

Briefly...

Gay Christian Activist to Lecture Wednesday

The Rev. Mel White will lecture on "Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America" at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the Warwick Center Ballroom.

A follower of the "soul force" principles of Gandhi and King, White received the American Civil Liberties Union's National Civil Liberties Award in 1997 in recognition of his efforts in the struggle for justice for sexual minorities. In 1999, White and partner, Gary Nixon, founded Soulforce Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to teaching and applying the principles of non-violence in the cause of justice, not just for sexual orientation, but "for all God's children who suffer injustice and discrimination."

Media Rally on Bond Referendum Tomorrow Night

A 12-stop bond issue media campaign will conclude at the Cape Fear Community College tomorrow night. Thirteen community college presidents and three university chancellors, including Chancellor James R. Leutze, toured the southeast yesterday and today to raise awareness of the Community College and University Higher Education Bond Issue that will be voted on during the Nov. 7 general election.

The rally will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the Schwartz Center.

Education Technology Fair Thursday & Friday

More than 50 companies will display and demonstrate the latest educational software and hardware for students from preschool through college-age at the Coastal Education Technology Fair Thursday, Oct. 5, and Friday, Oct. 6, in the Warwick Center ballroom.

UNCW offers non-credit classes online

HEATHER GRADY
STAFF WRITER

UNCW recently unveiled WebU, a newly expanded program of over 1,200 on-line, non-credit classes focusing on continuing education students.

The topics for study cover a broad range of subjects such as personal finance, computing and personal development, among others. Also available are certification preparation classes for Novell Service Administrators, Cisco, Lotus and Microsoft Engineering.

"WebU enables UNCW to share educational opportunities with a diverse audience, providing public access to online courses to improve job skills, develop professionally and enrich their lives," said Woody Sutton, associate director of UNCW's Community Outreach Services.

Prior to registering for a class, potential students can read a biographical sketch of the instructor, view evaluations from past students and receive a list of the technical specifications to run the program. There is also a list of frequently asked questions, a search directory, a demonstration option and a list of supplemental reading materials to aid in the course.

The instructor releases two lessons each week and students have up to 10 days to complete the lessons. The classes often span a six-week period, however, an additional six-week period can be allowed without charge, according to the students' lifestyle needs.

"Our goal is to better provide services to our community," said Michelle R. Howard-Vital, vice

chancellor for Public Service and Extended Education.

The cost for enrollment ranges from \$69 to \$129. The cost is typically more for certification classes.

The program, which began under the auspices of the Division of Public Service and Extended Education, has been in conceptual stages over the last few months.

"WebU began two years ago in a pilot phase. During this phase we learned that most of the students are highly motivated, self-directed learners," said Hunter Thompson, director of Community Outreach Services.

Student evaluations have been a large element in determining the efficiency of the program, even since the earliest stages. Statistics

showed that 63 percent of past students were interested in taking another on-line class according to Sutton.

"Ninety-three percent of the overall evaluations were favorable," said Thompson. "We thought that was a positive number. We wanted to ensure that the quality was high, so that student success rates would be as well."

WebU is also accessible to international students because it offers capabilities for

Chinese, French, German, Italian, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish native speakers.

According to Howard-Vital, as the program expands, more courses will be offered depending on the needs articulated by the community.



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