



PHOTOS BY KATIE BACHMEYER - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Left: A student uses a new "smart card" machine installed on dorm entrances. Above: Students preparing to enter Mills Hall. A smoking ban and changes in the security process to enter dorms are among several changes being implemented this semester.

Students adjust to changes in health plan

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Staci Thomas, freshman student, suffered a medical emergency when she was 23. "I was at work one day and all of a sudden there was this sharp pain in my abdomen," Thomas, now 25, said. "My gall bladder had stopped working. I developed pancreatic and so I was in the hospital for 10 days."

The ordeal cost more than \$80,000 by the time she went home.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina insured Thomas at the time, but the Weaverville resident said she wanted to switch to Pearce and Pearce, the South Carolina-based company that won the bid to be UNC Asheville's provider. Under Pearce and Pearce, Thomas would receive about the same coverage without paying the \$250 monthly fee she owed to Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina.

UNC Asheville launched its required health insurance coverage this semester. Pearce and Pearce breaks a year's coverage into two terms: fall and spring through summer. Each term requires one payment: \$611 for one student, \$1,512 for a student and his or her spouse and \$926 per child each year.

"I'm a big supporter of the school's mandatory insurance," Thomas said. "It's a lot cheaper."

The student insurance program covers sports-related injuries up to \$3,000, up to \$100 a year for immunizations and 80 percent on abortions under \$500. It also covers appointments with approved doctors and counselors up to 80 percent, but only covers 60 percent for doctors outside the network.

Some of Pearce's coverage-exclusions include eye examinations, glasses or contacts, hearing exams and routine physicals. The insurance does not cover dental treatment but will pay for accidental injury to otherwise healthy teeth.

Students who verified their pre-existing health insurance may obtain prescription drugs, HIV testing and birth control through Student Health Services starting immediately.

"We referred people from the first day," said Dr. Rick Pyeritz, medical director of Student Health Services and family physician. Pyeritz, also an adjunct professor, expressed concern

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Secure and smoke-free

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Resident students arrived on campus this semester to temporarily crowded, smoke-free and "smart-card" accessible residence halls.

"I wouldn't characterize overcrowding as a bad thing," said Vollie Barnwell, director of housing operations. "I'm extremely happy we have as many students who want to live on campus as we do."

About 20 students remained in temporary housing as of Aug. 29, Barnwell said, down from a high of about 60 at the start of the semester.

Temporary spaces included rooms typically reserved solely for resident assistants and lounges. The guest apartment, usually reserved for university visitors, is also serving as a temporary residence for students. A few larger

double rooms are housing four residents.

Students often don't want to leave temporary housing for smaller rooms, according to Barnwell. Other students wait for rooms in specific dorms to become available and prefer waiting for their desired rooms rather than making another temporary switch.

While the housing shortage affects only some residential students, they must adjust to legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly, which bans smoking in public university residence halls.

"It sucks, I can't just light up in my room, especially when it rains," said, Ben McMechen, freshman student, as he smoked at an uncovered picnic table near Founders Hall Sunday.

McMechen, a Founders resident, joined one of the Facebook.com groups

dedicated to "DSAF," the designated smoking area of Founders. Residents regularly crowd the table, designed to seat eight, throughout the day and into the early morning.

"It has its pros. We've got our own little social group now," said Jeremy Freeman, freshman student and fellow DSAF member and smoker.

Barnwell said health and safety concerns prompted the legislation.

"Smoke-free residence halls are a big thing on a lot of levels. Obviously it does impact ease with which students can control their own environment," he said. "It does make it more inconvenient to smoke but it definitely improves air quality and also safety, because so many fires are caused by smoking accidents."

Housing also decided to replace most of the key code units this summer with card entry systems

in order to resolve safety issues in residence halls, Barnwell said.

New "smart cards" allow residents to enter dorms by holding their cards a few inches away from sensors at building entrances.

Card access prevents non-residents from entering buildings better than codes, which residents can easily share with friends, according to Barnwell.

"Card access definitely gives a higher level of security," he said. "It will never be 100 percent secure, but it keeps somebody from walking out of the Botanical Gardens and into the building."

The keypads installed last year provided an interim step, getting residents into the habit of doing something to enter the dorms, Barnwell said.

Sophomore student Elizabeth Smith said card access makes her feel safer in the residence halls.

"I also love that you don't have to take your OneCard out of your pocket," the Founders resident said.

Smith said more safety measures would help her feel safer.

"It can be creepy walking all the way around Founders late at night when the HSU is closed," she said. "I would love it if there was a back entrance to the building. It would save time and make me feel much safer late at night."

Installing card access points and distributing new cards is an expensive and timely process, Barnwell said.

Nine doors in West Ridge, South Ridge, Governor's Hall, Mills Hall and Founders Hall have card access. Governors Village's four halls have keypad access.

Installing card access to these nine doors cost

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Power Vote looks to engage UNCA

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Braving a steady rain, 25 students met Tuesday, Aug. 26, in Highsmith University Union to jumpstart the local efforts of Power Vote, a national movement aimed at rallying youth around energy and environmental issues.

"The idea of Power Vote is to get all the youth in every region mobilized," said sophomore Rhys Baker, who is organizing the movement in Buncombe County.

Baker, 20, began the meeting by asking each student why they were interested in volunteering for Power Vote. The stat-

ed reasons ranged from serious to lighthearted, including one student who said she didn't want her kids "to die a hot and miserable death."

"This is a really good opportunity with the November election coming up because we're really in a key time," said junior political science student Kasey Baker. "Just look at the global warming effects that are going on with massive hurricanes, etc. You can go down the list."

The Buncombe County chapter of Power Vote intends to collect 3,000 signatures, building towards a national goal of having

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MEG RAWLS - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Rhys Baker, sophomore student, high fives Ellie Johnston, senior environmental studies student, at an Aug. 26 meeting of the UNCA chapter of Power Vote.

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