

UNC students given computer homework

By **ALLISON BELL**
Special to the STH

IBM and UNC are working together to develop educational software for use by colleges around the country. Professors generate the ideas, students help write the programs, and IBM funds the "think tank," taking a cut of the profits.

In the first phase of the project, 25 professors in the College of Arts and Sciences and dozens of undergraduates have participated in the Courseware Development Project. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich will publish the best work coming out of the program. Soon, when the second phase begins, more professors, some in the Business School, will join the effort.

Despite occasional glitches, members of the UNC community involved with the program say that it's worthwhile.

Faculty members like the courseware because it gives them unprecedented information about the way their students think.

History Professor John E. Semonche has asked students to participate in computer-based simulations of historical crises for 15 years. The simulations teach students to gather and use information to solve current problems, Semonche said. Developing such skills is one

of the aims of a liberal arts education.

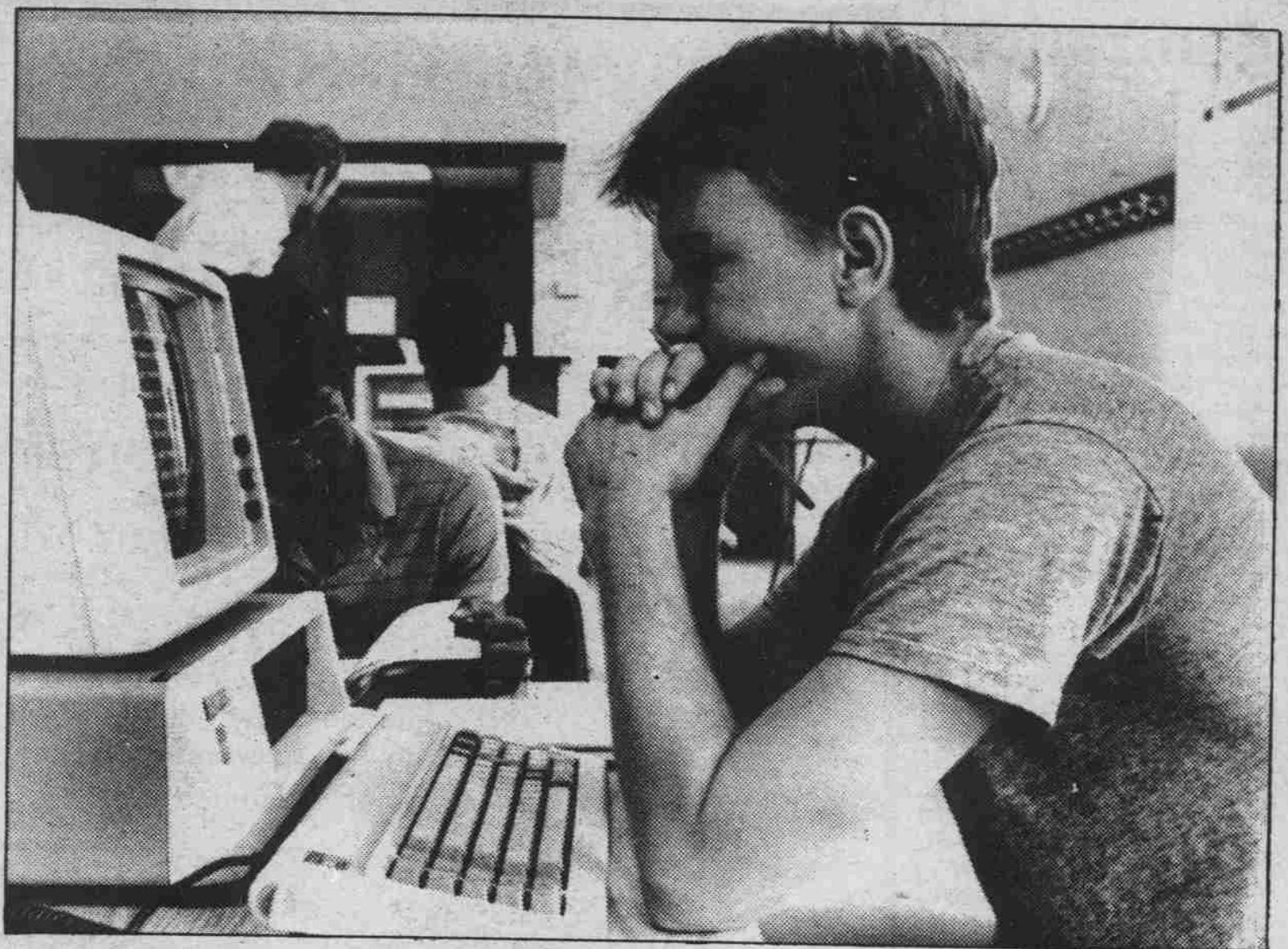
Semonche has supervised the development of three simulation packages. Each simulation focuses on a historical crisis. The programs let students gather information and discuss ideas with electronically-generated ghosts of historical figures. After they've finished their research, students plan and justify solutions to problems presented by the simulations.

Once the students have completed the simulations, printouts list what background information has been requested and when it was requested as well as solutions.

Semonche said the programs are designed for those who don't know how to use computers. He said he requires the simulations in addition to papers and tests.

Sally Atalla, a senior majoring in computer science, has helped write some of the courseware. She got involved in the Courseware Development Project as a programmer after taking SS90, an advanced programming course. She said that students need prior programming experience before getting into the program.

Students earn college credit during the school year, and money during the summer. Atalla said that wages start at \$5 an hour and go up to \$8.



Tar Heel/Steve Matteson

Sophomore Warren Harris studies a History 22 program

In the Research Triangle, beginning programmers usually start at \$12 or \$13 an hour, she said.

Student programmers can schedule their own time but must work at least 40 hours a week. Atalla said, "Most beginning programmers in the

project work 50 to 60 hour weeks to catch up with the work unloaded on them.

"It's a great experience for people who want to be programmers some day. It's a lot of hard work. You've got to have lots of energy and lots

of patience to sit there for hours programming."

However, she said she feels that she's learned a great deal from working with her supervisors and

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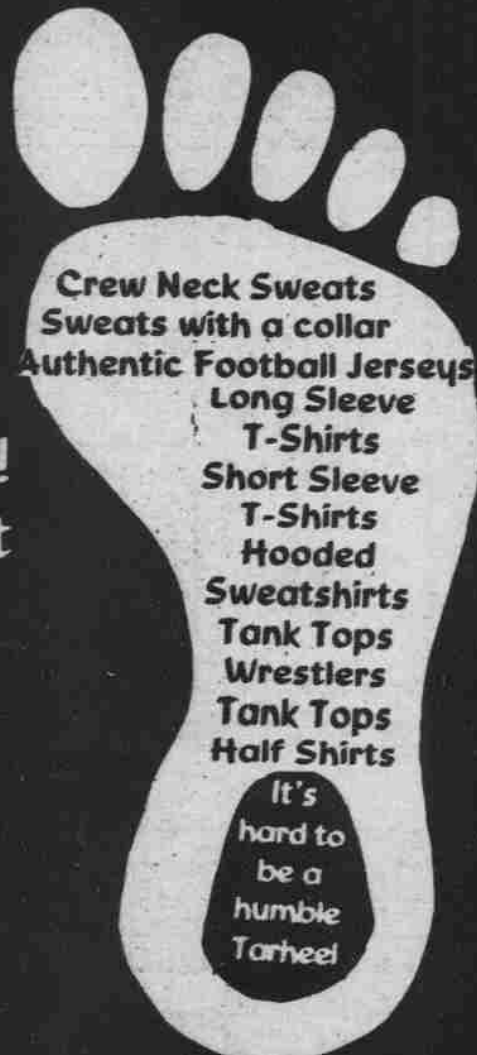


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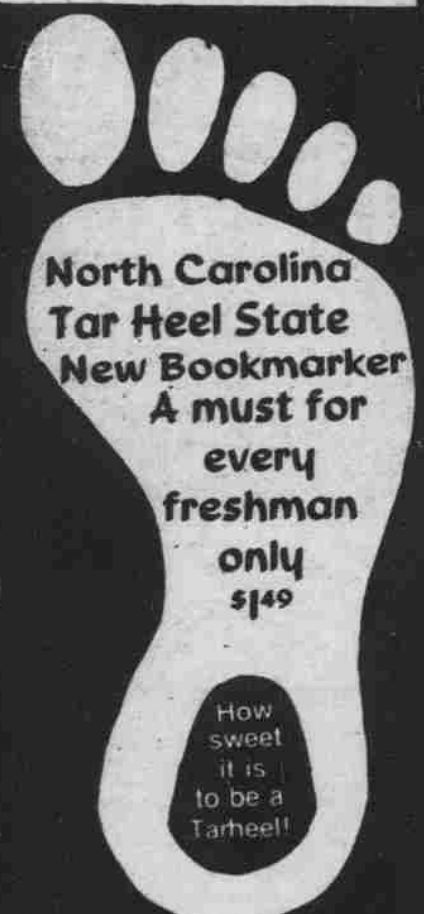
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