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Russell elected SGA president for 2000-2001

BY THOMAS M. RUYLE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Three weeks after all SGA presidential candidates were disqualified from the original elections, a winner emerged from a special election and runoff held April 26 and 27.

Katie Russell, entering her junior year, beat opponent Lee Keenen, now a senior, 248 to 195. Russell, Keenen and Laura Southerland were disqualified from the original elections on April 5 and 6. Southerland declined to run in the special election.

Because Russell, Keenen and a new candidate for the special election, Jessica Maher, did not receive a majority vote on April 5, a special runoff election was held the next day between Russell and Keenen. Maher did not receive enough votes to qualify for the runoff.

Russell was inaugurated as president May 10 by Vice-president Erica Pittelkow and sworn in as the only student voting member of the UNCW Board of Trustees the next day.

Elections Board Chairman Yancey Gulley, who graduated just after the controversial election was resolved, said the second vote was trouble-free. "With the obvious exception of the regular (presidential) election, everything ran smoothly," he said.

Although the original election was marred by candidates accusing each other of various campaign violations, Keenen said he and



Katie Russell ascended to the SGA presidency after a special election was held April 26 and 27. All presidential candidates had been disqualified from the original election in early April. Russell remain on good terms. "Katie Russell gave me a call (and said) there are numerous spots open in the SGA," he said.

As president of the Legislature, Pittelkow can nominate any student to fill vacancies. "She'll nominate me if I want to serve," Keenen said. "I want to be a Senator (legislator)."

Russell believes she and Keenen have patched up their differences since the election. "Well, I think in the beginning there were some awkward feelings, but it can be repaired. I do not hold any animosity," she said.

Keenen said he would like to increase graduate student participation in campus activities and representation in student government. "They contribute a significant amount of student fees," he said.

About 10 empty seats remain in the SGA legislature, which recently became a unicameral body after several years of having two houses. Interest in filling the vacancies has been high since the elections. "We've had some people ask to be appointed," Russell said. Elections will be held in early September for all vacant seats and freshman legislators.

Class of 2000 Clocktower erected in Commons

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UNCW's central commons area is sporting a new landmark after the Class of 2000 gift to the university was erected on Thursday, May 11.

The gift, a clocktower standing more than 50 feet high, was delivered to the university from the Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio and hoisted into place atop its concrete foundation using two large cranes.

"It took about eight hours for the whole process (of placing the clocktower)," said Shane Fernando, chairman of the clocktower committee. As senior class president, Fernando spearheaded the effort to fund the nearly \$150,000 tower. Much of the funding was provided by local businesses, individuals, students and alumni as well as a \$15,000 gift from the Student Government Association.



A crane lifts the tower into place atop its foundation May 11.

A ceremony was held the next day to officially unveil and dedicate the clocktower. The ceremony was attended

by about 300 students, community members, faculty and Chancellor James Leutze.

Given Wilmington's recent hurricane history – five major storms in four years – weather was a major influence on the tower's design. "Hurricanes were (considered) very heavily in the design...that's why we went with the open design – less wind shear," Fernando said.

According to Fernando, the tower, complete with chimes that sound every hour, is designed to withstand the worst weather Wilmington has to offer. "It's hurricane-proof to the furthest extent it can be," he said.

The tower and foundation are supposed to be able to handle the force of a high Category Three or low Category Four storm on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale. A Category Four storm can pack winds from 131 to 155 miles per hour.

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