

Obtaining in-state status can be a difficult task

By **SALLY PEARSALL**
Editor

Many apply, but few are chosen. Each year, hundreds of UNC students seek to be classified as residents of North Carolina for tuition purposes — and only about 50 percent of those who apply actually obtain in-state status.

A would-be in-stater begins the process by filling out a residence status application form and submitting it to his admissions office — undergraduate, graduate, law, medical or dental. According to state law, a student can be considered a legal North Carolina resident if he has lived in the state for 12 months before applying to the University as a resident for tuition purposes.

An admissions officer approves or rejects the application. Students whose applications are rejected can appeal to the University's Residence Status Committee for a hearing.

In order to win an appeal, said committee chairman Mary Sechriest, a student must convince the committee that he intends to make North Carolina his permanent home. And the committee often has a tough time finding that intent manifested by a student's actions, she said.

For example, she said, the place where a student spends his summer can be a factor in whether or not he wins his appeal. "If you go home for a month in the summer, great," she said. "But if you take the same (out-of-state) job you've had every year and you're living with Mom and Dad, our question would be — have you really broken those ties you said you have?"

"We're dealing with something that's very difficult to get a handle on," Sechriest said of the committee's decisions. "There's no one easy answer."

Although the overall Residence

Status Committee is made up of 28 administration and faculty members, only three committee members hear appeals and vote at any one time, Sechriest said.

If the committee rejects a student's appeal, he can apply again — as many times as he wants.

According to Brad Lamb, a UNC graduate, the application process is complex and unfair to students in some ways. "The University never puts out a lot of helpful information on the subject," he said. "The whole format is set up so that the University will not disclose a lot of information."

The University publishes a residence classification manual for students, but Lamb said it was an explanation of the state law, not a guide to help students achieve in-state status.

Lamb and his wife Kathi have published a booklet, "Residency Status and Tuition," to help students win their applications. To

obtain residence classification, Lamb had to appeal twice to the committee.

The booklet advises students who want to be classified as in-staters to register to vote, establish local checking and savings accounts, get a North Carolina driver's license and car tags and fill out an address change form at Hanes Hall. The booklet, which costs \$1, also lists possible questions students may be asked during the committee hearing.

"(The hearing) is like a job interview," Lamb said. "The more prepared you are, the better chance you have of winning."

Lamb said the appeals system was flawed because the committee makes its decisions on a subjective basis. "They should have objective standards that could be equally and fairly applied," he said. "Then people would know what they have to do."

Another problem with the pro-

cess, Lamb said, lay in the fact that the committee does not tell students why their appeals are rejected.

"The committee doesn't want to tell anybody that they have a chance to win at a later date," he said. "They ought to at least give you some reason why you were rejected."

Sechriest said the committee did not have the staff or the resources to hand down written decisions, but said students could approach committee members and ask them why their appeal failed — if the committee members were willing to discuss it.

Lamb said he planned to hold a meeting in the fall for students who are interested in obtaining residency classification.

"I try to be optimistic to people," he said. "... If you think you're at all entitled to be a resident, you're entitled to find out about it."

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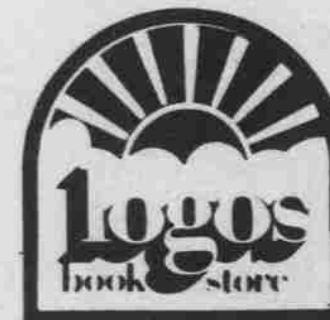
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