



# The Seahawk

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## UNCW Seniors join Graduation Pledge Alliance

TODD VOLKSTORF  
STAFF WRITER

A national movement urging graduating seniors to think proactively about their personal, social and environmental values relating to future employment has arrived at UNCW.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance (GPA) is committed to bringing social and environmental issues to the forefront of those making the transition from school to work force, according to UNCW Leadership Center literature.

The alliance asks seniors nearing graduation to voluntarily participate by taking a pledge that reads: "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work."

GPA was founded at Humboldt State University in California. Notable schools among the 27 that participate include Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Kansas. This is the first year UNCW has

participated, and so far it is the only school in North Carolina to participate.

Elizabeth Ervin, an English professor who also volunteers her time in the Leadership Center, came up with the idea of bringing GPA to UNCW. Ervin said she saw a story highlighting GPA in the *Morning Star* a couple of years ago

*"I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work." -Senior Pledge*

and thought it would be a good thing for the university to be affiliated with. She said she thinks it is important for students to recognize that social and environmental issues are always going to be a part of their personal as well as their professional lives.

"I think that it sets a very dangerous precedent for the Leadership Center to get

involved with political issues," senior John Kaiser said. "How far do you take it? I think it's an abuse of a part of the university that is publicly funded to promote a political issue."

Ervin said that last year, former UNCW student James Cooper and the Leadership Center conducted a survey to see what seniors thought of the idea and if they would participate. According to the survey, seniors said they would support a graduation pledge. Cooper has since graduated and Jessica Maher, a UNCW senior and lead fellow of the Activities and Leadership Center, continued promoting the idea of GPA.

"I think this is a logical step for the leadership center in terms of the social change model we follow - the social change model of leadership," Maher said.

According to Maher, an important component of the graduation pledge is for seniors to put into practice what they have learned about themselves and about dealing with groups. She said the seniors should put all that together and then into practice and "actually go out there and

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## Decline in economy results in fewer jobs

WES MELVILLE  
STAFF WRITER

An overwhelming number of reports have surfaced in the past several months concerning a rapidly declining economy. Although the reports have been ambiguous at times, a definite slowdown has been felt in the job market, especially for recent graduates. Students are finding it increasingly difficult to attract employers as a once plentiful market begins to dry up.

In a survey published recently by Collegegrad.com, which compiled statistics from over 2,100 colleges and universities, it was found that only 21 percent of seniors have accepted job offers as of March 2001.

"There has definitely been a slowdown in the economy, and that has resulted in a dramatic slowdown in the job market," said Thom Rakes, director of career services.

Rakes says that potential employers are carefully watching everything that is happening right now in the economy,

from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's interest rate cuts to overseas activity, such as recent troubles in Japan.

"Everyone is a little nervous," Rakes said. "It's all had a chilling effect on the job market."

While positions in computer science, education, and nursing are feeling no immediate threats and probably will not be affected, some other industries are taking a harder hit, such as manufacturing and retail.

"The manufacturing sector of the nation is in recession," said William Hall, a UNCW business professor who helps track economic activity in eastern North Carolina.

This might help to better explain why North Carolina has felt the burden of an injured economy.

"Of the 50 states, North Carolina has



the highest percentage of its labor force employed in manufacturing," Hall said. "The state is heavily dependent on manufacturing as both a source of employment and a source of income."

As employers witness the current

downturn, there has been an increase in lay-offs and some companies have introduced hiring freezes. Employers are becoming much more cautious.

Rakes refers to the new approach as "wait and see... they're not hiring early in the season," as oppose to a year ago when "they were hiring lots of people even if they weren't sure exactly what they're going to do with them."

This fading confidence among companies has really been felt at college campuses. With a decreasing demand

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