

The Banner

Volume 27 Issue 3

February 5, 1998

Late closing strands commuters

By Catharine Sutherland
Contributing Writer

Many students and faculty were surprised at the administration's failure to cancel classes before 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 27 when roads were already under nearly six inches of snow after an unexpected winter storm hit the Asheville area, resulting in over a foot of accumulation by midnight.

"It is unusual for the administration to wait until you can see six inches of snow on the ground before canceling classes. They've never done this," said Judi Leffe, secretary of the math department, who has worked at UNCA since 1986.

"In a sense, it just tricked us all," said James Pitts, vice chancellor for academic affairs and the administrator responsible for canceling classes.

Under normal snow procedure, Pitts consults with facilities crews before 6 a.m. to determine what conditions are like on campus, and he also considers the weather report.

When facilities personnel had not contacted him by 6 a.m. on Jan. 27, Pitts assumed campus conditions were satisfactory and left his home for a 7 a.m. dental appointment.

It was not until he was forced to walk the last stretch of University Heights in the snow at 10:30 a.m., leaving his car stranded in a traffic jam at the university entrance, that he realized there was a problem.

The problem, in this case, was not with the university's snow policy, but with the unexpected change in the weather, Pitts said.

"The snow policy's pretty clear. The timing of the storm and the difficulty of determining what was going to happen is what threw it off," Pitts said.

Facilities personnel trusted the weather reports, which claimed the snow would turn to rain by noon, and therefore did not contact Pitts before 6 a.m., he said.

In the future, such communication problems should not arise, according to Pitts.

"We still have no control over when the storm comes, but we worked it out in greater detail who would make the call if I am not available and if the associate vice chancellor's not available," Pitts said. Due to the large commuter population at UNCA, many consider the snow policy of special importance.

"If there are at least two inches of snow on the ground, classes should be canceled," said commuter Ben Tiller, a freshman history major. "The snow policy should be very lenient, especially with commuter students," Tiller said.

Tiller, who commutes to classes from Black Mountain, awoke to six inches of snow on the ground Tuesday morning and did not attempt the drive to Asheville, despite the regular class schedule.

Sophomore Amy Waldrep did make the drive to campus, and spent the night paying for it.

"Me and my roommate came because class was not canceled when we called. Then class was canceled when we got here," said Waldrep, who left her home at approximately 11 a.m. to commute to school from West Asheville. "I called as soon as I woke up about 8 a.m., and the roads were already really bad."

After spending the night on a friend's couch in a residence hall to avoid the treacherous drive home, Waldrep was without her snowbound car for two days following the storm.

As for future snow days, Waldrep hopes the administration has learned a lesson from last week's incidents.

"I think they'll do better from now on," Waldrep said. However, she said she will not attempt to make it to class in the snow again, despite the class schedule.

Some professors agree with this thinking.

"No matter what the policy is for the whole school, individual people have to have leave to use their own discretion," said D. James, associate professor of literature.

James said that, while she lives close enough to walk to campus in bad weather, she always tells her students to use their own judgment on snow days, and not to risk life and limb to attend class.

"It is a hard call," James said.



PHOTO BY PRESTON GANNAWAY
The unexpected snowstorm brought construction on campus to a halt.

Her colleague in the literature department, Peggy Parris, agreed. "We are never going to have a perfect solution," Parris said. Since some people live within walking distance, some live on campus, and others, like herself, live on the sides of mountains, the university's snow policy will not be able to accommodate everyone's needs, she said.

"It seems to be a lose-lose situation," said Nancy Williams, assistant director of housing.

"I wish there were a way to gauge what the majority of the faculty were going to do, because I ache to see students work hard to get here and then their teachers aren't here," Williams said.

Power outage leaves Village in complete darkness

By Catharine Sutherland
Contributing Writer

Residents of the Governor's Village residence halls may have experienced the darkest hours on campus during the power outage last Tuesday night, which left the eight residence buildings without hall or exit lights due to the lack of an auxiliary generator.

The power loss occurred during a surprise snow storm that knocked out power in over 50,000 homes in Western North Carolina.

"There are no fire exit lights when the power goes out here, and it is pitch black," said Craig Hall resident Amy Douglas, a sophomore psychology major.

"It was pretty scary. I am on the third floor, and if something had happened I could have fallen trying to get down the steps," Douglas said.

Residents all over campus lost power at approximately 6 p.m. and did not regain electricity until 8:20 a.m. the next morning.

Those living in the Founder's, Mills, and South Ridge residence halls were able to gather in lit hallways thanks to the buildings' auxiliary generators.

"We all brought games and congregated in the hall. It was like a major hall social," said South Ridge resident Chris Martin, a sophomore psychology major.

"I would hate to live in the Village. I feel so fortunate. I feel kind of spoiled," Martin said.

"There is an auxiliary generator in South Ridge, our newest residence hall," but the Governor's Village, the oldest residence hall area on campus, has never had a generator, said Chancellor Patsy Reed.

"The safety of our students is very, very important to us. I do not know if that means we should have an auxiliary generator, or more discussions at the RA (resident assistant) level [about how to handle emergency situations in the Governor's Village], or consider alternatives to an auxiliary generator," Reed said.

Students living in the Governor's Village felt more strongly about the generator.

"It should definitely be a priority. It should be passed, it should have already been

See VILLAGE on page 8

Adjunct positions cut

By Greg Sessoms
Staff Writer

A budget crunch caused by the state legislature's delayed 1997 budget report forced university officials to cut 15 class sections due to a lack of funds available to pay adjunct professors.

According to Thomas Cochran, associate vice chancellor of academic affairs, the adjunct budget was reduced from \$290,000 to \$260,000.

Originally, the administration had planned to cut the adjunct budget to \$230,000.

"We pulled it down as tightly as we thought we could get away with," said Cochran.

According to Cochran, most academic departments were forced to enlarge class size or cut class sections. "There are not many departments that did not have to do something," said Cochran.

The music, humanities, and foreign language departments were among those hardest hit by the cuts due to their heavy reliance on adjunct professors.

"Essentially, we just could not serve anybody new," said Charles Knight, chairman of the music department.

Students majoring in music or continu-

ing studies from previous semesters were given priority over other students when it was decided who could enroll in a course and who could not.

In addition to limiting the availability of classes, some music classes were overloaded from a prior limit of 12 to 15 students to as high as 24 students, said Knight.

The humanities department had to cut several class sections and the class size limit was raised from 22 to 23 due to the cuts, according to Margaret Downes, director of the humanities program.

Downes said that there were some students who were not able to enroll in a humanities class, and that others were forced to change their schedules when the sections that they had enrolled in were dropped.

"It made a significant alteration in my schedule and plans for the semester," said freshman philosophy major Mike Sears.

The foreign language department had to cut three sections of classes and move full-time professors into classes previously taught by adjuncts.

"It was painful," said John McDonald, chairman of the foreign language department.

However, some departments were only forced to make minimal changes to course offerings. The health and fitness department only canceled one class due to the

adjunct cuts according to Keith Ray, chairman of the health and fitness department.

According to Cochran, the adjunct cuts did not result in an dramatic increase in class sizes. "We may have tried to push some classes up by two to five students," said Cochran. "In most cases, the decision to allow an increase in a class size was left up to the instructor."

Cochran said that courses taught by adjuncts with low enrollment numbers were the first to be cut.

In cases where there was low enrollment in a course taught by a regular faculty member, that course would be cut and the full time professor would be used to replace an adjunct.

According to Downes, some of the money needed to pay adjunct professors this semester was taken from a fund provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities for faculty development.

"I try to do whatever I can to keep adjuncts employed. What we pay them is bad enough," said Downes.

Adjuncts are paid about \$1,700 for each three-credit-hour course they teach.

"I do not think anybody disputes that we are not paying our adjunct faculty a sufficient wage," said Cochran.

See ADJUNCTS on page 8

Road closed



PHOTO BY NATE CONROY

The service entrance to UNCA was closed on Jan. 27 due to the snow. It was reopened to traffic early on Jan. 28.