

# The Banner

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## Drug law may cut aid

By Krystal Lucas  
Staff Writer

College students across the country are participating in a campaign to have a provision of the Higher Education Act of 1998 (HEA) overturned, according to the Drug Reform Coordination Network (DRCNet), a Washington, D.C. based non-profit organization. The provision would prohibit persons convicted of drug offenses from receiving federal financial aid, grants, student loans, and work study.

"UNCA and other institutions have taken posture and are not applying the provision until it has been reviewed," said Carolyn McElrath, director of financial aid. "This means schools are held harmless, at this point."

On October 7, 1998, President Bill Clinton signed into law the HEA of 1998, which included the provision to delay or deny financial aid, according to the DRCNet Web page. Students may receive early restoration of benefits by completing a drug treatment program that fulfills the yet-to-be-announced department of education regulations.

"The provision is just another act by the federal government that attacks the symptom (using or dealing drugs) rather than the core problem, (inequality and racism)," said John Gaither, a senior political science major. "If you have a disease you don't attack the symptom, you attack the disease."

The provision will have racially discriminatory effects, according

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## Weathering the storm

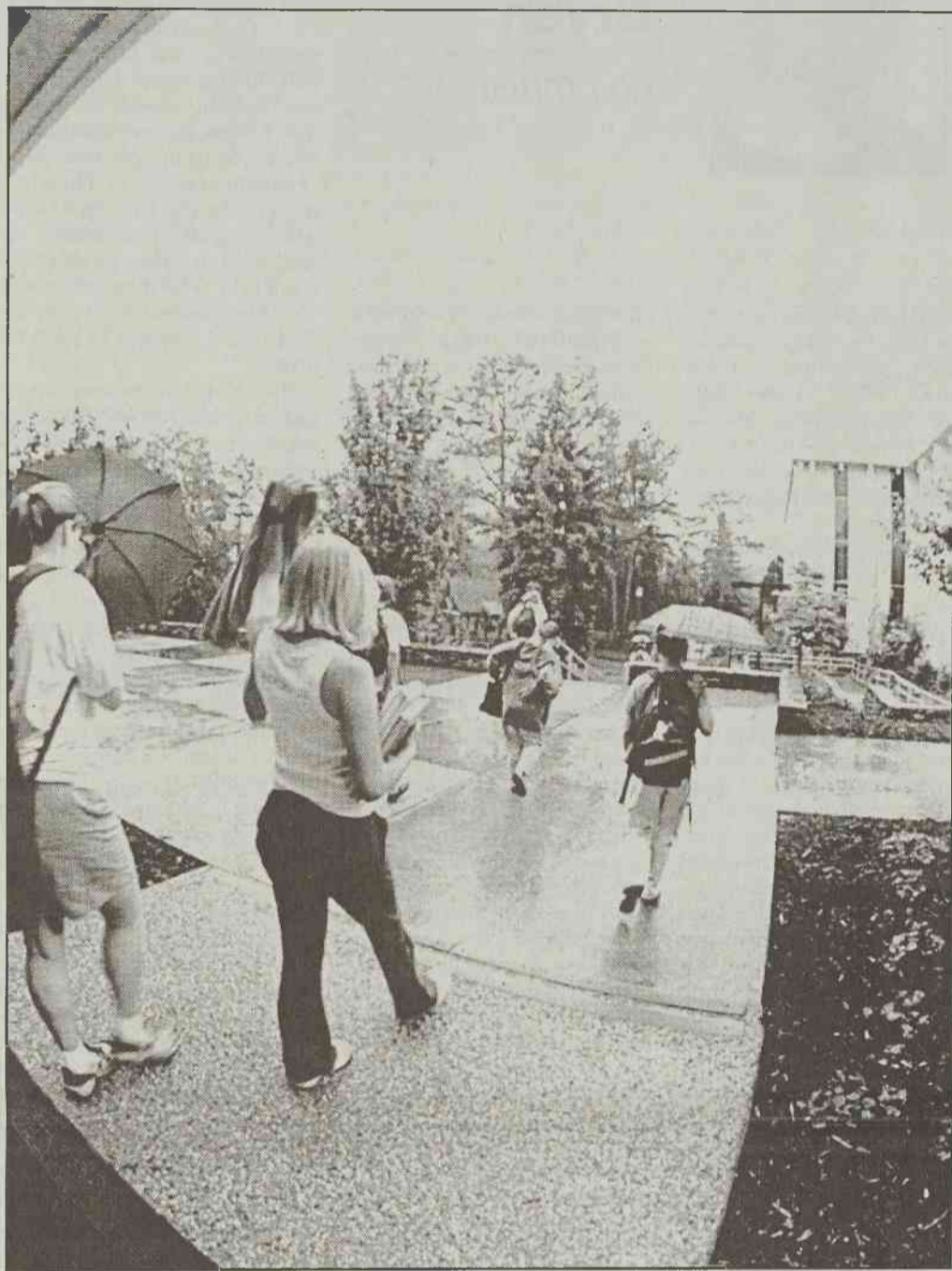


PHOTO BY TRAVIS BARKER

April showers continue into May as UNCA students approach exams. The rainy days make sleeping more inviting than studying.

## Reed key speaker at graduation

By Mike Bryant  
Staff Writer

Chancellor Patsy Reed will be the commencement speaker at UNCA graduation ceremonies on May 22.

"The UNCA Board of Trustees has announced that Chancellor Reed accepted their request to give the commencement address at this year's graduation event," said Tom Cochran, associate vice chancellor of academic affairs.

The majority of UNCA graduating seniors have completed their academic study during Reed's term as chancellor at the university.

Students were unaware of the choice of Reed as the commencement speaker for the 1999 graduation ceremonies.

"I did not know who the speaker for this year's graduation was going to be," said Jeffery Sharpe, a senior psychology major. "It really does not matter anyway. The event is more important to my parents and family than it is to me. It might have been more interesting to hear someone other than Chancellor Reed speak, but I think she is as good a choice as anyone else."

Additional opinions and suggestions were offered by other graduating seniors regarding the choice of this year's commencement speaker.

"I had not given any thought to who would be speaking at graduation," said Cerise Glenn, a senior Spanish major. "But, I must say that I am very interested in hearing what Chancellor Reed has to say since she will not be returning to

the university. However, I wish that the senior class had been given some input into the selection or choice of the speaker."

"I did not know that Chancellor Reed would be the speaker at graduation," said Marquis McGee, a senior psychology major. "It is fine with me, but I would have chosen someone like Bill Cosby. I was hoping the commencement speaker might be someone who represented a little more diversity in his or her life experiences."

Seniors said they are hoping that Reed will address issues which continue to concern students at UNCA.

"I have really been disappointed with the lack of diversity in both the student body and the faculty," McGee said. "Though my overall experience at UNCA has been OK, I do not feel that adequate support for my academic interests were available in my department or the university. Maybe Chancellor Reed will include these types of concerns in her address to the seniors."

"I have mixed feelings about my four years at UNCA," said Glenn. "I am pleased with the academic aspect of my education at the university, but I feel very strongly that cultural support was lacking across the campus for all students. I hope the chancellor will mention the changes that need to take place in the future and not just highlight the positive points of the university."

Many seniors were more concerned with satisfying family members at graduation than voicing any real displeasure with the choice of a

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## UNCA professors teach local prisoners

### Youth offenders find personal relevance in Plato

By Emma Jones  
Staff Writer

Youth offenders in Western North Carolina are pursuing college courses under the instruction of UNCA professors, according to one of the volunteer professors.

Though the curriculum is almost identical, the differences between a college atmosphere and a class in prison are evident, according to Paul McDonald, associate professor of French.

"It really is a visit to a different planet," said McDonald, who is teaching a section of Humanities 124 at Foothills Correctional Institution. "It's so totally different from anything we're used to. For them, it's visiting another planet to study Humanities 124. They've never done any college work before."

This is the first year UNCA has participated in the program.

"The project is funded by federal funds that have been given to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for 26 years now," said McDonald. "Last year, the special administrative group at UNC-Chapel Hill asked if UNCA would subcontract to do this sort of thing."

The prisons UNCA work with are both all-male institutions.

"We work with two prisons in this area," said McDonald. "The one I teach at is

Foothills, a maximum security prison. Western Correctional Institution is the other facility, and it is for boys ages 16-19. These are special institutions for young people, and then they get transferred to the general prison population in other places if they are still incarcerated after 25."

Confronting a prison situation can be daunting at first, according to McDonald.

"It's a very sad situation," said McDonald. "It's a scary experience the first few times you go, though there is absolutely no sense of physical fear. It's sad because (the inmates) are almost reduced to a robot-like existence."

The program at Foothills involves around 35 of the 711 prisoners at the institution. "They're among the best 5 percent in terms of motivation and ability," said McDonald.

Even within the uppermost sector of inmates, the maturity level is generally lower than other similarly aged groups, according to McDonald.

"The prisoners are manipulative," said McDonald. "That's one of the things that is kind of sad. They're manipulative in the

way a sixth grader might be manipulative. They try to play the teacher off the guard. It's very schoolboyish. In talking to the education counselors, I understand why they act that way. One of the reasons they are here is because they have very low self esteem. This way of behaving allows them to create some sort of individual identity."

Over the course of the semester, McDonald said he has seen an improvement in the inmates' work, as well as an increased level of understanding of the Humanities 124 material. Just as Plato is applicable in an academic sense, especially in humanities, many of the prisoners find it personally relevant.

"I've found within my course there are very clear resonances to their lives in the texts they are asked to confront," said McDonald.

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" depicts a group of humans chained inside a cave, watching shadows created by puppets on the wall of the cave. Plato says that they will only be able to see "true forms" if they are able to escape from the cave into the sunlight. In an essay on Plato's work, a prisoner discussed the difficulty in returning to

**"It's sad because (the inmates) are almost reduced to a robot-like existence."**

-Paul McDonald, associate professor of French.



PHOTO BY TARA HAMMOND

McDonald brings Plato's light to prisoners at Foothills Correctional.

society after years in Plato's "darkness."

"What I live out here in prison actually exists as did the shadows," wrote one prisoner in his essay. "Yet the reality of the free world... People have a hard time when they first enter prison (darkness) as well as when they first get out (the light), such as when the story told of how a man could be blinded in two ways, either by coming from the light (free world) and entering darkness (prison), or by coming from the darkness and entering the light."

McDonald said he has encountered a wide range of ability and willingness to learn in the inmates.

"There are two or three who were impres-

sive from the outset," said McDonald. "I had three others who didn't have a good attitude from the beginning. Two of those dropped out, and one was taken out. The others in the middle are the people who have really improved."

Since the prison is a correctional institution, the first priority is discipline rather than education. The professors sometimes encounter a different attitude toward education than they normally see on a campus of higher learning, according to McDonald.

"You're aware of an element in the guards that, to a certain degree, goes

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