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President Obama speaks at UNC

BY: MOLLY BRUCE

"Please join me in welcoming the President of the United States," said Dominique Garland, a senior at UNC Chapel Hill studying

education. And with that, the 8,000 people in Carmichael Arena erupted in applause.

President Barack Obama's visit to North Carolina was made in an effort to send a

message to Congress.

This coming summer, if Congress does not take action, interest rates on federal student loans are set to double, and this price hike is one many college

students and their families cannot afford to pay.

As Garland said, speaking from personal knowledge about her own loans and the loans of her younger sister, soon-to-be a

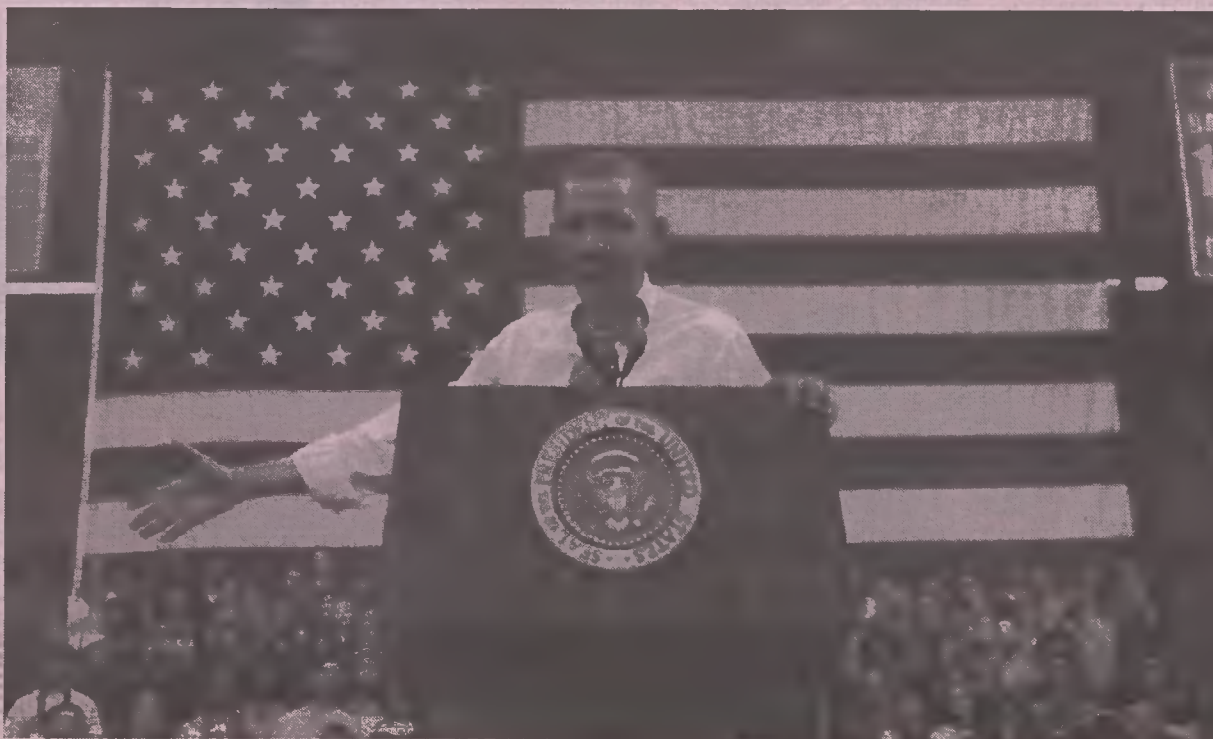
freshman at UNC Chapel Hill, "If interest rates were to double, that would mean that many students who would love to and who deserve to take part in extracurricular activities would have to work or live at home instead of having the college experience."

Obama reiterated, "Five years ago, Congress cut the rate on federal student loans in half. That was a good thing to do. But on July 1st -- that's a little over two months from now -- that rate cut expires. And if Congress does nothing, the interest rates on those loans will double overnight."

During his speech, Obama hit on the political ramifications of many of Washington's policies towards student tuition standards. However, Obama also made clear his opinions about the importance of earning a degree beyond a high-school diploma, regardless of the cost. "Higher education is the single most important investment you can make in your future."

Later that evening, Obama appeared on "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon", broadcasting the special show from UNC's Memorial Hall. Late Night also featured special guest Dave Matthews.

However, this policy speech was more than just an attempt to raise awareness about the financial issues plaguing many college students and their families. While North Carolina went blue for the 2008 elections, which put Obama in office, North Carolina the second time around is considered a swing state, and young adults will be important again in the presidential election of 2012.



Obama speaks to UNC students

Courtesy of the Washington Post

HOPE and Africa Fest celebrate African American culture

BY: JAY BUCHANAN

Africa Fest, held March 24, 2012, featured a variety of acts pertaining to past and current African and African American society and heritage.

Letita Mason, Director of Admissions at NCSSM, says on the history of HOPE and Africa Fest, "Leading Youth Through Education (LYTE) started Africa Fest in an effort to educate NCSSM students on the positive cultural influences and role models of African descent through the United States and the state of North Carolina."

HOPE is NCSSM's African American culture group.

Mason, who served as sponsor to LYTE as well as its predecessor the Harambee Club, now leads the African American Studies seminar on campus. "The seminar was only offered in third trimester; too late to hold class participants responsible for seminar credit - they participated out of their own commitment and passion for their cultural heritage," says Mason

"HOPE provides us with a chance to connect with other people who understand our culture and experiences," says junior Tatiana Miller, HOPE member and Africa Fest participant.

Ravyn Njagu, senior, serves as the current president of HOPE, and Christina Stone serves as the Chairwoman for Africa Fest.

Njagu says, "Africa Fest was a great success this year. It would not have been successful without the collaborative effort of everyone that who contributed to the production. All the hard work and dedication is what made the show amazing!"

Africa Fest featured a number of dance routines, a video testimonial series for

the African Studies course, and an intertwined plotline which followed two young women whose plane tickets were switched.

"It's a lot of work," says Mattie Gaddy, Multicultural Admissions Counselor and current HOPE and Africa Fest sponsor. She continues, "But it is good work."

Gaddy worked behind the scenes throughout rehearsal and performance of the Africa Fest production, helping keep order and complete managerial tasks.

"The best part of Africa Fest is watching the students evolve," says Gaddy. "They go from small and nervous in the beginning to a great show in the end."



March of the Flags at Latin America Fest 2012

Courtesy of Caroline deSaussure