



The Blue Banner

The News in Brief

President gives final State of the Union address

President Bush gave his final State of the Union Address Monday, highlighting a \$150B economic stimulus plan intended to stave off recession.

Offering few new significant policy proposals, Bush again reiterated the need for peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis, something many experts believe he is staking his foreign policy legacy on.

Guests of First Lady Laura Bush included several Iraq war veterans, a New Orleans jazz musician and a student shot in the April Virginia Tech massacre.

New power plant causes controversy

North Carolina approved a permit for Duke Power to construct a proposed Cliffside coal power plant in Rutherford County.

Environmental groups across the state had opposed the plant, fearing it would emit additional pollution and reduce air quality stretching across the state.

Duke officials said it plans to take cautionary steps to reduce the net amount of pollution its power plants churn out across WNC.

UNC Asheville celebrates Black History Month

UNC Asheville will host a series of special events throughout the month of February commemorating Black History Month.

Highlights of the events include the second annual State of Black Asheville Forum on Saturday, Feb. 14 and a jazz concert by the Langston Hughes Project on Friday, Feb. 22

For more information about UNC Asheville's observance of Black History Month, call the Office of Multicultural Student Programs at (828) 232-5110.

Bulldogs ranked No. 15 in mid-major poll

The UNCA men's basketball team rose four places to the number 15 spot on the collegeinsider.com Mid-Major Top 25 poll after wins over Charleston Southern and Radford last week.

Several Web sites are now predicting that the Bulldogs will enter the NCAA tournament as a No. 14 seed.

The Bulldogs remain undefeated in conference play, having won nine of their last ten games. They will face Winthrop on Saturday in front of a sold-out Justice Center crowd.

Compiled by Aaron Dahlstrom

Campus health plan mirrors other institutions

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For an idea of what UNC Asheville's new mandatory health insurance plan will be like next fall, look no further than Western Carolina University, which started a similar plan in fall 2006.

"Western Carolina University has done a fine job in selecting the mandatory plan for its students," said Julian Simpson, insurance coordinator at WCU. "This is giving students attending the university the opportunity to afford a reasonable health plan on their

own. The biggest key is keeping students healthy."

WCU's student health insurance plan shares many similarities to the one UNCA implements this fall; both schools will use hard waiver system, so students who already have health insurance can opt out of paying for the plan offered through the university. WCU's requirement, like UNCA, also only apply to full-time and international students.

The WCU plan charges \$586 per semester, while the UNCA plan will charge \$611, which can be covered through financial aid. Both schools go through the student insurance

company Pearce and Pearce, Inc for their plans.

Before WCU implemented their plan they used a focus group to refine the, a step UNCA doesn't plan to take.

"Before the student insurance plan started, we had focus groups to handle student reactions, and the need of our campus as a whole with a mandatory plan," Simpson said. "Promoting the benefits really caught the student's attention, and knowing that there was an actual choice when it came to health insurance was a key turn on for our students."

The WCU still has some shortcomings. Emily Hart, senior student at WCU, said the waiver paperwork, which allows students to forgo the university's plan in favor of their personal insurance, has caused problems for her.

"Although I agree that all students should have health insurance, the waiver system is hard to keep up with," Hart said. "We have to get it renewed every semester, and if you forget, they charge the money directly to your tuition. This has happened to me before, and it can

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JESSICA BETHLE - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Bicycle thefts shot up last fall, with eight stolen bikes reported during the semester.

Campus police battle string of bike thefts

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Late in the fall semester, Governors Hall resident Griffin Payne ran to campus police reporting three scruffy males stealing bicycles. The theft was one in a series of eight bicycle thefts leaving several UNC Asheville students on foot.

On Nov. 26, police charged Scott Schaeffer, 31; Elvis Walton, 25; and Keith Flemming, 39, with larceny and criminal damage to property.

"(Schaeffer) informed me he was carrying a knife. Mr. Schaeffer then reached for the knife and I stopped him," said Officer Shannon Green in the police report.

Other officers arrived and detained the other suspects. When confronted with the details, Schaeffer and Walton admitted to being lookouts for Flemming as he stole the bike. Flemming admitted to stealing the bike, according to the police report.

Police could not identify the owner of the bicycle, so charges could not be filed at that time. Police later identified it as belonging to Alexander Jones, a Governors Hall resident. Charges were filed and warrants issued for the three men's arrest.

"These people had no address, they were homeless," Bayne said. "They carried bolt cutters. They had a whole bag of tools with them."

Bayne said students chained their bikes to bike racks outside of various buildings on campus where the men cut the chains.

"They had radio systems where each one had walkie-talkies, and they would put each other on lookout while one went and stole the bike and took it off campus," Bayne said.

In an unrelated case, Marshall Green, junior multimedia arts and science student, noticed his bike missing the week after Thanksgiving despite the protection of a heavy lock and chain. Green reported the missing property immediately upon realizing its disappearance. Campus police were unable to recover his bicycle.

"Once I do get another bike, it certainly won't be left outside," Green said.

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Fill 'er up



TREY BOUVIER - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fuel delivery driver Mitch Mechanic readies his rig for the road. He began his career at Blue Ridge Biofuels four years ago as a volunteer

UNC Asheville pumps green into the gas tank

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With Production and distribution of biofuels increasing exponentially worldwide, UNC Asheville is priding itself on being a patron of this global change.

Yuri Koslen, UNCA transportation planner and coordinator, initiated the switch in 2005 for all campus service vehicles that have diesel engines to run off biodiesel indefinitely.

"We made the decision because it was the right thing to do," Koslen said. "The university, as well as everyone in the (Facilities Management) department has an environmental ethic to uphold."

There are a total of 19 campus-owned vehicles that run off at least a B20 blend of biodiesel. The alpha-numeral B20 represents the percentage of biofuel mixed with a

traditional petroleum-based diesel. A range of 0-100 can be used with any diesel engine. A standard blend for most biodiesel vehicles is B50, according to Koslen, who has worked with biofuels since 1998.

Many diesel vehicle owners think it is necessary to go through a conversion process with their vehicle in order to run biodiesel. This is a common misconception, according to Blue Ridge Biofuels' Community Relations Director, Brian Winslett.

Blue Ridge Biofuels is the sole provider of biofuels to Western North Carolina.

Charles McAbee, UNCA's head mechanic for 25 years, admits his original hesitation when Koslen suggested the switch, but is now a proponent of the change and anxious to keep the ball rolling.

"When synthetic oils and fuels came out, I was gun-shy," the 50-year-old Asheville native

said. "But it improves the life of the engine, improves miles per gallon and we're keeping it in the community."

Biodiesel is created using domestic, renewable resources that are high in lipid fat content. It is made through a chemical process called transesterification, separating the glycerin from the harvested resource and leaving behind two products usable as alternative fuel, according to the National Biodiesel Board Web site. The two products left behind are glycerin and methyl esters, the chemical name for biodiesel.

The number of available resources, or feedstocks, for creating biodiesel are many, and extensive research is being conducted to find the most efficient, inexpensive and environmentally friendly feedstocks to achieve rising demand.

Vegetable oil, ethanol, palm oil

"It's great because I can buy fuel from my friends, people I know and trust"

BRUCE HAUMAN
Biodiesel User

and soybeans are among the most popular but not necessarily the best.

Recent media coverage has uncovered evidence of the environmental and social impact of biofuel crops. In an article titled "How Biofuels Could Starve the Poor," released in the May/June

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This Week



Sports

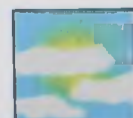
Bulldogs take a bite out of Charleston Southern and Coastal Carolina, page 4.



Arts Etc.

Telepath rocks The Orange Peel with their Middle Eastern-inspired jams, page 8.

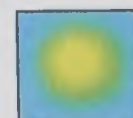
Weather



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