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NCCU to Play in NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament First Four

Eagles Face UC Davis in Dayton, Ohio on Wednesday at 6:40 p.m. on truTV

INDIANAPOLIS - After winning the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference tournament title to earn a trip to the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament for the second time in school history, North Carolina Central University will face UC Davis on Wednesday, March 15 at 6:40 p.m. in the NCAA First Four in Dayton, Ohio. The contest will be televised live on truTV.

NCCU made its first March Madness appearance in 2014, when the No. 14 seed Eagles played Iowa State in San Antonio. In just six seasons as a Division I program - NCCU achieved full NCAA Division I membership in August 2011 - the Eagles have posted four 20-win campaigns, earned three MEAC regular-season championships (2013-14, 2014-15, 2016-17) and won two MEAC tournament championships (2014, 2017). Two seasons ago, NCCU participated in the NIT with a road game against the University of Miami. The 2016-17 NCCU team boasts an overall record of 25-8 with a 13-3 conference mark. UC Davis won the Big West Conference Tournament and enters Wednesday's game with a 22-12 overall record. The winner of the No. 16 NCCU/UC Davis match-up will advance to play No. 1 seed Kansas on Friday, March 17 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Woman helps pave way for blacks to attend UNC Chapel Hill

By Kevin Ellis

GASTONIA, (AP) - Sixty-five years ago, Gwendolyn Harrison Smith was told because of the color of her skin she could not attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Although she clearly had the academic credentials to take a doctorate level Spanish class during a summer session at the state's flagship university, something had been overlooked in her application, university officials said.

"It was not known she was a Negro when a room assignment was given to her by mail," Neal Cheek wrote in his 1973 dissertation, which was made available by the university.

Smith, who lived most of her adult life in Bessemer City, died Feb. 28 at age 91. Her story would be remarkable even if she had taken the advice of university officials and accepted a refund and returned home.

But Smith fought for her right to an education, and in turn became the first black woman to take classes at the UNC Chapel Hill, according to university officials. She would be one of the first blacks to ever take classes at the university.

"It's still incredible the courage they had to be pioneers here," Nicolas Graham, an archivist at the university, said March 3. "They went through a lot to get an education. It's a remarkable example they set for all the students who followed them."

Smith was just 25 years old when she arrived on the UNC Chapel Hill campus the morning on June 11, 1951. She had already earned a bachelor's degree in history from Spelman College in Atlanta and a master's degree in Spanish from the University of California. She was a professor at Johnson C. Smith in Charlotte at the time she applied to take a class at UNC Chapel Hill.

The application for summer school did not have a place to denote a person's race at the time, although it was noted she had attended the historically black Spelman College and taught at Johnson C. Smith, another historically black college. Smith did put her race down on the dormitory room reservation card, according to university records.

Everything seemed fine at first. Smith went to a dormitory after arriving on campus, paid a deposit and was given a key to a room in the building. She would say later that she believed that the university had made accommodations for her and she believed officials had known she was black before seeing her.

She left the dormitory to attempt to discover the class registration procedure. When she returned to her dormitory, university officials were waiting.

She was told she would not be permitted to live in the dormitory or register for classes. She was advised to see the director of the summer school or UNC Chancellor Robert Burton House.

House told her that no one at the university had the authority to act on applications from "Negro graduate students," according to records.

Instead of going home, Smith, who at that time was not yet married, wrote a letter to then-Gov. W. Kerr Scott, who was also chairman of the UNC board of trustees, explaining the situation. With the help of her father, a medical doctor in Kinston, Smith also sought advice from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and hired an attorney.

She filed a federal lawsuit against the university on July 5, 1951.

At an emergency meeting of trustees on July 16, one of the board's members suggested the university discontinue its doctoral program in Spanish rather than let Smith attend classes. That idea was defeated in a vote by a "good majority."

Another board member spoke up for admitting Smith.

"I don't think we should say we're willing to be ignorant rather than educate Negro children," said trustee Victor Bryant according to college records. The trustees would vote overwhelmingly to admit Smith into the program.

Smith began her class in the second summer session. She would take at least three classes over three different summer sessions. University officials were uncertain March 10 whether she earned a doctorate degree there. Her federal lawsuit was dismissed after she began attending classes.

Few people knew of Smith's historic Civil Rights past, said her family. She would mention it sometimes in passing, but it wasn't something she talked about much. She was far better known for her kindness, love of education and dedication to family, her children said.

Described as quiet and soft-spoken, Smith would also not be pushed around.



More groups press Jeff Sessions on civil rights commitment

By Sadie Gurman

WASHINGTON (AP) - The leaders of several civil rights groups said they remain concerned about the future of the Justice Department's commitment to their priorities after meeting Tuesday with Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

They said Sessions gave no specifics about how he will handle a number of issues, including monitoring troubled police departments and protecting voter rights.

But the 45-minute meeting was a chance to "raise issues in ways he perhaps had not heard before," said Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

"We were not hostile, but we showed holy indignation," the Rev. Al Sharpton said. "He listened earnestly."

It was the second time in a week Sessions met with civil rights leaders over their wide-ranging concerns. NAACP leaders met with him privately Friday.

The Justice Department declined to comment on the meetings, which Sessions arranged shortly after his confirmation.

Sessions has moved swiftly to set the Justice Department on a different path from his Democratic-appointed predecessors, and dramatic changes are already being felt in the area of civil rights.

The groups said they were especially troubled by his suggestion that the Justice Department would pursue fewer federal investigations of civil rights violations in police departments. It has also abandoned an Obama-era challenge to a key aspect of Texas' voter ID law that is among the toughest in the nation.

Tuesday's meeting came a day after Sessions and other officials unveiled a scaled-back version of President Donald Trump's ban on many foreign travelers. The groups made it clear they believe the new version is still unconstitutional and would continue to fight it, said Kristen Clarke of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.