

The Blue Banner

"Accomplishing the impossible means only that the boss will add it to your regular duties." -- Doug Larson

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Report indicates little change for UNCA minorities, women

Lynne Delk
Staff Writer

A study on diversity shows little change in the status of minorities at UNCA since 1983. The Minorities Affairs Commission prepared a report on the Status of People of Color and Women at the University of North Carolina at Asheville last spring. The study proposes to "provide the university with a base line for understanding diversity at UNCA."

The study reports that people of color made up 24.5 percent of the population in October 1992. UNCA employed only 6 percent of people of color as full- and part-time faculty in the fall of 1992. The taxpayer-funded university enrolled only 7 percent of people of color as students in the fall of 1992. "The most salient fact about the status of people of color at UNCA is their absence," states the report.

Statistics show that "women at UNCA occupy lower ranks than their male colleagues." Women faculty outnumber men only in the nontenure track position of lecturer. The university hires lecturers on a limited contract with no opportunity for advancement or tenure. Employees hired in nontenure track positions also receive less pay than employees in tenure track positions of assistant professor and full professor.

The report also shows a lack of diversity in staff positions. The university employs 13.5 percent African-Americans in staff positions. More than half of these work in the lowest paid occupational category at UNCA and earn less wages than white employees in similar jobs.

African-Americans working as clericals make up only 2.6 percent of the total staff while white employees working as clericals represent 24.5 percent of the

total staff.

Federal Occupational Category OA 70 includes unskilled labor and service jobs. The category also includes grounds and labor or maintenance positions.

African-Americans hired in the category OA 70 work mainly in housekeeping positions. No African-Americans work in grounds and labor or maintenance positions, and "people of color with jobs in federal category OA 70 at UNCA earn noticeably lower wages than do white employees in the same category."

Writers of the study "recognize efforts to improve the status of people of color and women" at UNCA.

"The academic affairs, under Larry Wilson, has really tried to be much more coordinated in its efforts to bring African-American students and faculty than it was earlier," said Dwight Mullen, assistant professor of political science.

Changes in UNCA's chancellorship make the report's status unclear. The commission put together the study last year and submitted it to the faculty senate, said Mullen.

"Since then there hasn't been any response. Folks don't know what's going on with it. Now that the chancellorship is going to change it may be put on hold," said Mullen.

The study on diversity does not indicate definite causes for the statistics. Different methods of recruitment may be needed to reach prospective minority students, said Carolyn Briggs, coordinator of multicultural affairs.

"Sometimes I think in order to get minorities you have to do some creative advertising and make sure that the information is getting to the community," said Briggs.

"It's part of our society that in a lot of cases, not always, people of color do not have the opportunities that are afforded non-minorities," said Andy Brantley, UNCA's director of personnel.

To increase diversification of its student body, UNCA must draw more on the local population, said Mullen. The numbers of people of color that are coming out of Western North Carolina "are just insufficient."

Mullen cites lack of preparation as the main reason for the low numbers of local African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic students coming to the university.

Local high school counseling and guidance departments, working with a student advocate, show the best results in helping college bound students fill the necessary requirements, said Mullen. "If a student's parent or if there is a mentor in the community, the high school guidance tends to respond much better than if the student is alone."

Advocating for minority employees, the state of North Carolina implemented the "accelerated pay increase" to help bring wages for lower ranking state employees up from \$12,000 to around \$14,500, said Brantley.

"The state recognizes that, traditionally, it is minorities that do have those jobs more than non-minorities," said Brantley. The program proposes to bring wages of lower ranking employees up to the poverty level.

The report did not look at statistics for people of color applying for employment with the university.

"I think that's something that needs to be looked at, to see if people are applying for these positions and, if they are, why are they not being hired," said Briggs.

The report prepared by the minorities commission gives the university a starting point for future efforts to increase diversity. It points out areas of concern in addressing the diversification of UNCA.

"It's an important report which deserves attention," said Heidi Kelley, assistant professor of anthropology.

Students face cuts in financial aid

Suzanne Edney
Staff Writer

Former President Bush's changes in federal aid will affect UNCA students this year. One-third of the student body gets some form of financial aid. Ten percent of needs are not met.

"My grants were cut in half almost by 50 percent. I had to take a Stafford loan," said Jack Newton.

Some students benefit while others lose. This year anyone can get the Stafford loan regardless of need.

"Dependent students this year are not being assessed as heavily as they were in the past, therefore it increased need for them," said Carolyn McElrath, director of financial aid. Students with children benefit. Also the federal government doesn't look at home equity anymore which helps to create greater need.

"Based on the way we have seen the shifts in our awards that we have made this year, it looks to us like single independent students were hit the hardest with the change," said Caroline Miller, assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management. She

said single, independent students have to make more money than before in order to be eligible for financial aid.

"For Pell purposes, however, \$2,450 more dependent student income is exposed to taxation causing Pell eligibility to decrease," said McElrath.

"I think it's bad that I had to go and borrow money to finish up this year," said Mary Pangle.

"The Feds set the limit and then our office packages your aid based on what the Feds have set about your limit," said Miller.

"What used to be two formulas, like a different formula for Pell Grant and a different formula for campus-based money, has been merged to one formula," said McElrath. The formula is cost of education minus expected financial contribution (EFC) equals financial need. If a student's EFC is \$2,100 or less, then that student is eligible for the Pell Grant. This change caused an increase in eligibility and need. However, it reduced the amount of Pell Grants given to students.

"If a family writes to me and says 'My dad was laid off in January,' then I know that the financial information

that the application asked for would base it on that family's 1992 income. Should we consider that family based on its 1992 income? No. Changes have taken place, so therefore we need to base it on the family's 1993 income," McElrath said.

The Pell Grant was supposed to have been higher than it was funded. "They (the government) wanted to be able to fund as many students as possible. They even gave us indication that we might have to go in and even decrease those awards even more, even after having awarded them, so here's hoping everything is holding firm. I think it is now set that we won't have to decrease Pell any further," said McElrath.

Marlon Garren's financial aid changed because he moved off campus. "I had to get loans for the first time ever because they cut back on my Pell Grant," Garren said.

Last year the maximum Pell Grant was \$2,400. This year it's \$2,300. Right now the maximum for the Pell Grant is \$2,300, and the minimum is \$400.

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Staff Photo By Karen Brinson

A poetry reading was held Tuesday, Sept. 7, in the Laurel Forum.

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Weather Report

The forecast calls for sunny skies and unseasonably cold temperatures. Highs will be in the 60s and lows will be in the 40s.

Weather Report courtesy of the National Weather Service

UNCA Atmospheric Science Department offers updated forecasts through the 24 hour weatherline. 251-6435

UP and GALA sponsor series

Teri Smith
Staff Writer

A diverse audience of over 100 students, visitors, and members of UNCA faculty and staff gathered in the Humanities Lecture Hall last Thursday evening for the first of an eight-week film and discussion series sponsored by Underdog Productions (UP) and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA).

Members of UP and GALA knew from the beginning that presenting the series of 13 films, which explores the issues surrounding gay, lesbian and bisexual lifestyles, could be controversial.

"We could stir-up some feelings on campus that people want to keep repressed," said Hampton Hopkins, assistant director of student activities.

"We wanted to bring this issue out on campus and to get people thinking about why this issue needs to be in the forefront of our minds," he said.

"Because we have a visible gay and lesbian student population on campus, we wanted to relieve some stereotypes people have about gays and lesbians," said Hopkins. "Especially on a humanities campus, I think that's where it really fits in."

Trish Loftin, president of GALA, has been questioned about her reaction to people who may object to GALA receiving funds for this project.

"My first response is to tell those people to get over it," said Loftin. "But, upon reflection, I hope people who would object to this would have the decency and the courtesy to attend before they do. And then, object politely."

"I hope this film festival can act as a bridge between the gay and lesbian community and the straight community on the UNCA campus," said Chad Underwood, vice president of GALA. Marlon Garren, past president of GALA, says the film series goes beyond the function of education.

"Yes, we want to raise issues and discuss them," said Garren. "But, this is also a celebration of part of our culture. You need to see this because society won't let you see this."

The three films shown last week addressed issues and stereotypes surrounding lesbianism.

The first, "A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts," was a 26-minute parody of lesbian stereotypes.

Trisha Wallace, a climatology student at UNCA, attended to fulfill a cultural event requirement for her humanities class.

"I was looking for something different," said Wallace. "The first movie was very strange. As a heterosexual I guess I found it informative, but parts of it ... if I were a lesbian, I might find it insulting."

Loftin and Underwood fear that some heterosexual students missed the message of the films.

"The lesbians were howling," said Loftin. "Most lesbians have been confronted with these stereotypes and myths for so long. You're seeing your life. You just have to laugh."

"I thought there were some people who wouldn't get it," said Underwood. "We were sitting here laughing very hard and there were these guys sitting behind us who were dead silent. It was

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Staff Photo By Teri Smith

Underdog Productions, under the supervision of Hampton Hopkins, and GALA sponsored the first of 13 films in the gay and lesbian film series.