

Economist predicts economic growth despite poor job market

By Michelle Peck

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With a record audience of 400 people, UNC Asheville's 25th annual Economic Crystal Ball Seminar filled Lipinsky Auditorium as students and Asheville residents listened to the predictions of our current economic recession.

"By the end of this year, we will be out of this recession; we will see positive economic growth at the end of the fourth quarter," economist David W. Berson said. "The bad news is things like unemployment rate won't look like it's over. The unemployment rate could get to 9.5 percent or so at its peak and could go a little higher."

Noted economists Berson and James F. Smith spoke. The economics department and Parsec Financial sponsored the seminar, which began with a reception, followed by the speakers and a question-and-answer period.

The event was free and open to the public.

Master of Ceremonies for the night economics professor Joe Sulock, introduced the speakers, and said Berson and Smith are to economics as Huntley and Brinkley were to newspapers.

Michael E. Bruder, senior financial advisor at Parsec Financial, attended the event and offered advice to students trying to pay loans.

"Don't get into anymore debt, no cred-



Sulkiro Song - Staff Photographer

Sophomore Andrew Wertheim, senior Nermin Vehabovic and junior James Phillips mingle at the 25th annual Economic Crystal Ball reception at Lipinsky Auditorium last Thursday.

it cards," Bruder said. "Small amounts can help. For instance, Starbucks coffee, wonderful coffee, but if you give it up, take that money and put it aside, you may be able to use that money for monthly payments."

Bruder received his undergraduate degree in social work and a master's in counseling from Western Carolina Uni-

versity, but now he works with money management.

"Right now to pay down debt, do not take any risks. Put your money in a savings account, money market, checking account or a certificate. You're not after getting a high interest if your interested in keeping the money safe," Bruder said.

Our society says to spend, spend, spend, according to Bruder, and students should not fall into the habit of spending.

Berson of the PMI Group explained to the audience his cell phone was on vibrate, waiting for the *New York Times* to call him for an interview.

Later he walked off the stage, and took the call, as James F. Smith was talking.

"The recession that we are in now began in December of 2007," Berson said while talking about his last forecast.

The economic outlook portion of the program focused on inflation, employment, interest rates and the strength of the dollar and housing market.

"We have a huge excess of inventory of homes for sale. The last thing we want is for builders to build more," Berson said.

Berson, a former vice president and chief economist at Fannie Mae, was the president of the National Association of Business Economists. He was also chief financial economist at Wharton Econometrics Forecasting Associates and a visiting scholar with the Federal Reserve.

"Home sales have probably already bottomed," Berson said. "The trend is now upward. The housing market can recover before the job market does, but it usually doesn't recover strongly until the job market does."

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UNCA gains alternative, above-ground fuel tanks this summer

By Hannah Doyle

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Thanks to a \$70,000 Mobile Source Emissions Reduction Grant from the North Carolina Division of Air Quality, the UNC Asheville Transportation Office will begin construction this summer on three above-ground fuel storage tanks and 2,000 gallons of B50 (50 percent biodiesel, 50 percent petroleum diesel), 2,000 gallons of E10 (10 percent ethanol, 90 percent gasoline) and 1,000 gallons of E85 (85 percent ethanol, 10 percent gasoline).

"In light of budget cuts, it's really important that we try to get as much funding available. We would not be able to do this project if not for this grant," said Chris Miller, environmental health and safety

officer. "Back in 2005 state legislature required that we reduce dependency on petroleum by 20 percent. We're already at 38 percent, so this project will help us further that goal."

Currently, the transportation office runs its vehicles on B20 (20 percent biodiesel, 80 percent petroleum diesel). The grant money will first replace the two aging 300 gallon tanks (one diesel, one gasoline) with three above-ground fuel dispensers for a centralized fueling station outside of the Sam Millar Complex.

UNCA has 84 vehicles for university use, 14 of which are Flex Fuel (E85) vehicles; four of these use B20 and belong to the transportation office. Vehicles that currently burn regular gasoline will start out on E10, and as the demand for the E85

motor fleet increases, the transportation office will phase out of E10 and move to E85, according to Miller.

"With this new fuel dispensing system, it integrates directly with Raleigh's motor fleet fueling system, so it will allow not only our motor fleets but also those from other state institutions in Raleigh and other areas to come here and use our system," Miller said. "There are not many alternative fuel stations across the state available to alternative fuel vehicles. Ours will allow other areas like city of Woodfin, city of Asheville, city of Weaverville, town of Weaverville and more to utilize this system."

The transportation office ordered the grant in March. Senior environmental studies student Corey Scheip, who interned at

the transportation office this summer, researched, developed plans and wrote the application.

"We asked for \$96,000 for an ethanol, biodiesel and compressed natural gas station," Scheip said. "The ethanol and biodiesel got approved, the CNG rejected. This is the first time UNC Asheville has received a Mobile Source Emissions Reduction Grant, which is put out every year."

Miller plans to keep the fueling station on campus open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. It will be the first alternative fueling station in north Asheville, open to other state and local government agencies and to the public. The station allows the possibility of sig-

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