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Truths of the UNCC Dorm Dispute

By Becky Mooneyhan

Several weeks ago, the *Charlotte Observer* ran an article concerning the overcrowded conditions of the dorms at UNCC. Due to widespread criticism from both the students and Charlotte residents, the *Carolina Journal* stepped in to investigate.

After confronting Dean Dennis Rash and Chuck Lynch, the problem of overcrowding came into a more realistic perspective. Dean Rash explained the overcrowding situation as one that "the university is very concerned with, especially with the limited number of spaces." The university is exploring the possibility of additional residence space, however several problems have developed.

The support once given to universities, by the federal government (FUD) in the form of loan subsidies, has been terminated, thus eradicating the

eligibility of the university to get a loan at a very low interest rate. Because of this, the university now must take loans at a very high interest rate, which compounds the already high cost of construction for dormitory space.

Unlike many other universities in the North Carolina system, UNCC is a relatively new campus with modern dormitory facilities. Older, more established university campuses have older dorms, built many years ago with federal subsidies, which have been paid off for several years. Because of its youthfulness UNCC is in a difficult financial situation to construct new dorms due to the ransom of high interest rates.

Some people wonder why high interest rates should hinder the advancement of the construction of dormitory spaces. Many do not realize

that the taxpayer doesn't pay for the construction of residence halls, since they are a self-liquidating process. New and existing dorms are financed by the rent and student fees paid to the university budget.

Chuck Lynch explained, "UNCC had requested approval to seek funding for additional housing through the General Assembly of the North Carolina Legislature two years ago (74-75)." However, the approval did not get through the Legislature at that time. In May, 1976, the Legislature approved funding of 250 dormitory spaces through the voting of a state bond referendum.

Even before the bond had passed, the university officials had engaged architects to work with the conception of a new residence facility. A survey was taken by a university committee to select a site for the new residence hall and ideas

for an apartment style low rise residence facility during the spring of 1976. Even with a tentative site and design planned, the only question raised was one of economics. Would the student be able to afford paying a higher rent?

Until this question is resolved the question of who gets a dormitory space is one of priority. Continuing students have first priority followed by students outside commuter distance and commuting students. Remaining rooms are filled on a first come, first serve basis, with waiting list students having priority over new applicants in January for the spring semester.

Both Dean Rash and Chuck Lynch said the overcrowding is due partly to the growth of UNCC and its widespread acceptance as an academic university on its way up. Recognition as *runnerup* in the 1976 NIT basketball tournament has also been helpful.

Carolina Journal photo by Susan Cole



Increased enrollment results in crowded dorms.

Did you know that:

*UNCC is the fastest growing university in North Carolina with the most students per square feet.

*UNCC has had to increase its faculty to accommodate the growing student body, thus eliminating seven classrooms and a few janitorial closets to facilitate faculty offices.

*UNCC offers help in locating off-campus housing.

*UNCC houses 2000 students at the present time.

*350 students were on the waiting list for this fall semester as of July, thus many people seemed to be discouraged from applying because of the long list.

*There was a 76% retention rate of continuing students from last year, allowing for 500 new students to get dormitory space.

*UNCC hopes to build a new dorm facility of 250 beds for use in fall 1978 but still it won't facilitate all students requesting dorm space.

*Projected need of 500 additional spaces by fall 1979 in addition to 250 spaces needed by fall 1978.

*500 space figure based on percentage (%) of fulltime students already housed in dormitories at UNCC.

*44% of all fulltime students are housed in dorms.

Suspended Prof Plans Legal Action

By Les Bowen

UNCC history professor and former city council candidate George R. Abernathy Jr. apparently plans to take legal action against the university in response to his suspension.

Abernathy, 51, was suspended from teaching as of Monday, August 23. Two days later he and another man were found guilty in a Monroe court of public drunkenness and of stealing corn from a farmer's field. University officials deny any relation between the suspension and the court proceeding.

Last week UNCC Director of Information Ken Sanford told the *Journal*: "The university's position is that we sent him a letter in mid-August stating our intent to discharge him. On the day school opened the university gave him notice that he was being suspended from holding classes, effective immediately."

"The suspension had nothing to do with the Monroe incident, which we didn't even find out about until the Wednesday after he had been suspended on Monday," Sanford said. "It was caused by another problem which we will not discuss, because we understand he is

planning litigation."

Sanford said the Abernathy incident was the first case in which a tenured UNCC professor has been discharged. Abernathy has been a history professor here since 1963.

Abernathy's name appears in the Revised Fall 1976 Course Schedule even though the history department knew he might be suspended. The Acting Chairman of the history department, Dr. John B. Wrigley, said, "I knew there was a possibility that he would not return, and I prepared for that contingency. I was somewhat hesitant about removing his name from the course schedule because I did not have the ultimate responsibility to say if he taught or not."

According to Section 6, paragraph A of "Tenure Policies, Regulations and Procedures of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte," a tenured faculty member "shall enjoy protection against unjust and arbitrary application of disciplinary penalties. During the period of such guarantees the faculty member may be discharged or suspended from employment or diminished in rank only for reasons of incompetence, neglect of duty, or misconduct of such a nature as

to indicate that the individual is unfit to continue as a member of the faculty."

Paragraph B of the same section stipulates that the university send the faculty member written notice by registered mail of its intent to discharge him. The letter must notify the dischargee that he has ten days to request a specification of the reasons for his dismissal and/or a hearing by the Hearing Committee.

Paragraph C says that if the faculty member does not ask for specification of reasons or for a hearing within ten days of receipt of the notice, he waives "recourse to any institutional grievance or appellate procedure."

According to Sanford, the university sent Abernathy such a notice in mid-August. Apparently he has chosen not to avail himself of inter-university recourse.

Sanford said it was his understanding that Abernathy planned to litigate against the university, Acting Chairman Wrigley, explaining why he chose not to comment on the reasons for Abernathy's firing, said: "I have been notified by phone that he plans to proceed against

me. In the event of litigation...it would be unwise for me to comment."

The *Carolina Journal* was unable to contact Abernathy last week. At the Monroe trial on August 25 he said he had "no comment on anything," and indicated he plans litigation.

Abernathy and co-defendant Ernest H. Davis were given 18-month suspended sentences and fined \$300, each in District Court. They were also placed on three-year probation and ordered to attend the Randolph Clinic for Alcoholism in Charlotte.

Abernathy and Davis were arrested by Union County sheriff's deputies about 11:30 pm on July 27 after the deputies noticed a parked station wagon on N.C. 84 near Weddington. The deputies found approximately 50 ears of corn in the back of the station wagon, which they assumed came from a nearby field. Joe Evans, owner of the field, testified that some of his corn had been stolen.

The defense's position was that the men had stopped by the field so that passengers in the car could relieve themselves. Abernathy and Davis are appealing the conviction.