

The BLUE BANNER

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The News in Brief

By Lisa Gillespie
MANAGING EDITOR

Student wins free tuition

Laura Tamea, UNC Asheville junior student, recently won \$5,000 from U.S. Cellular for free tuition.

U.S. Cellular's "Star Service" Tuition Sweepstakes awarded 20 scholarships to students from across the country. The Star Service Initiative visited more than 50 universities last year and helped students move into residence halls, provided free rides from bars and restaurants and delivered refreshments to students. Tamea registered to win free tuition at www.getusc.com or via text message from their mobile phone.

Peanut butter recalled to Never-Never Land

Certain batches of Peter Pan Peanut Butter may contain food-borne bacteria salmonella. Symptoms of salmonella are similar to food poisoning. Affected people will get diarrhea, fever and lethargy. Symptoms will appear within a few days of ingestion, but fatal cases are rare.

College bans Wikipedia

Vermont-based college Middlebury College's history department banned Wikipedia, the collaborative online encyclopedia, from papers and exams after students in a history class obtained false information for an exam. Middlebury has not banned the use of Wikipedia completely.

Senator supports gay marriage

The Rhode Island attorney general said same-sex marriages performed in Massachusetts, the only state where they are legal, should be recognized in Rhode Island yesterday.

The state currently prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and does not explicitly prohibit same-sex marriage.

After three employees who had same-sex marriages in Massachusetts asked that their personnel files be changed to reflect that they were married, the question went to the attorney general. In September, a judge in Massachusetts ruled that Rhode Island couples could marry in Massachusetts because Rhode Island did not have a law barring same-sex marriage.

Rape allegations spark conflict

The United States plans to investigate into the case of a Sunni woman allegedly raped by Iraqi policemen after the Shia-run government dismissed her claims as false.

U.S. chief of military spokesman's announcement said Baghdad appeared aimed at containing the growing political storm over the case, which strikes at the heart of Iraqi attitudes of dignity and the protection of women.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's exoneration of the three officers after an investigation lasting less than a day inflamed Sunni-Shiite tension.



Chancellor Anne Ponder talks with students on the Quad after the walk-out yesterday, addressing concerns and answering questions alongside University General Counsel Tom Lawton. University administration is currently under fire from faculty, staff and students for recent decisions regarding faculty restructuring and, more specifically, the recent termination of Maggie Weshner, director of the counseling center. Students organized the walk-out in hopes of reinstating Weshner to her position in the counseling center.

Restructuring tension boils over

Students organize walk-out in support of Weshner

By Aaron Dahlstrom & Lisa Gillespie
STAFF WRITER & MANAGING EDITOR

The termination of Maggie Weshner 11 days after the first day of spring classes continues to cause controversy as faculty and staff members passed a resolution calling for the reversal of the school's decision and yesterday's student-organized walk-out.

"Whatever the new structuring is going to be, there should be a place in it for Maggie Weshner, who has worked here for almost 30 years," said Gary Nallan, associate professor of psychology and chair of the faculty senate. "If we had been consulted, this decision might not have been reached."

Weshner lost her job due to a restructuring process undertaken by the school, according to Chancellor Anne Ponder.

When a student asked Ponder if it was a personal or professional decision to fire Maggie Weshner, Ponder paused. After consulting with University Attorney Tom Lawton, Ponder said, "Professional."

"This type of change has been needed for years. We have been working with a broken medical system for students," John Noor, senior economics political science student and student body president. "I am glad to see that the vice chancellor is taking the right steps for students and making this difficult but necessary decision."

The move combines the counseling center and health center into one unit, giving the school increased efficiency in the face of growing student demand, according to Vice Chancellor Bill Haggard.

"Our student psychological and medical issues have become more complex," Haggard said. "These issues cannot be easily compartmentalized into different departments, especially psychological and medical."

The restructuring of the counseling and health services centers into one unit will offer a continuum of care that will have far reaching benefits, according to Weshner's



Students marched to the library steps during the walk-out yesterday. Chancellor Anne Ponder was in a meeting in the library at the time, and students sat and chanted in the lobby for over an hour until her meeting ended. Ponder answered questions and responded to student concerns.

letter of dismissal from Haggard.

"A consultant came in January, I told them to combine us with the health center," Weshner said. "I just thought I would be a part of it."

A special gathering of the faculty senate met with university administration Thursday, expressing their disagreement with the school's decision to terminate Weshner.

"I have never seen the faculty and administration so split over an issue," said Marilyn Lonon, a former applications programmer who retired from UNC Asheville after working at the university for 32 years.

Lonon said she retired because the atmosphere at the school changed for the worse.

"I had the luxury of retiring. I loved my job, I loved the people I worked with, loved working with the students," Lonon said. "I believed in the mission of the University, but in the last 15 months the atmosphere of the campus for the staff had become so

threatening and so intimidating that I just decided I did not have to work in that kind of environment."

The reaction to the firing of Weshner may not have been as strong if there wasn't already a cli-

mate of fear, according to Weshner.

"It is both her longevity here, almost 30 years, but also she is the most recent in a series of terminations of long-term employees," Nallan said.

Weshner was a catalyst to an issue already occurring through a

series of events, according to Weshner.

"Maggie was the one person so far who had the most to do with students. She was the most visible person," Lonon said.

In the three semesters prior to Ponder's arrival, 18 employees left who were classified as executive, administrative, managerial and professional. Following her arrival, 26 employees left, according to the department of human resources.

"Maggie was the flashpoint. In the last 15 months, according to my research, I know of 25 staff members who had been fired, retired or who have left for other jobs under duress," Lonon said. "Twenty-five people for a total of nearly 450 years of staff experience in 15 months. My question is, 'Is there a pattern here?'"

The way the restructuring took place concerns some students.

"If they are doing this for the students, they ought to be explaining how this will make things better. You should be open about what

you are doing. I don't accept restructuring for an answer, and I don't think Maggie Weshner does, either," said Jennifer Nicolini, a sophomore psychology student.

There have been 26 meetings on restructuring, and only one or two meetings included students, according to Greg Goddard, junior atmospheric science student and organizer of the walk-out.

"Restructuring is sometimes necessary, but firing an employee of 28 years is not the way to do it," Goddard said. "The students that represent student government are not representative by the two members of student government that she talks to, John Noor and Tim Laughlin."

In the faculty senate resolution, faculty advised Weshner to stay until the end of the year to facilitate

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Maggie Weshner



Greg Goddard