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## Marijuana misdemeanor

SARAH BRODERS & REBECCA RILEY

THE SEAHAWK

Possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana is a class 3 misdemeanor unless it is broken into smaller bags.

According to David Donaldson, the chief of the UNCW police department, less than half an ounce is a class 3 misdemeanor. Between half an ounce and one and a half ounces is a class 1 misdemeanor, and over one and a half ounces is a felony. You can get up to two years in prison for a misdemeanor, he said.

Paraphernalia possession is considered at least a class 1 misdemeanor. "The penalty can actually be greater for having paraphernalia," Donaldson said.

Captain Pulley of the New Hanover County Sheriff's Department added, "If it's broken up into nickel or dime bags separately, then it's a felony."

"We encounter marijuana fairly regularly," Donaldson said. He said that this year, from Jan. 8 to Feb. 12, there were 12 cases of marijuana possession on campus, and 5 cases of paraphernalia possession on campus.

In fact, police arrest more people nationwide for marijuana possession than any other drug.

"Our intent is to solve the problem ... you are going to be referred to the Dean of Students, then the question is, are there going to be criminal charges," Donaldson said.



Courtesy of www.usdoj.gov

Marijuana's criminal status in N.C. recently decreased.

The widespread use has led many to believe that marijuana could possibly be legalized.

"With the current crop of politicians in North Carolina, it's not likely that marijuana will be legitimately decriminalized, but the possibility is there for the near future," said Paul Ricardo, a spokesman for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

Almost 47 percent of Americans said that they had tried marijuana at least once, according to a survey conducted by CNN in October of 2001.

North Carolina State University's student paper, *the Technician* conducted a poll last November and found that 68 percent of N.C. State students felt that marijuana should be legalized while only 32 percent felt that it should not.

"Marijuana is so commonly used it might as well be legal. I don't think any crime or death

rates will go through the roof if it were decriminalized. I think people will get used to it," junior Chris Waldrop said.

An issue of particular relevance for UNCW students is a statute that prohibits students with drug convictions from receiving financial aid.

When asked if it would be fair to provide a student who had a previous drug offense with financial aid, junior Heather Farrow said, "Yes; people deserve a second chance. If someone slipped up once and got busted, it could mess up their whole life because sometimes it's impossible to go to school without financial aid."

"I can understand not granting scholarships and grants to drug offenders," Farrow said. "If they can reimburse left over aid for drugs it creates a problem. I work hard for my money to go to school with, it would piss me off to see someone smoking theirs away."

## Tuition, sales tax on the rise again

LORRIE LALIBERTE & SARAH BRODERS

THE SEAHAWK

The N.C. State House voted April 17 to increase tuition 5 percent for the entire University of North Carolina system, and to extend a half-cent sales tax for two more years.

The two proposals were made in hopes of making up for the \$1.68 billion shortfall the General Fund is expecting for 2003-04. The General Fund provides UNC schools with a substantial portion of their funding, so if the General Fund falls short, then tuition will likely be affected.

The Senate must now vote on the proposed budget.

Ken Grogan, special assistant to the UNC General Assembly originally enacted the one-half cent sales tax in 2001. It was a temporary measure to raise additional income so that the state budget would be balanced. The tax was implemented Oct. 16, 2001 and is due to expire June 30, 2003.

Grogan said the tax money is put into the state's General Fund.

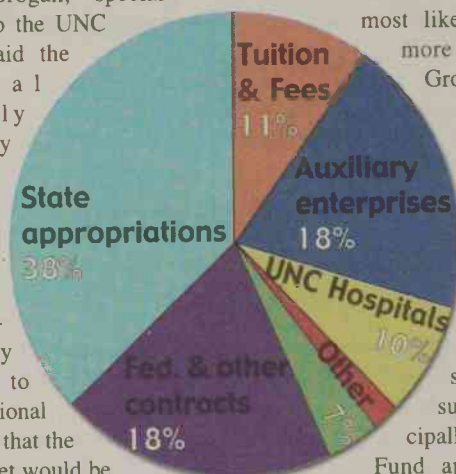
However, the tax is not earmarked for any particular agency or institution, it just goes into a "pot," as Grogan called it.

The sales tax revenue and other taxes provide \$460.7 million for the General Fund, said Jeff Davies, the UNC system's vice president for finance.

The entire UNC system receives close to \$1.77 billion in state appropriations, which is 37.7 percent of the system's \$4.7 billion budget. UNC would lose \$56 million if the tax were to expire, Davies said. About 1,500 jobs would be lost, including 650 faculty positions.

"We are concerned that if the sales tax is not extended, the most likely result is more cuts," Grogan said.

This would most likely also have an effect on tuition, because "the UNC system schools are supported principally by General Fund appropriations from the state and tuition and fees from the students," Grogan said. If there is less money in the General Fund, then tuition will have to make up for it.



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