

# Black presence low in Business School

by Laurie Willis  
Editor

Of the 825 undergraduates enrolled in the UNC School of Business Administration, 20 of them, or 2.4 percent are black, according to Peter Topping, executive director of the undergraduate program for the school. Other minorities are 1.8 percent of the school's enrollment.

Topping said he thinks blacks do not feel they have enough incentives to apply to the business school.

Are UNC blacks just not interested in business, or are there specific reasons why more of them are not in the school?

John P. Evans, dean of the school, said he has some guesses about minority enrollment. "My impression is that there isn't the right set of mechanisms where blacks at the high-school level have occasion to find out what a business career might be like."

Evans said he recently asked some blacks in the UNC Master's in Business Administration program (MBA) why they thought so few undergraduate blacks were in the school. "They responded that there doesn't seem to be a lot of information readily available to blacks at the high-school level and during their first two years of college."

He said the students also remarked that blacks need role models in business.

Topping said he is looking to a long-term investment for trying to recruit minority students. "What I haven't done yet and look forward to doing is talking to Elson Floyd, Harold Wallace and Hayden Renwick to get collective wisdom on strategies the school can employ."

Floyd is an assistant dean for General College, Wallace is the vice chancellor for University Affairs and Renwick is the associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

"But the best sources right now are the black students already in the school," Topping added.

Kenneth Brown, a senior in the school from Burlington, N.C., said he thinks blacks do not apply because their heads are filled with misconceptions about admission requirements. "I think a lot of it has to do with a lack of information about the business courses."

Brown said he thinks a lot more blacks would apply if they knew what the admission requirements were.

Topping said he does not want to see a student not apply because of misconceptions.

"A student must take three business administration (prerequisites) courses and have a 2.75 cumulative grade-point average before applying," he said.

But a student with less than a 2.75 average has a chance at admission, he said.

"A student whose average is under a 2.75 should send a letter stating why the school should consider him," he said.

"For example, a student with a 2.6 average who maintains a 3.0 in the three business courses would probably get in," Topping said. "But a student who has less than a 2.5 in the three business courses and an overall average less than a 2.5 would be disadvantaged in applying to the school."

Students should declare their majors during the spring semester of their sophomore year, Topping said. "But declaration doesn't automatically mean acceptance."

Brown said the required GPA has been a misconception among blacks for a while.

To try to clarify that misconception along with others, he said he is forming a self-help group for intended minority business majors.

He hopes to assist a lot of freshmen and sophomores, he said. "I am starting this program because I feel obligated to inform minority students about the school."

Brown said he plans to contact the other blacks in the school and ask them for assistance with his program. He and Keva Butler, another senior business student, sat down this summer and mapped out their plan, Brown said.

The two said they plan to tell students how to structure their course loads and they plan to hold study sessions. "I also plan to establish a quiz file for the students," Brown said.

He said he hopes his plan will go well but he thinks more needs to be done.

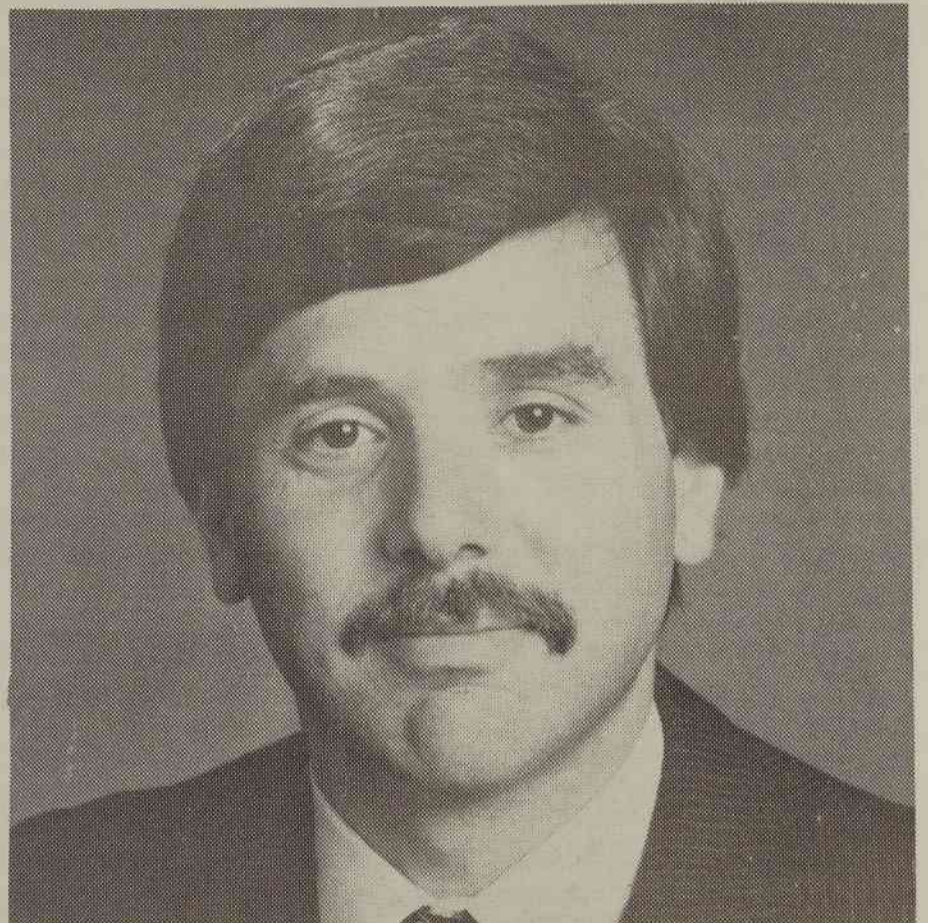
"I think some blacks don't apply to the school because of the lack of role models within the school," he said.

The school has 79 full-time faculty members including one active black professor, Marilyn Gist, who came to the University at the beginning of the semester.

John Cole, the school's other black professor, is on a leave of absence.

Evans, the Business School dean, said in his 16 years at the school, there has never been more than two blacks on staff at any one time.

(continued on page 8)



*"We will neither go out and grab students and coerce them into applying nor will we reduce our standards, but we will try to develop a support system within the school for blacks."*

— Peter Topping, executive director of the undergraduate program, UNC School of Business



photo by Ralph Ward

*"Blacks as a group aren't in business, and because of lack of exposure, I think young blacks thinking of majors don't consider business."*

— Marilyn Gist, assistant professor in organizational behavior, UNC School of Business