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Split graduation ceremony planned for spring

TODD VOLKSTORF
STAFF WRITER

Spring commencement for undergraduates will take place twice in the same day for the first time in school history.

The decision to split the ceremony came near the end of last semester. One ceremony will take place for the College of Arts and Sciences and another will take place for the nursing school, the education school and the business school combined.

The main reason behind the decision to split the ceremony was class size, as the spring 2000 commencement proved too crowded. A single ceremony that size resulted in each graduate only getting three tickets to attend, which caused minor problems with ticket scalping.

Terry Curran, dean of students, told the *Seahawk* in November of last year that the number of people in Trask Coliseum for the May 2000 ceremony probably exceeded fire codes. Having the two ceremonies will free up space inside Trask Coliseum and each student will receive six tickets. Extra tickets will be available to those who need them that day.

Another debated commencement issue was whether or not students would walk to the stage and receive their diplomas. Mary Crookes, UNCW events coordinator, said



that part of the ceremony would remain the same. Graduate students will walk at their main ceremony as they always have, undergraduates will not.

According to Crookes, something new this year is a professional photographer who will take pictures of each student as they walk in the processional. The pictures will be available for purchase over the Internet.

Crookes said the different departments within the university are having their ceremonies on the Friday before commencement. In the past the departmental events have taken place after the main ceremony. Although

Crookes does not plan those particular events, she said she believes it is at those events where the undergraduates will walk; however, the decision to allow students to walk remains up to each department.

"Each department or school has been given the opportunity to have an event of their choosing on Friday," she said.

The Watson School of Education is still planning for its ceremony. Kathy Barlow, the education school's dean, is unsure if graduates will walk during their ceremony. "We're still working on that," Barlow said.

In addition to commencement, a light breakfast is scheduled for Saturday morning before the College of Arts and Sciences' commencement, which will take place at 9:30 a.m. A light lunch is scheduled before the 2:30 p.m. afternoon ceremony, which is for the professional schools.

According to Crookes, the department of student affairs is sponsoring an all-graduate event Friday night before commencement. The event will take place at 8 p.m. in the Warwick Center and all students, families, faculty and staff are invited. The department is still planning the event, but there are likely to be hors d'oeuvres and music.

Should the "Morning after Pill" be over the counter?

HEATHER GRADY
ASSIST. NEWS EDITOR

"Sex sells," but will safer sex sell—right off drug store shelves?

That question was posed to the Food and Drug Administration on Valentine's Day when over 60 medical groups and women's health advocates filed a petition in order to make emergency contraception pills (ECP), also commonly known as "the morning after pill," accessible over the counter.

ECPs, first approved by the FDA in prescription form in 1997, must be taken within 72 hours to be effective. Advocates for the drug's crossover into non-prescription status argue that the women who would be most benefited by the drug are often unable to gain access to physicians within the time period necessary for effective results.

"The reality is that accidents don't just occur during doctor's office hours. They occur on the weekends when doctors are pretty hard to come by," Judith DeSamo said, president and CEO of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, according to reports from the U.S. Newswire.

The makers of Plan B, a popular brand of ECPs, are set to begin government-sanctioned testing on hundreds of women in hopes of further persuading the FDA of market demand for the pills, according to associated press reports. Proponents hope to see

ECPs hit the shelves as soon as next year.

According to information provided by Planned Parenthood, widespread national use of the ECPs could prevent \$1.7 million unplanned pregnancies and over 800,000 abortions every year.

"We'd love to see [emergency contraception] go over the counter. It's very safe. We want to make it as available as possible," said Dana Blackman, director of education and community development for Planned Parenthood.

"I think that [making the pills accessible without a prescription] would be a good thing. I think it should be more widely available," said Ashleigh Rouse, a junior at UNCW.

The pills work in the same manner as prescription birth control pills; however, the differences lay in dosing amounts. Most commonly, they prevent the woman from ovulating. If ovulation has already occurred, then the pills work to thicken the cervical mucus to interfere with fertilization and prevent sperm from entering the uterus. However, if fertilization has occurred as well, the ECPs then prevent the fertilized egg from implanting into the uterine lining, thus eventually removing the egg from the body, according to Dr. Caroline Clements, assistant professor of psychology, who teaches the university's human sexual behavior course.

It is this last method of averting pregnancy that most concerns anti-abortion advocates.



"These activists are saying a woman is not pregnant because implantation has not taken place. This deliberately ignores the significant segment of the scientific community and public that hold that life begins at fertilization—not implantation. Abortion advocates are pulling the wool over women's eyes by obscuring the fact that the morning after pill causes a living human being to die when the [fertilized egg] can not implant in the uterus," said Dr. David Stevens, Christian Medical Association executive director. Planned Parenthood, as well as other groups backing the petition, maintains that ECPs are not in any way equivalent to an abortion, asserting that some pro-life activists are misleading the public with such charges.

Others, such as Dr. Albert Abrons, medi-

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