

THE BLUE BANNER



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UNCA holds conference about Israel

Kristen Willett
News Reporter

The Center for Jewish Studies and the Humanities Program co-hosted "Understanding Israel," a conference to help students learn more about the region, Feb. 2 through Feb. 4.



WALTER FYLER/
STAFF
PHOTOGRAPHER

Kenneth Stein points to a map.

The conference came about as a desire to understand Israel," said Katie Peters, a visiting professor of history. "It was also an opportunity to learn about the ecosystems of Israel and the region in general."

"We want people to come away from the weekend with a greater understanding of a complex society," said Peters.

Experts on various cultures came to provide the students and community the opportunity to learn from them, according to Peters.

Over the past two years, UNCA has sponsored conferences focusing on non-Western societies such as China, India and Africa.

At the end of World War I, the British promised the Arab people independent Arab States for their cooperation during the war.

In 1917, the British government made a statement supporting the formation of Israeli territory, a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The Arabs believe this land was part of the land promised to them.

The conflict arose from these land disputes, and has continued to plague the region to this day.

"Both have legitimate claims to the land," said Eric Meyers, professor of Judaic studies at Duke University, during his lecture at the

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Pegasus spending investigated

Lana Coffey
Investigative Reporter

Stuart Gaines
Investigative Reporter

Robert F. Yeager, who recently retired from his position as a tenured literature professor at UNCA, was removed from his position at Pegasus Press last fall amid a UNCA investigation into possible financial improprieties at Pegasus, according to Bill Styres, UNCA's director of internal audits.

"The allegations against Dr. Yeager are a catalyst that triggered an unfortunate series of events and the university does have a debt owed to it by Pegasus," said Rod Baird, chairman of the Pegasus Press board of directors.

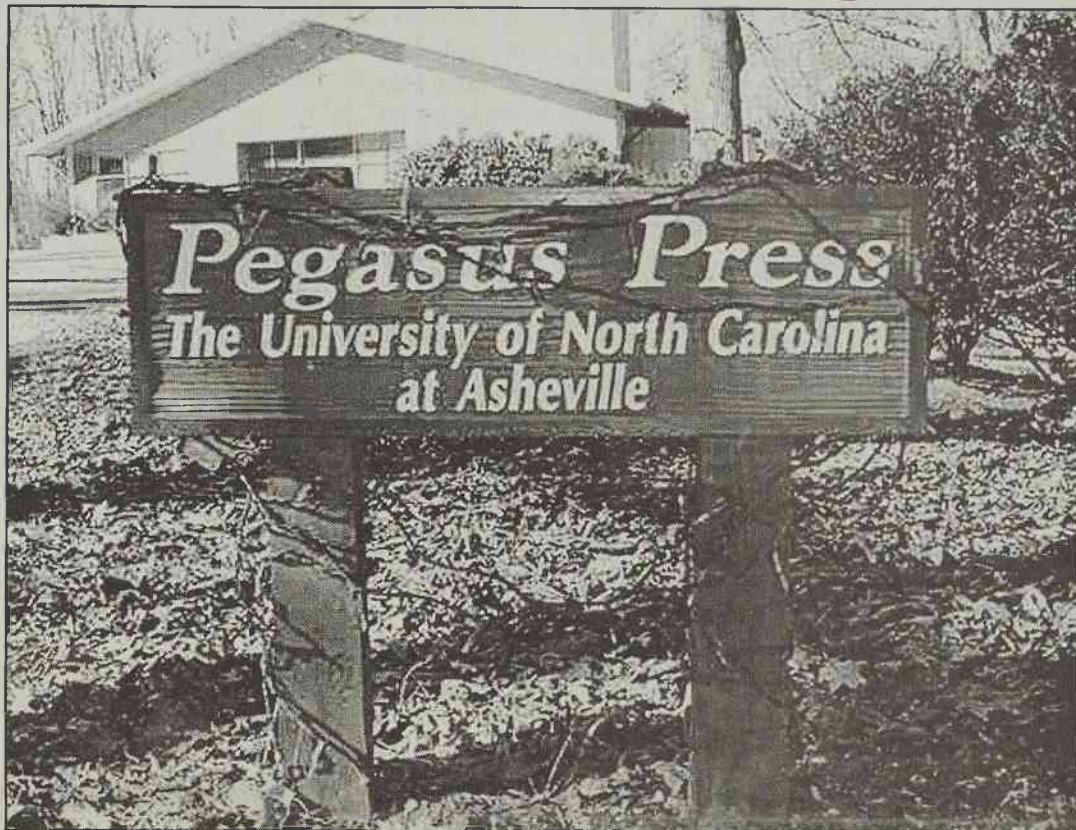
Styres's report, entitled "Schedule of Questioned Costs," which documented some financial spending in Pegasus Press's records, showed the allegations against Yeager included double-billed travel expenses and the purchase/return of office supplies.

No charges have been filed against Yeager. The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation is currently conducting further investigation of the finances of Pegasus Press. The SBI will report its findings to Buncombe County District Attorney R.L. Moore upon completion, according to an e-mail from John Bason, public information officer of the North Carolina Department of Justice.

Pegasus Press's increasing and cumulative debt to UNCA prompted Styres's investigation beginning with the university's request for a debt repayment plan, according to Wayne McDevitt, vice chancellor of financial affairs.

Yeager, who had been employed by UNCA since the late 1980s, served as the executive director of Pegasus Press, according to Tom Cochran, interim vice chancellor of academic affairs and a volunteer member of the board of directors for Pegasus Press, a not-for-profit publisher of Renaissance and medieval texts that is loosely affiliated with UNCA.

In his report, Styres wrote, "I have compiled relevant information categories where it appears that double-billing took place. As the director, Dr. Yeager approved all these ex-



RACHEL CRUMPLER/NEWS EDITOR

Loosely affiliated with UNCA, Pegasus Press publishes Renaissance and medieval texts.

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-Bill Styres

UNCA's director of internal audits

penses. There was no board oversight for these items."

Yeager had control over most aspects of the press's finances, according to Styres.

"He was the overall leader," said Styres. "The signing of the checks, most of the time, was done by Dr. Yeager."

During his investigation, Styres said he found that the number of office supplies being purchased seemed excessive and incompatible with the supplies needed at Pegasus Press.

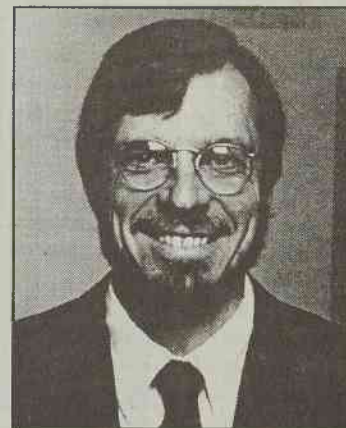
Styres's report of selected office supplies purchased by Yeager for Pegasus Press between March 3, 2000 and Sept. 22, 2001 showed that Yeager purchased three Jaz disks for \$269.95 each. According to

Styres, Pegasus did not have the equipment to use Jaz disks at the time of purchase.

"It is my understanding, based on the documentation that I have, that Dr. Yeager was returning the items that he bought from the store for a credit on his credit card," said Styres. The items were "purchased with his personal credit card originally and returned to the store, usually within 48 hours."

"So, his credit card washes clean, yet he still has the original receipts which he submitted to Pegasus for reimbursement. Of course, he is in charge of writing checks himself," said Styres.

From December 1999 until September 2001, Yeager purchased approximately \$12,500 worth of



COURTESY OF UNCA'S
PHOTO ARCHIVES

Former UNCA professor Robert Yeager.

office supplies. While being reimbursed by Pegasus for this full amount, Yeager returned \$9,657.79 worth of those supplies for credit back to his credit card, according to Styres's report.

Travel expenses may have been billed to both the university and Pegasus Press, according to Styres's report. On four business trips, including one to Washington, D.C.

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Student charged with assault on a female

Elizabeth Moe
News Reporter

A UNCA student was arrested on charges of second-degree trespassing and assault on a female Jan. 28. The arraignment is scheduled for Feb. 18.

"This is an extremely harsh and unjust ordeal to go through," said Marcus Bethea, a senior sociology major and employee of UNCA public safety. "There is factual information to show that I am innocent of these accusations, and the facts will definitely come clear in court. Everyone who knows me can understand that my dedication to my job, my academics and my friends has always been sincere."

According to the incident report, Bethea physically assaulted a woman Jan. 25. The victim called the Asheville police department at 3 a.m. the following morning.

The Asheville Magistrate's Office issued warrants for Bethea's arrest. APD officers took him into custody two days later.

Adams said the victim's injuries are "very minor."

When pressed to answer more specific questions, Adams declined to speak.

"I'd rather not answer any questions directly relating to this case," said Adams. "It's a personnel issue with us, since he was employed with us at the time."

However, Adams said Bethea's duties within the department were minimal.

"He's a student employee for us," said Adams. "He's not a public safety officer. He has no authority."

Bethea's duties included answering the phone, providing fellow students with an escort, letting students into their dorm rooms, jumpstarting cars and locking up buildings at night.

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Student banned from campus after assaulting a public safety officer

Whitney Setser
News Reporter

A UNCA student was arrested for underage drinking, assaulting another student and assaulting a law enforcement officer Jan. 23.

"UNCA takes assault on a staff or faculty member seriously," said Jerry Adams, public safety investigator.

Sean Patrick Heffner, an undeclared sophomore who was unavailable for comment, was taken

to the Asheville Magistrate's Office after two UNCA officers responded to a call they received involving a fight in progress in Founders Hall.

Steve Lewis, the public safety shift supervisor and one of the responding officers, tried unsuccessfully to calm Heffner, who claimed another student stole his jacket, according to the public safety incident report.

"We do not expect that kind of behavior from students," said Adams.

Heffner, who was reported to have

been intoxicated in the incident report, assaulted Lewis by pointing his finger, striking Lewis with his finger and pushing Lewis in the shoulder, according to the public safety report.

This was not the first offense of this kind caused by Heffner, said Adams.

"We had a report of a disturbance that (Heffner) was creating in the residence halls less than a week prior to this situation," said Adams.

Heffner accused Jason Isbanioli, a sophomore environmental science major, of stealing his jacket.

Isbanioli was able to secure arrest warrants on Heffner for communicating threats and assault, according to the public safety incident report.

Isbanioli declined to comment. "From what I know of Sean, he's a decent and down-to-earth guy," said Elizabeth Duquette, an undeclared sophomore.

Assault is defined as "intentionally offering corporal injury to another by force, under such circumstances as to create a well-founded fear of imminent peril, coupled with apparent ability to execute

the attempt, if not prevented," according to UNCA student conduct policy found in the UNCA catalog.

College students are not drinking as often or as much as people think, and underage drinking has actually been declining, according to the Web site for Underage Drinking and Alcohol Abuse.

"I've never had a problem with people drinking in the dorms, except sometimes," said Amanda Bowman, an undeclared sophomore. "People can be loud late at night."

Although underage drinking is slowly declining, aggression is still heavily linked to alcohol abuse, according to the Underage Drinking and Alcohol Abuse Web site.

"We have zero tolerance for alcohol violations. If we get called to a violation or observe a violation, we have to take one form of enforcement, which could be sending someone to student conduct or issuing someone a state violation," said Adams.

Alcohol abuse occurs highest in

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