

## Virginia Tech shootings prompt security questions

By Neal Brown  
STAFF WRITER

As the country reels in the wake of last week's tragedy at Virginia Tech, UNC Asheville students and administration continue to mourn the deaths and evaluate their own security measures, which most remain confident in.

"What we do is we constantly try to learn from these things. When something goes wrong on another campus, those of us responsible for campus security and safety and education, we study those events. We will learn from this event. It is a very tragic way to learn but we will learn and try to improve our practices anyway we can to help prevent what has happened," said Bill Haggard, vice chancellor for student affairs.

The shooting left many questioning security issues on college campuses, which administration said they feel is a strong point of UNC Asheville. Still, Haggard said he acknowledges some doubt as to courses of action in the future.

"It doesn't make me question whether or not what we're doing is right," Haggard said. "It makes me question if we need to do more to help prevent this type of thing from happening."

UNC Asheville is comparatively safe to other universities. However, a tragedy like this could occur anywhere, according to Chancellor Anne Ponder.

"It is a tragedy," Ponder said. "It exposes the vulnerability of each individual on every campus."

Steve Lewis, director of campus police, said he agrees with Ponder and is confident UNC Asheville is safe, but he said a tragedy like this could befall anywhere.

"Crime statistics show that UNC Asheville is a safe place to be," Lewis said. "A shooting of this magnitude could occur anywhere. The Presidents Task Force on Campus Safety has released information that looks at the entire 16 institution UNC system. Their numbers show that, statewide, crime rate is six times lower on campus than it is off campus."

The university has crisis plans, which are in place in case anything were to happen, but no one can ever predict what type of event is going to occur, according to Haggard.

"We have student crisis plans, we have communication protocols and all of those things are in place, but we never know the actual type of incident that is going to happen," Haggard said.

Lewis said UNC Asheville has a security crisis plan and officers are prepared to respond.

"We do have a plan of action," Lewis said. "We are prepared to respond with the resources that we have."

Campus police officers and other administrators are currently re-evaluating crisis plans, according to Lewis.

"Certainly after an event of this magnitude, we would be doing the university a tremendous injustice if we did not take the time to seriously scrutinize our plan," Lewis said. "Meetings have already taken place and future meetings are scheduled with campus police, university administrators and adjoining law enforcement agencies to continue the re-evaluation of our response plan."

Reactions to the shootings consist mostly of shock for most students, according to John Brooks, a second-year engineering graduate student at Virginia Tech.

"I have been pretty shocked," Brooks said. "I do not really know how to feel about such a thing."

A friend of Brooks alerted him to a situation at school, saying classes were on lockdown, information which Brooks said kept him off campus.

"A buddy called me and told me the school was on lockdown," Brooks said. "I considered it a day of vacation until I realized what was going on."

Student reactions revolve mostly around sadness and confusion about what to do next or how to handle the situation, according to Noah Wilkes, senior environmen-



Members of the UNC Asheville community hold a candlelight vigil on Monday in memorial to those who died last week at Virginia Tech.

tal studies student at UNC Asheville.

"It makes me feel really sad and, in a sense, powerless to the solutions that could solve this type of problem," Wilkes said. "It kind of leaves a person feeling sort of helpless."

Other students remain shocked and express disbelief at the situation, according to Cassie Wilkie, junior health and wellness student.

"I was completely and utterly in shock," Wilkie said. "I just could not believe that actually happened."

Some students feel the problem is more of a cultural issue than one of campus security, according to Wilkes.

"This is not a security issue of

campuses. This is an issue of a systemic cultural issue of people feeling and becoming marginalized," Wilkes said. "The question is how do we make these marginalized people who feel like they are not part of society feel part of it so that we don't have events like this occur."

Other students like Wilkie remain confident in our security. "I feel like here we are a safe campus," Wilkie said. "I feel like we are in a good place with our security."

For other students, the Virginia Tech shootings are a reminder of what is important in their lives, according to David Cox, junior political science student.

"It has reminded me and helped



A student holds a candle during the vigil on Monday. Students faced the Ramsey Library steps, where 33 candles were lit in memory.

me refocus on what truly matters," Cox said. "The relationships, the love and hold dear. Just remembering how much that is what all about."

## Asheville sees an increase in public transportation use

By Trevor Worden  
STAFF WRITER

Asheville Department of Transportation has seen an increase of bus riders as they continue to strive to make commutes more affordable and reliable for students.

"Our transit system is very efficient for a city the size of Asheville. While the transit system is not going to be efficient as a vehicle in time, we currently hold a 97 percent on time record," said Bruce Black, DOT manager.

The Asheville transit system expects 1.4 million riders in the coming fiscal year, an increase from the previous year's 1.1 million users. Black said complaints have been cut in half.

The system boasts 200 working busses, bus maps at over 200 locations and is in the process of building 65 new benches, according to Black.

Commuters using public transportation increased by 30 percent since 1995. By the end of the year, Asheville DOT expects to be above the national average, according to Black.

Each bus ticket costs a dollar with no fee for a transfer to another bus, according to Black.

Tickets for students holding OneCards are free for the most part, according to Yuri Koslen, transportation planner at UNC Asheville.

"Transportation is moving in the right direction, and we are getting a lot of new transfers," Koslen said. "From November to January, we had a 89.3 percent increase in student passengers riding on the transit system."

During these three months, UNC Asheville had 679 more riders than in previous months, according to Koslen.

"With students, faculty and staff able to board the transit system for free with their

OneCards, it has made the mass transit system more accessible," Koslen said.

Koslen said he objected to the 97 percent on-time record with the transit system.

"Part of the issue we see with buses is that they are running hot," Koslen said. "Running hot means that buses will leave a station before its scheduled arrival time and the on-time record does not include buses

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*Transit systems help with enjoyment of campus life and promote equality among students.*

YURI KOSLEN  
Transportation Planner  
UNC Asheville

that run hot."

Kristen Borgna, sophomore multimedia arts and sciences student, said the amount of time spent commuting on the bus is too long.

"Unless you have to go anywhere else other than downtown, it takes forever," Borgna said. "One

time, I used the bus to go to Target and it took me about 3 hours to get there and back."

Koslen said students could just misunderstand the bus schedules causing them not to use them.

"Students may be unfamiliar with the commute or the maps, but if students check out the transportation Web site located on UNC Asheville's homepage, it could really help students understand," Koslen said.

UNC Asheville student Jessica Wilson said she liked taking the bus.

"I think it is nice to know that I am contributing to fewer greenhouse gas emissions by riding on the bus," Wilson said.

Other problems exist besides scheduling, according to Black.

"There are some busses that are stressed to their limit due to constant use," Black said. "Route 18, the route that runs from UNC Asheville to downtown, is a very popular route and it is not one of the system's higher performing buses."

The Asheville community benefits from the transit system, according to Wilson.

"I think the bus offers a sense of Asheville's community that you cannot get a lot of other places," Wilson said. "I think it is something everyone should try at least once."

Koslen said the reason students are encouraged to use the transit system is to promote campus unity and enthusiasm for campus life.

"One thing to note for college students is it is beneficial for a university to decrease parking demand," Koslen said.

"Increased bus accessibility improves recruitment and retention on college campuses. It is like offering DSL or any other service. Transit systems help with enjoyment of campus life and promote equality among students."

## Manning

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cantly, you're going to have to change some things. You won't be able to deliver what it is you've been delivering before."

Manning said his decision was not solely based on funding disparity.

"Money isn't everything," Manning said. "I looked at 20 other school systems and what I found is that no matter how much money they had, except for the Chapel Hill and Carrboro area, the children were in equal bad shape."

Manning said he saw high dropout rates across the state, and high percentages of students were not performing at grade level.

"Every time our children walk into a classroom with a teacher who looks at them like they're dirt, thinks they are unable to learn, their constitutional right to learn is infringed upon," Manning said.

Manning said he travels across North Carolina, making sure his mandate is enforced within the state. The North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the Leandro decision twice, according to Manning.

UNC Asheville brought Manning to the campus to speak on his landmark court case in order to educate local Asheville lawyers, community members, educators and both current and future, on the decision, as well as to inspire education students to give every child an equal opportunity to learn, according to Sandra Byrd, assistant provost for graduate and continuing education.

"I wanted them to be able to connect a face with the decision because I think it humanizes what is actually happening," Byrd said. "And I wanted them to think about the importance of a sound, basic education for every child because this is what they are getting ready to do and the importance of the teacher in that equation."

## Exchange

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HIV and Hepatitis C infection among drug users.

A 1997 study of 81 cities conducted by the Center for AIDS Prevention compared HIV infection rates among intravenous drug users in cities that had needle exchange programs to cities that did not. In the 52 cities without programs, HIV infection rates increased by 5.9 percent per year on average. In the 29 cities with programs, HIV infection rates decreased by 5.8 percent per year.

"When people are given the opportunity to access some kind of health care, they generally take it," Harney said. "We are helping people who have slipped through the cracks."

It seems strange to think of the

government giving out needles for drugs to make it convenient, according to Joshua Black, UNC Asheville alumnus.

"It seems like if people are going to use drugs and put their lives at risk that way, are they really going to pay much attention to if their needle is clean?" Black said.

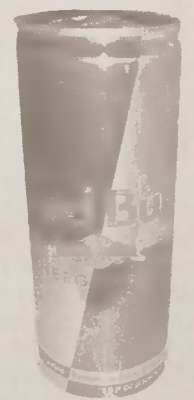
Harm reduction strategies encourage individuals about to reduce harm when engaging in risky activities, according to the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition.

"The lead issue is that this is a public health issue. That's the concern, getting people access to the means to reduce their risk," Harney said. "Moral issues are secondary."

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