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Students' stories help fuel litigation

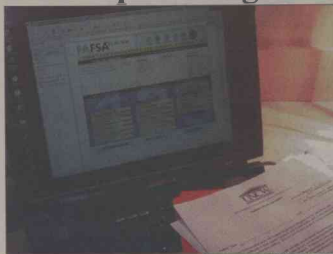
JOHN WHITE
STAFF WRITER

UNCW students denied financial aid due to drug convictions are getting a chance to tell their story to the ACLU.

The American Civil Liberties Union is gathering complaints from students across the nation who have lost federal financial aid due to drug convictions. The legal group is asking students to share their stories to begin litigation against the Higher Education Act of 1998, which bars federal financial aid to students who have been arrested for the sale or possession of illegal drugs.

"What we are basically doing is reaching out in various ways to college students and people involved with higher education through their financial aid offices to see how people are being affected by this law," said Graham Boyd, director for ACLU Drug Policy Litigation Project.

The ACLU said the law unfairly targets the poor, discriminates racially and denies higher education to people who have already been punished for their crimes. The organization is currently investigating repeating the controver-



Students answering yes to FAFSA question 35, which concerns drug convictions, will be denied financial aid under the 1998 HEA.

sial litigation.

"It is counter-productive in so many ways to deny someone higher education for drug use," Boyd said.

However, Mark Williams, director of UNCW's financial aid office, said the ACLU has put him in the position of having a conflict of interest by ask-

ing him to solicit claimants while simultaneously holding the position of state employee.

"As a state employee, my job is to uphold state and federal law, but on the other hand, I want students to have ac-

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Universities come together to create distance learning nursing project

COLLIN BECK

STAFF WRITER

UNCW's online nursing program is expanding to create an inter-university collaboration that is the first of its kind in the state and possibly the first in the nation.

Since 1998, UNCW's nursing program has included several distance learning programs, which allows nursing professionals to take the necessary courses to obtain their Bachelor of Science. Now, through a program collaboration with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and with a \$25,000 grant from the UNC office of the president, some students will find it even easier to continue their nursing education.

UNCW's and UNCC's collaboration involves expanding the nursing courses offered at both universities and then creating four new core distance education classes. Both universities will accept the

courses, so students will receive credit whether they graduate from UNCW or UNCC.

The need for baccalaureate-prepared nurses is critical. Research has shown that nurses who have a bachelor's degree provide care that is more comprehensive in nature, said Dr. Betty Glenn, associate dean for academic affairs at UNCW.

"We wanted to create more flexibility and access, and work with those individuals (that wished to obtain their BS)," Glenn said.

According to data from the North Carolina Center for Nursing, 68 percent of the 70,000 registered nurses working in NC have associate degrees in nursing. Nurses who have associate degrees may be granted the same opportunities as graduates of a baccalaureate program, however, the majority of health-related agencies wish to hire nurses with advanced education to fill managerial positions, Glenn said.

Glenn, along with Dr. Virginia Adams, dean of UNCW's School of Nursing, and Dr. Sonya Hardin, assistant professor at UNCC, have already created the first of four core class, leadership and management.

"By combining our resources, UNC Charlotte and UNC Wilmington are able to offer an online program that further enhances access to education," said Dr. Sue Bishop, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions at UNCC.

Several students said that the online nursing classes are really beneficial.

"Nursing is so self-initiated. We get out (of the nursing program) what we want," said senior Misty Stoker.

Additionally, being a student in an online course is like having a one-on-one student-teacher relationship, Glenn said.

"We find that students are more likely to ask certain questions through e-mail or chat groups," she said.

Economic jump helps graduates

MOLLY HANDLER

STAFF WRITER

UNCW graduates should look forward to new economic growth, as predicted by professors in the UNCW Cameron School of Business.

Claude Farrell and William W. Hall forecasted a 4.5 percent growth in the Wilmington area economy during this year. The increase lies in contrast to the past two years, which have shown declines in the national economic growth. During the second half of 2001, the economy dropped another 3 percent. Most experts blame the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks for the devastating blow to consumer confidence. Confidence, however, is just starting to be restored.

"There is nothing to prevent us from rebounding from our current economic situation. Historically, markets have always come back stronger after periods of slow or nonexistent growth," said Luther Lawson of the Cameron School of Business. "Further, our economic institutions are as strong as ever, particularly our financial institutions. Interest rates are at an all time low and will serve to stimulate the economy, once confidence is restored." Lawson said. He is also optimistic about the future for America's economy.

This rise could lead to better opportunities for UNCW graduates in December and for those students set to walk in May.

Growth in the humanities as a result of Sept. 11 could also offer more opportunities to UNCW students, Hall said.

"(We are seeing) growing opportunities for students with degrees in history, philosophy, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology and modern languages. We need a better understanding of foreign cultures," Hall said.

The local growth mimics a bigger national trend, said both Hall and Farrell.

The local growth will also boost the surrounding counties and translate into a \$7.1 billion annual increase.