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Terrorist attacks affect UNCW

KATIE TRAPP

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The U.S. Department of State's Web site offers the following advice for college students traveling abroad for Spring Break: "Most [students] will have a safe and enjoyable adventure, but for some the trip will become a nightmare." Two UNCW students experienced both extremes on their recent spring break trip to Europe.

Last week in Madrid, 10 bombs exploded on four commuter trains at 7:30 a.m. March 11. More than 200 people were killed and 1,647 people were wounded. It was the deadliest attack on a European city since World War II.

Seniors Bryan McDowell and Matt Cottet spent four days in Madrid over break, one of those days being March 11.

During the attacks, the two students were safely asleep in their hostel.

"There was an uneasy feeling in the city. You heard sirens all over the place, and everybody was on edge throughout Thursday," McDowell said.

Due to cancelled trains, travelers had to find other modes of transportation. "We decided not to use public transportation until Friday when we had to go to the airport," McDowell said. "All the trains with destination to Madrid Atocha were cancelled on Thursday, but the majority of



Courtesy of Bryan McDowell

Spaniards gather in Puerta del Sol to protest terrorism after the train explosions March 11 in Madrid. Many UNCW students were in Madrid for the attacks.

trains ran on Friday."

"I didn't want to use public transportation after the attacks," Cottet said.

With Prime Minister elections in three days, the city worked hard to settle down Madrid. "Madrid officials decided that they would let people ride the metro for free Friday afternoon so that was an effort to help the city return to normal," McDowell said.

The attacks spawned protests and moments of silence in the following days. "We were in Puerta del Sol on Friday for the 15 minutes of silence. Everybody was standing and facing the flags in Puerta del Sol," McDowell said. "Even taxi drivers stopped and

got out of their cars and people in stores stood silently. You could hear sirens in the background."

There are currently 34 UNCW students studying abroad in Spain, and all were accounted for after the explosions, including one student studying at La Universidad Europea de Madrid. "We have a lot of students in Spain and they are all safe," said Liz Adams, director of Education Abroad Programs.

Valerie Rider, a foreign languages and literatures lecturer at UNCW, took a group of 16 people from the university.

"I take groups of students to Spain every Spring Break,"

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Students' ratings of professors cause debate

KATHY GILLEN

STAFF WRITER

The popularity of Web sites used for rating teachers is growing and 484 UNCW professors are among over 300,000 college professors across the United States and Canada who have been rated on Ratemyprofessors.com, one of the national professor-rating Web sites.

Since 2002, the Web site has added over 2,000 schools to its listings. In the same time period, teacher ratings rose from about 200,000 to over 1.5 million.

Ratemyprofessors.com went online in 1999. The site's president and founder, John Swapeinski, created the site after a particularly bad experience with a professor in graduate school.

Professors are rated according to easiness, helpfulness, clarity and hotness. The teachers get an Overall Quality grade, which is the average of their helpfulness and clarity scores.

Icons denote whether the professor has a good, average or poor rating. If a student rates a teacher as "hot," they get a chili pepper icon.

Both students and faculty members say Internet grading sites like Ratemyprofessors.com aren't reliable indicators of a teacher's proficiency. These sites also raise issues of the accountability of the reviewers.

"Some of my colleagues ...

worry that all too often it winds up being either a popularity contest or an entertainment quotient," said Dan Noland, associate professor of English. "And so, somebody could be highly rated because they're fun to sit in class and listen to even though at the end of the semester, what have you done? On the other hand, suppose you conceive the notion that I needed to be punished, that I needed to be destroyed. Then you could get together with a few people on the computer versions and just artificially lower the average by giving the lowest possible score."

English and Spanish major Melinda Johnston also has concerns, "Whereas some people might find it beneficial to read things about a professor like good comments, there are also very inappropriate comments that aren't really important for other students to know, like if the teacher's hot or not."

Junior Charles Osgood thought the lack of regulations on the Internet discredited the site and those like it entirely. "You really can't go by what they say."

Many students agree, however, that finding a legitimate way to look at professors' ratings and comments by other UNCW students is a good idea. When a student is registering for a class that has several sections taught by different professors, it's a common

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