone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.

EDITORIAL

Body camera footage should be public record

In March, footage of former Asheville Police Department officer Chris Hickman beating, choking and stunning Johnnie Jermaine Rush was leaked to the public. The footage of the incident dated back to last August, but surfaced seven months later. Additionally, the footage was leaked, not released, to the public.

APD remains under investigation for the incident, but cases in which blatantly unjust footage of police brutality surface and precede substantial investigation are an anomaly. Body-worn camera footage is not often leaked, instances of injustice are not brought to light and the system of oppressive behaviors by police continues.

Body-worn camera footage should be accessible through public records. The current process to access body-worn camera footage remains tedious and in some states is not at all accessible to the public.

Asheville requires a written request to the police chief, according to *Reporters Committee*, but in other cities in North Carolina, laws vary as to who can ac-

cess the footage. Some cities, including Charlotte consider body-worn camera footage showing any violation of the law to be filed under criminal investigation and therefore not accessible as a public record, as deemed by NCGS 132-1.

These inconsistent laws make the basic understanding of these regulations murky for those who want to access this footage. By making all footage — aside from that which classifies under open investigation — legal to attain, these laws would serve several crucial purposes to society. The accessibility to this footage gives the public more opportunity to critique law enforcement and to hold their local police departments more accountable. More accountability could lead to, potentially, less brutality from police.

As growing reports and documentation of police brutality surface, police accountability becomes a growing and urgent need. No longer should civilians be subjected to unearned punishment from a corrupt system that basks in unchecked power.

Clarification: In a previous edition of *The Blue Banner*, we ran a story on UNC Asheville's new Healthy Campus Initiative. We would like to clarify that the national framework of this initiative is known as Healthy Campus 2020 while UNCA's iteration of it is known simply as the Healthy Campus Initiative, with a sub-program known as the Food Equity Initiative.