

NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

More than just a press release NAACP builds NCCU chapter

BY CHRISTINE NEWMAN
ECHO STAFF WRITER

It is 9:30 am. The day has already begun for the Public Relations Department stationed on campus, located next to the Administration Building.

The office is cheery and bright; a large "Eagle's Eye View" photograph of campus hangs on the wall.

Work piles up on top of the secretary's desk. The phone rings continuously.

The staff is small—Carmelita Spicer, director of public relations, Robert Lawson, university photographer, and Cheryl George, a temp they hope to get on staff permanently.

Promoting a positive image of the University takes time, energy and a love for the job. Many may or may not be aware of the daily goals, obstacles and achievements of this department or know what the Office of Public Relations do.

Public Relations enhances the reputation of the University through the media, students and staff. The department mediates between the university and its constituencies.

Spicer and her staff meet with media to get positive media coverage. Public relations makes sure NCCU is covered and covered fairly.

Spicer says recent media coverage, for instance, would be the recent fall convocation. Holding up a copy of the Durham Herald Sun that has a big photograph of alumni in full regalia, Spicer says that NCCU's convocation attracted more coverage than Duke University's convocation.

"It is never an eight-hour day. The media has access to my home number and they call all hours of the day for my pressing issue," says Spicer. The media looks to Spicer for information on NCCU. "I will state the truth, but be fair in the assessment in reporting," she adds.

Each day the staff reads newspapers to stay abreast of media coverage. A news clipping service is used to ensure that the office gets all media cov-



Carmelita Spicer, director of public relations at N.C. Central University

erage of the University.

No one realizes the time it takes to develop a story, according to Spicer. The Office of Public Relations has to get the story, write a release, send e-mails, conduct follow-up phone calls, and make sure the press releases reach television and radio assignment desks.

"It is far more than just a press release," said Spicer earnestly.

Much of the media material we receive on campus—The Vision Brochure, activities calendar, commercials, ads, recruitment brochures, and university videos—all come from Public Relations.

Robert Lawson takes all photographs we see in our catalogs and brochures for the Office of Public Relations, in addition to handling other university photography assignments.

"It is hectic ... I serve every department," said Lawson, adding that he works weekends and nights, attending special events.

He also processes the film and distributes photographs to outside organizations.

"People don't realize how much I have to do, but I enjoy it," said Lawson.

Although some days are hectic, Lawson feels his job is rewarding.

"I enjoy seeing how I can improve myself," said Lawson. "When you enjoy something, it's hard to wear you down."

The current goals of the office are to develop university publications and media in a way that supports a consistent university image, vision and mission.

Public Relations is also responsible for promoting the image for incoming students about the University.

"But once they get here, when they are treated unfairly and have to wait in long lines, the positive image gets taken away from the word of mouth," said Spicer.

Spicer's position is that Public Relations should be a collective effort.

"The responsibility of the University is to become public relations," says Spicer. "So many look to the department to do it all, but once the world gets here, we must show them through our actions."

Spicer's position is that she cannot change the image of the University, but only support and promote the University. Negative comments can reach the media and reflect badly on NCCU.

"There is a such thing as the power of the pen and spoken word: when they speak negatively it transcends, it becomes something larger," says Spicer, adding that faculty, students and staff must be careful how we speak and what we say because we all are the official spokespeople for the University.

Spicer is optimistic: "I do believe we are receiving more positive coverage ... I think every action brings out a reaction and we have to choose in the actions that we take. So if we choose to think positively and act positively and support one another, I truly believe the actions we receive from each other, the community and the world will be positive and supportive of this great university."

BY SHEON LITTLE
ECHO STAFF WRITER

The N.C. Central University student chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has set objectives this year to increase student awareness of campus activities, increase political awareness and increase community service, specifically services that reach out to the youth in the community.

The University's NAACP chapter advisers are Director of Administrative Services for Financial Affairs Mozell Robinson and Special Assistant to the Chancellor General George Walls.

In April, NCCU junior Timothy Peterkin was elected president of the student chapter. Sheneka Douglass and Amanda Cheek were elected first and second vice president respectively, Valencia White was elected secretary and Danielle Tillman was elected treasurer.

Dues are \$10 for students under 21 and \$15 for students 21 and over. More information can be obtained at a leadership conference scheduled for Sept. 11 in the Student Union from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The NCCU student chapter of the NAACP operates in conjunction with the Durham NAACP chapter and other campus organizations.

Earlier this year, Durham Chapter President Rev. Curtis Gatewood began his second term by announcing a drive to increase local membership from about 500 to over 2,000.

At a news conference in January, Gatewood said that he felt confident that under his leadership, the NAACP could attract younger members. Currently, 70 percent of the NAACP's members are over 60.

The NAACP was formed in 1909 in New York City by a small group of blacks and whites working together for social justice.

Noted African American activist, historian and teacher W.E.B. Dubois and feminist anti-lynching crusader Ida Wells-Barnett were among the organization's original ranks.

Bonds

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issue once the campaign jargon starts to fly.

During the debate Sen. Virginia Foxx was cited in the News and Observer saying that "University people would rather drive Cadillacs than Chevrolets."

"I think it's a serious mistake," Keith Harrod, a former trustee at NC State.

"I think it sends the message to the world that the state doesn't care about higher education, and that's not the case."

Of the \$3 billion, NCCU would have received \$118 million. \$36.8 million would have gone towards tearing down the old Hillside school and building the new science complex. Annie Day Shepard Dormitory and Latham Hall would have received \$7.2 million and \$3.4 million respectively for renovation and modernization. Another \$250,000 was designated for the general campus master plan. This year both dorms have suffered rain damage because of delapidated roofing and structural damage.

NCCU Chancellor Julius Chambers expressed his disappointment with the bond failure at the recent university convocation. As an example of how badly the university needs the money, Chambers pointed out that after 40 years in the making, McClendon-McDougald Gymnasium is still not finished.

Even with the failure of the bond package, UNC schools were not completely eliminated from the state budget, which included \$69.5 million for renovations and repairs and a separate \$20 million for improvements at UNC-Pembroke, NCCU, NC A&T, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville State and Winston-Salem State.

Last spring, university officials and legislators were shocked when a preliminary report by Eva Klein, a consultant hired by the UNC system, stated that the universities needed a combined \$6.9 billion in capital improvements. The report itemized a long list of repairs that were needed by buildings in the UNC system.

"That is just mind-boggling," UNC President Molly Broad said, although she said she agreed with the recommendations, according to the News and Observer.

At the request of legislators, Klein whittled the list down to \$5 billion over a five-year period, then later focused on her estimation of the most pressing needs, totaling 2.4 billion. A \$3 billion package

Shooting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

stopped by Lawson Street that evening, and visited separate houses. McLaurin told police that he went to Perry's house while Shaun Hicks visited his father. When McLaurin arrived at Perry's house, Ryles was there, and an argument between the two ensued.

According to Perry, McLaurin had a gun, which he showed to one of Perry's friends. Perry told the Herald-Sun she asked McLaurin, "What are you trying to prove by coming over here?"

The argument spilled outside, which Ronald Hicks told investigators he tried to defuse. According to the nephew, Ryles threatened to get his gun, then left with three females, including Perry.

According to witnesses, Ryles and Perry returned shortly thereafter, and Ryles was holding a shotgun, which he attempted to take inside Hicks' house.

Hicks responded by pulling a gun and firing several shots in the direction of Ryles and Perry, according to the News and Observer. Ryles told police he fired two shots at Hicks.

Speaking to a Herald-Sun reporter at the hospital the next day, Perry said that she was surprised that such a minor incident escalated to the point it did. "I didn't think it was going to resort to this," Perry told the Herald-Sun. "I don't want it to sound like it was a dispute over me. Sometimes people just do things to prove a point, and that's what I think it was."

Perry declined requests for an interview with The Campus Echo, as did Campus Police Chief McDonald Vick, who said he was instructed by Public Relations Director Carmelita Spicer not to talk to the press about the incident.

Student reaction to the incident has ranged from amusement, to apathy, to concern for student's safety on campus.

"To me it's kind of scary," NCCU freshman Celeste McGhee of Oxford told the Herald-Sun. "When I first got here, I already knew the perception of crime, but it seemed like it was going down. It really makes me not want to stay on campus anymore."

The public perception of crime at NCCU, which was sparked last year by a series of on-campus armed robberies, may be what NCCU is trying to down-

play with its current press blackout regarding the Aug. 16 incident.

According to a 1998 uniform crime report obtained from the NCCU campus police, out of 16 N.C. Universities, NCCU tied for second with North Carolina State University in 1998 for total violent crimes, each having a total of 19. The highest was at Duke University, which had 24.

At the time, N.C. State had an estimated student population of 7,920, while NCCU's was 1,895. Duke's estimated student population in 1998 was 5,390.

This is not the first time gun violence at NCCU and the effectiveness of campus security, has come to the public's attention:

■ On Aug. 30, 1986, NCCU student Anthony Wayne Bullock, 20, was found shot to death at Chidley Hall dormitory stairwell

between the third and fourth floors. Bullock's death apparently resulted from a drug deal that had gone wrong. Bullock's

mother, Mazelle Bullock, filed suit against NCCU in 1987 for negligence in her son's death, and was awarded \$100,000 in 1989.

■ In 1990, Kenneth Jett Clark, 19, was shot and killed near the Alfonso Elder Student Union after he had spent less than a week on campus.

■ In 1992, Bernard M. Martin of Fayetteville pulled out a pistol at a campus and shot into a crowd of 30 people. Six students were shot, and three were trampled in the ensuing panic; none were killed. The shooting apparently stemmed from an argument that started when an unidentified man kissed another student's girlfriend, according to the News and Observer. Two of the students who were shot, Lisa Michelle Ferguson and Latonya Rogers, filed suit against NCCU for lack of adequate campus security.

■ In 1994, NCCU Eagle's sophomore defensive back Robert Hood, 20, of Charlotte was shot in the hand and leg after a skirmish between NCCU football players and the assailant, a non-student, ended in a chase through Chidley Hall that resulted in shots being fired. By the time campus police arrived on the scene, students were jeering at them, and police had to defuse a near riot.

The football team had suffered a personal loss due to gun

Convocation

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from the long lines during registration to the competence of department workers.

"We still have too many lines for registration, too much delay in hiring personnel, in purchasing equipment or supplies, and too little connection among departments," Chambers said.

Chambers outlined a list of seven goals for the school to meet: the assumption of personal responsibility among students and staff, improved academic standards, technology upgrades, sponsored research, increased participation in school programs, improved facilities and better communication between students and administration.

Chambers encouraged members of the NCCU community to increase their support of school programs, which he said would hasten the construction

of new facilities for arts and sporting events.

"How many times have you passed up the opportunity to attend a play, a choir concert, our jazz band's performance or an athletic program?" Chambers asked the audience. "We are still arguing about our needs for additional facilities... Unless you join with us in attending and supporting events, we will be a long time in getting these facilities."

Toward the end of his speech, Chambers challenged students to be responsible and to act as model citizens.

"We have warned you about alcohol and drug use," Chambers said, possibly referring to a recent sweep of drug users on campus. "We have talked with you about respecting your colleagues. Why are we continuously throwing paper on the grounds, in hallways? That shows no respect for ourselves or our fellow stu-

dents."

Chambers was born in 1936 in Mount Gilead, NC, a small, rural community east of Charlotte. He entered North Carolina Central University—then called North Carolina College—in 1954.

In 1959 Chambers was admitted to the Law School at the University of North Carolina. Opening his law practice in 1964, Chambers was a key attorney in the civil rights case Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, over school busing.

During the speech, administrators, evidently worried that the sweltering heat in the gym would overcome Chambers, called in infirmary staff as a precaution. Dr. Jan Leigh-Fleming and Director of Student Health and Counseling Services, Carolyn Rogers escorted Chambers out of the gym immediately after he concluded his address.

“I didn't think it was going to resort to this.”

—MARSHA PERRY
NCCU SENIOR SHOT IN A DISPUTE BETWEEN HER BOYFRIEND AND A NEIGHBOR

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