

WNC campuses

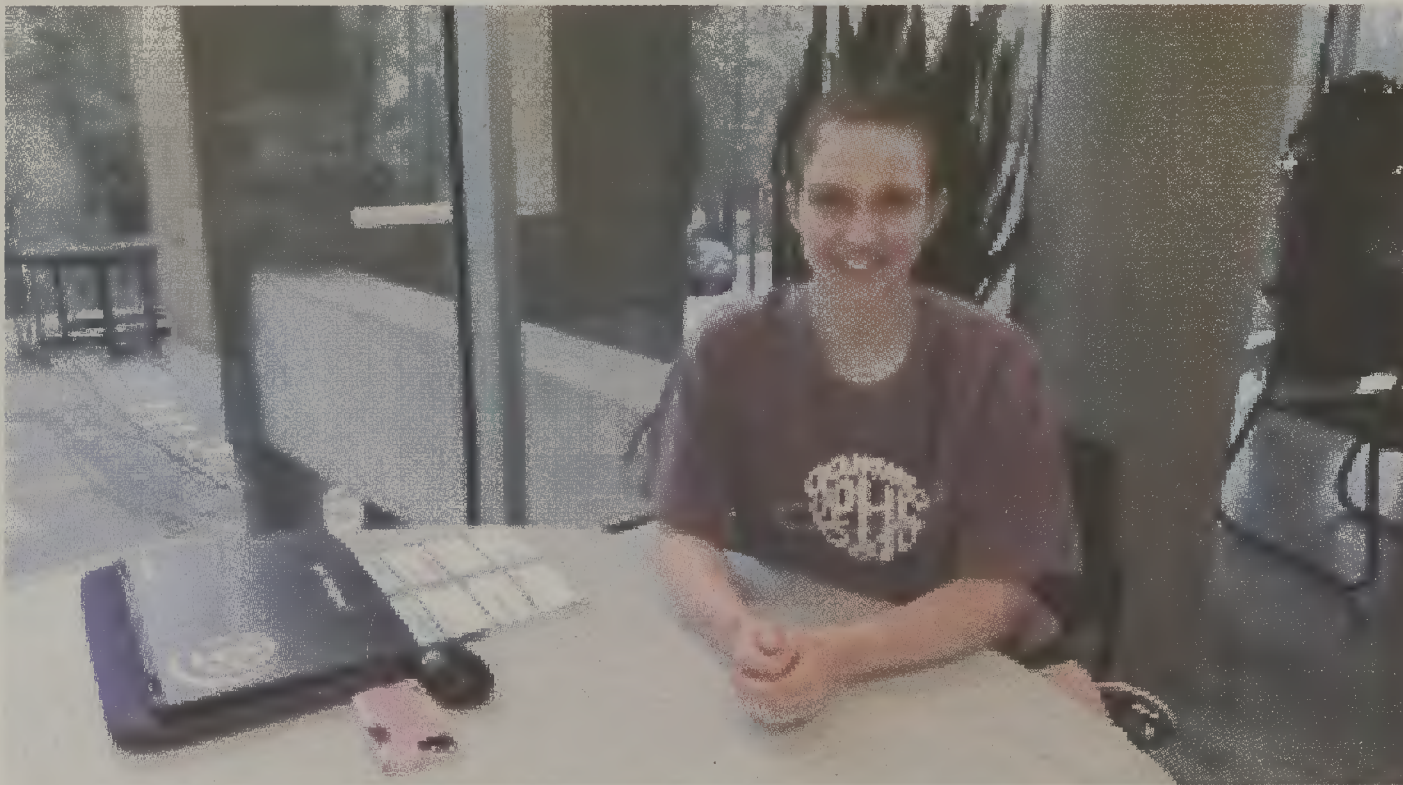


PHOTO BY LANCE HICKEY

Darcy Davis believes the environmentally sensitive community around Asheville draws students to the area.

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most biodiverse areas in the world," North Carolina Arboretum Marketing and Public Relations Manager Whitney Smith said. "There's just an abundance of plant species, tree species, anything natural in the world here."

Students have the opportunity to experience this diversity by just stepping outside, Smith said.

"In terms of just overall mental health, hiking and exercise and even just walking is just one of the great benefits to mental health," said Smith, a graduate of Appalachian State University, another state institution in the mountains. "They (students) have that opportunity here."

Established in 1986, the North Carolina Arboretum is currently governed by a board of directors appointed by the UNC Board of Governors, the UNC President, the North Carolina Governor, the Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore of the North Carolina Senate, according to public records.

"We have a lot of recreational opportunities here (at the Arboretum)," Smith said. "We have 10 miles of hiking and biking trails. We have over 65 acres of cultivated garden areas for people that are specifically interested in horticulture

and landscape and with that we also offer educational opportunities for both adults and youth to learn more about the world around us. We offer 70 classes for our adult education program per semester."

The North Carolina Arboretum currently serves more than 26,000 students annually.

"In order to live an active life you have to, you know, be active and be in a place that's active," said 24-year-old Tyler McCart, a senior mathematics student at UNC Asheville. "I believe that the mountains provide that for you with being able to go on hikes, being able to go on long walks, wherever that may be."

The resources available to students on college campuses across the mountains also give students another incentive to attend college in the mountains, McCart said.

"I can honestly say before attending UNCA I never once went on hikes, never once went camping, never once did anything (outdoors)," McCart said. "Going to UNC Asheville definitely influenced my different hobbies."

According to university records, out-of-state students make up 10 percent of UNCA student enrollment for the spring 2017 semester.

"I think with being a student, you can't

always be a student," said Darcy Davis, a sophomore biology student at UNCA from Toledo, Ohio. "First of all, you have to have outlets. Being so close to the mountains and, specifically the Blue Ridge Mountains, it really allows you for an outlet just to connect with nature and be more rounded, be environmentally cautious and appreciate what's around you."

The idea of living in an area warmer than Ohio largely convinced Davis to attend college in WNC.

Davis said she would recommend out-of-state students to attend college in WNC because of its diverse ecosystems.

In 1986, the UNC Board of Governors instituted a new policy requiring a cap of out-of-state freshman enrollment at 18 percent of total enrollment, excluding the North Carolina School of the Arts, according to records.

The policy, though, does not apply to transfer or exchange students.

Students are not limited or confined to the area, but proximate to other impactful cities, enhancing the student experience, Davis said.

"With the mountain environment you get a lot of diverse ecology," Davis said. "We can appeal to many different students and climates."

Eclipse

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off the coast of North Carolina. During the eclipse the mainland was visible from the island just off the coast until darkness blocked it from view.

"The eclipse was coming from the Southwest, so we could see the mainland go dark right before we went dark," Dennison said.

To see his second total solar eclipse, Dennison and his son traveled to Schorndorf, Germany, in 1999.

"It was cloudy and we had to drive because we weren't sure where the clear weather was going to be," Dennison said. "We got on the German highway, called the Autobahn, and drove like mad to get to a place where we would have a chance of seeing it."

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— Brian Dennison

They drove to a field near the border of Germany and France to view the eclipse. The clouds dispersed right before the eclipse took place, giving them the opportunity to see the full event as well as take pictures.

"It is so unusual to have it go dark in the middle of the day. It is an exceptional circumstance when everything is thrown into darkness for about two minutes," Dennison said.