

Cheerleaders protest rules excluding body piercing and tattoos

by Angela Burrus and Garry Walton

There was a time when Andrea Harvey considered being a professional cheerleader after she graduated from college.

However, after spending two and a half years on the Viking team, the ECSU junior admits, "All of my spirit for cheering is lost."

Harvey is one of three members of the Viking squad to resign in protest of what they consider to be an excessively strict policy governing cheerleaders' behavior and personal appearance.

Nine of the twelve members of the team have signed a petition seeking "better treatment from the coach," according to Harvey.

They are protesting new rules restricting cheerleaders from having tattoos, hair extensions, or body piercing, which went into effect last semester. Cheerleaders are also prohibited from wearing flip flops or talking with any males while in uniform; they must also not weigh over 130 pounds. Harvey complained that cheerleaders' hairstyles must be approved by the coach before attending a game, and she criticized cheerleading coach Delphi Curtis for showing favoritism to certain squad members.

"She always wants everything her way," said Harvey. "If she doesn't like the person, she won't be on the team."

Coach Delphi Curtis said she does not believe she shows favoritism to any team members.

"I'm a second grade teacher. I've taught third, fourth or fifth grade. In your classroom. If you have two or three students and you ask them to do something the first time and they'll do it right, then you'll depend on them more than others, who might not do quality work."

"If you have more faith in one person that you'll know something will be done properly and you don't have to come back to two or three times and remind that person, I don't call that favoritism. I call that depending on someone who will do a job and get the job done well."

Curtis said the rules were already in place when she assumed the position of coach. They were put in place by the former coach Addie Griffin and by Dr. Edward McLean, Director of the Athletic Program. "And I didn't see any need to change those rules."

"I saw where I needed to revamp some of the rules to fit some of the girls who were present. I revised some of the rules because they weren't clear enough."

Curtis said she doesn't believe the

rules are too strict.

"Every rule that girls follow, if I were a cheerleader I would follow them, too. Anything I feel like I can do, then it's not hard for someone else to do. I'm a former cheerleader for Elizabeth City State University, and we had no rules. And a lot of things went on that shouldn't have gone on. If we'd have had rules and regulations, they wouldn't have gone on. So putting rules and regulations in place will eliminate problems before they start."

Curtis said the petition "was because they didn't want to follow rules. They felt like I was being too hard on them, and that I was treating them like second graders. Sometimes you are treated the way you act."

Fredrika Simons, captain of the cheerleading squad, said she found out about the petition when the students presented it to Curtis. "I don't feel like all the members of the squad were thinking when they signed the petition," she said. "When you sign your name to a petition you're stating that everything that's on the petition happened to you. Some of them said that the allegations that were on the petition didn't happen to them, yet they signed anyway. I felt like it wasn't fair to the coach, and I think they could have gone about it a different way."

Harvey complained that last semester team members had to travel a long distance to a game without stopping for food. After the game, they were confined to their hotel rooms unable to leave for anything, including food.

"I suffered a migraine headache because of this," Harvey said. "On the way back to school, the bus driver had to stop the bus four times for me to throw up."

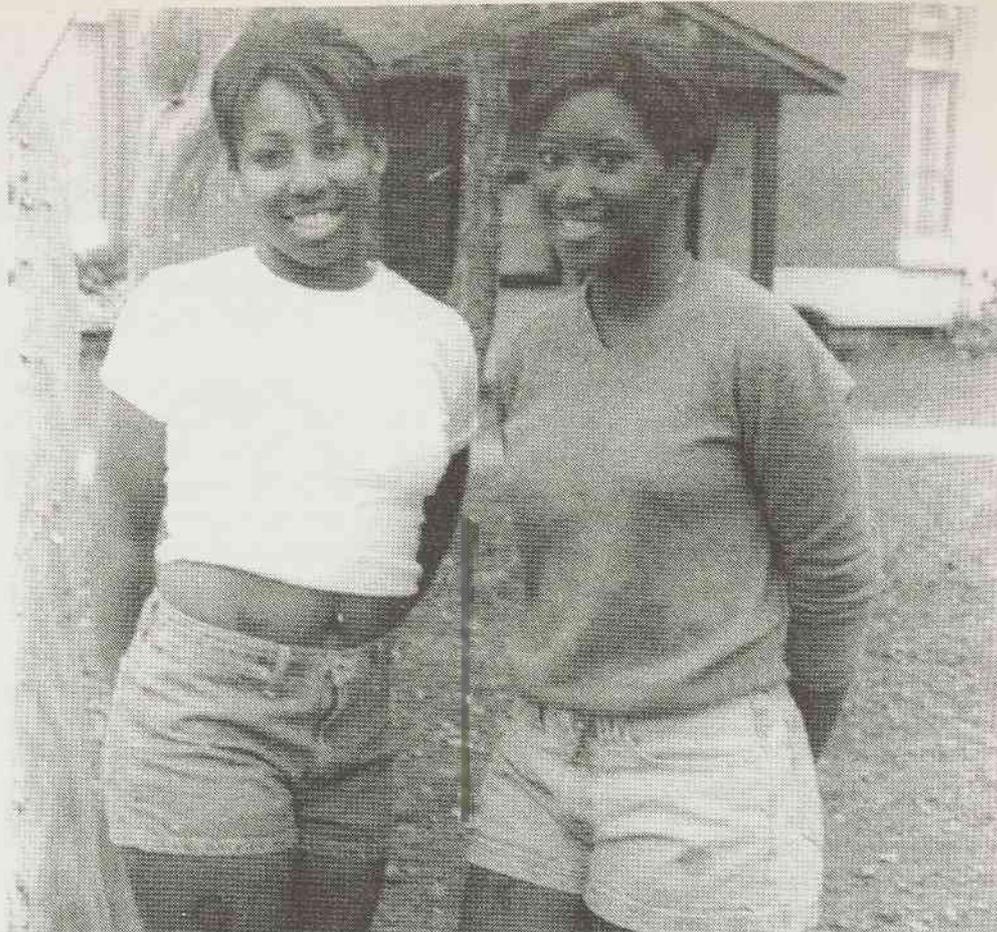
In recalling this incident, another former cheerleader, Yetta Brimage, an ECSU sophomore, said, "I could see that the coach was not too sympathetic towards Andrea."

On one particular night, Curtis said team members were violating their two a.m. curfew, and they were spotted walking toward Kentucky Fried Chicken to get some food.

"If something would have happened to one of them, then Dr. McLean as well as Student Affairs would have been on me, because I am responsible for their safety."

Simons said she supports Coach Curtis.

"I feel like our coach looks to us to be respectful young ladies. We have to show respect in order to get respect."



Franklin G. Scott, Jr. photo

Former cheerleader Andrea Harvey (at left) and Nadirah Shaw, a current cheerleader, pose with their tattoos, which are not allowed to be displayed under the new rules. Nine of the 12-member team signed a petition demanding better treatment.

ECSU receives OK for graduate program

by Tiffany Newell

The Board of Governors has authorized ECSU to begin planning for a new graduate program, which will offer a master's degree in elementary education.

The authorization is good for two years, according to Chancellor Dr. Mickey Burnim. And the faculty will decide what courses will be offered.

"The faculty is responsible for delivering the program," he added.

Burnim said the university is in "the first stages of the procedure."

When the program is established the courses will be geared toward elementary education. A faculty survey showed that about ten to fifteen students will enroll per year.

"There was quite a bit of interest on the Board of Trustees for ECSU to offer a graduate program," said Burnim.

The new master's degree program will enable people currently commuting to other campuses for graduate programs to get their degrees here, Burnim said. Burnim anticipates that the new program will attract top notch faculty as well as boost undergraduate enrollment.

Currently, graduate courses are offered at ECSU's Kermit E. White Center, through East Carolina University. According to Burnim, upon his arrival in September of 1995, the Board of Trustees was then in the process of requesting the authorization to establish a graduate program at ECSU.

"The graduate program will offer a little bit more prestige to the university and to the faculty teaching in it," Burnim said. "It will better serve our institution in its mission."

In order for a graduate program to be approved, a university must first petition the Board of Governors to begin planning the program.

After the plan has been approved, the Board of Governors must grant permission for the program to be established. Once the program is approved, the University can begin offering courses.

Burnim said the University had received no money for the program since it has not been established yet.

The first degree will be offered in education. Later degrees will correspond with the demand of graduate programs within the area, Burnim said.

The University will build graduate programs that focus on "the area of strength" in the undergraduate programs, said Burnim.

"If people in the area wanted a grad program in nursing we couldn't do that because we don't teach nursing. It would have to be something consistent with our curriculum at the undergraduate level, and something that's strong area for us."

"We always want to build graduate programs on solid strong undergraduate programs. I would look to areas of strength, perhaps to biological sciences and mathematics."