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Students explore Charleston

Conference focuses on multicultural issues

By Geraldine Ndiforchu
Echo co-editor

Members of the University Honors Program got the opportunity to attend the 23rd annual conference of the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC), March 9-11, in Charleston, SC.

"The conference was intellectually stimulating and gave us all a great deal to plan and work for," said Patsy Perry, director of N.C. Central University's Honors Program and professor of English.

NCCU students attending were Brent Collier, Jonovan Cooper, Tulani Giscombe, Bryan Mills, Jamil Spain, Lateefah Williams, Cheryl Woods, all freshman students.

Also participating in the conference were Keisha Roberson, sophomore; and Gloria Chambers, secretary to the University Honors Program.

The conference, which was hosted by the College of Charleston and the Citadel, focused on "Internationalizing: Multicultural Realities and Honors Programs." The topics at this seminar ranged from international and multicultural issues to religious concerns.

The keynote speaker at the SRHC conference was Alexander Sanders, president of the College of Charleston, who gave "an astounding luncheon presentation," said Perry. "His major point was sharing, the importance of sharing."

As for Jamil Spain, he came from the conference with a wonderful idea of putting together an honors program newsletter.

"He has committed himself to taking the leadership in producing a newsletter for the University Honors Program," said Perry.

"The conference was quite an experience during which I was first introduced to honors programs from other universities," said Spain.

According to Perry, the conference was very reaffirming in that many of the honors initiatives they have underway for NCCU are right at the heart of what university honors programs are doing across the region.

"We are very appreciative of the support we've received for the University Honors Program," said Perry. "Students gain invaluable experiences through their participation in co-curricular activities such as this SRHC meeting."



Top Photo: Basketmakers of the famous palmeto and pine needle baskets live in the low country of South Carolina near Boone Hall Plantation containers.

Right Photo: Tulani Giscombe and Cheryl Woods at the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston



Historic southern city has vibrant cultural heritage

By Geraldine Ndiforchu
Echo co-editor

Students attending the the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC) 23rd annual conference were fascinated by the rich arts and cultural heritage of Charleston, S.C.

"A highlight of the meeting had to do with the craftsmen of the low country of South Carolina, who worked in iron, creating the beauty of the iron-lace fences," said Patsy Perry, professor of English.

The basket makers who sit on roadsides making baskets are also artisans. They make beautiful varied containers, have a very easy-going but business-like demeanor and never object to anyone's tak-

ing pictures of them, said Perry.

The participants also took part in guided tours of some of the historic buildings of Charleston.

"We had a walking tour of historic Charleston during which Bob Stockton, adjunct professor of history at the College of Charleston and the Citadel, talked about the architecture, especially about the French and Dutch influences," said Perry.

Stockton also mentioned the large Barbadian population that has been in Charleston since the days of slavery, she said.

"I enjoyed the tour of the town of Charleston. It was beautiful. We visited the Old Slave Mart Museum," said student Cheryl Woods.

Co-ed files harassment complaint

Female alleges unwanted sexual advances against dorm adviser

By Danny Hooley
Campus Echo staff
and Terri Boykin
Echo Co-editor

A newly revised sexual harassment policy for North Carolina Central University is being tested in a still-undecided case involving a female student who filed a complaint last November against a male residential adviser in her dormitory.

The claimant, freshman honors student Meiewyn Claryse Avent, says she did not know where to go for help in September 1994 as she considered taking action against Kipchoge Ryan, a senior residence adviser at Annie Day Shepard Residence Hall. Avent says that by that time, Ryan had made two unwanted sexual advances towards her and that she had rebuffed him.

Formal complaint

At first, Avent consulted another residence adviser, who suggested that she speak to Annie Day Shepard's residence director Julia Williams. Avent said she decided not to do so and did not pursue the matter for more than a month. During this time the harassment continued, Avent said.

In early November, Avent wrote a formal complaint against Ryan. She submitted a letter dated Nov. 7 to his supervisor, Director of Residence Operations Phyllis Shumate. Shumate requested and received a more detailed letter a week later. In line with policy, she referred the matter to Mavis Lewis, director of human resources, and the school's affirmative action officer.

Lewis is responsible for overseeing all sexual harassment cases at NCCU, as well as training field representatives to mediate cases on an informal level. Most likely, those with complaints will contact a field representative first. If the rep does not find probable cause to mediate a complaint, or if a mediation session is either unsuccessful or not desired by the claimant, the claimant may then go to Lewis for determination of probable cause, as Avent did.

Lewis found probable cause, and she scheduled a formal hear-

ing. Following policy, she selected a panel of five people who, she says, make up "a cross-representation of the campus," excluding acquaintances of the claimant or of the accused, and including at least one student. This panel heard the case, and is supposed to submit a written recommendation to the chancellor within 10 working days.

If Lewis had found no probable cause to schedule a hearing, Avent could have gone directly to the chancellor. Claimants may also begin the process at any one of these levels, Lewis says.

Last September, NCCU's Board of Trustees endorsed the new policy, which has been distributed to students, faculty, and staff this semester. The old policy, which was revised in 1991, was not "as user friendly as it should be," says Lewis. She said that the new policy is more suited to those who wish to avoid a formal hearing "but want to tell somebody what's going on."

Mediation as an Option

Avent says she never considered mediation as an option. She asked for a formal hearing but had to wait until after the Christmas break for it to be scheduled and a panel to be selected by Lewis. According to Lewis, the time lapse was unavoidable.

"I got [Avent]'s letter in this department December 12," she says, "right before everyone was ready to leave for the holidays." Lewis says that she encouraged Avent to see her again when classes resumed in January, and that she told Avent to expect a letter from her in the meantime. Avent says that she did not receive the letter; it arrived at her parents' home in Charlotte after she had returned to school.

Avent did not follow up her complaint until the first week of February, according to Lewis. Lewis says that she met with Avent to make sure that she was still willing to go through with a hear-

See "Sexual Harassment"

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