



POLICE ROUNDUP

Assault Trial Continued For ECHHS Student

An East Chapel Hill High School student charged in connection with the February assault of a fellow student is scheduled to stand trial in May.

Michael Cooper, 16, of 502-C Sykes St., was charged along with two other teenagers with one felony account of assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill, inflicting serious injury.

Cooper was scheduled to stand trial Thursday, but the judge granted a continuance.

Cooper's trial is set for May 22 in District Court in Hillsborough.

University

Wednesday, March 22

■ A UNC student was napping in the fourth-floor lounge in Davis Library when she heard someone enter the lounge and then leave after about five minutes, according to police reports.

After the person left, she woke up and saw that her purse was gone. She went looking for the person who took her purse, according to police reports. Police reports stated the subject dropped the purse when he saw her.

The subject was described as a dark-skinned black male, about 20 to 30 years old, more than 6 feet tall and with severe acne on his face. He was wearing a tan leather jacket.

■ A UNC student accidentally left her purse in the Hanes Art Center Auditorium for two minutes around 10 a.m., police reports stated. When she returned, the purse was gone, according to police reports.

The purse contained \$460, a checkbook and check card, two credit cards, drivers license, keys and a UNC ONE Card. The student canceled the credit cards before reporting the crime, police reports stated.

■ A UNC student fell, possibly breaking her ankle, at 7:30 a.m. in the Sitterson parking lot, according to police reports.

The student was treated on site by an Orange County paramedic and then taken to Student Health Services for further treatment.

■ Someone discharged a fire extinguisher in Old West Residence Hall around 3:04 a.m., causing the fire alarm to sound. According to police reports, the residents evacuated and the Chapel Hill Fire Department and University Police responded. No fire was found and students returned to their rooms.

One student was cited for not evacuating after the alarm, police reports said. It is a misdemeanor charge that could result in a fine from \$10 to \$80 plus court costs.

■ A UNC student was sitting in her room in Morrison Residence Hall around 12:05 a.m. when an unknown person walked by and broke out the window in the room, according to police reports. There were no suspects at the time of report.

City

Thursday, March 23

■ Aaron Thomas McCafferty, 20, of 1203 Lark Hall Court, Cary was stopped on Airport Road near Taylor Street for speeding in a 2-door 1996 Chevrolet Camaro. Alcohol use was suspected, and police arrested and charged McCafferty with driving while impaired and violation of provisional license. His blood alcohol content registered at .17.

He was charged on three counts — one misdemeanor count provisional licensee violation, one misdemeanor count DWI and one misdemeanor count for speeding 60 mph in a 35 mph zone. He was summoned before a magistrate and released. McCafferty's trial is set for May 2 in District Court.

■ A suspicious condition was reported at East Chapel Hill High, located at 500 Weaver Dairy Road. Principal David Thaden reported to police that threatening messages were left on a school computer screen. Police are still investigating.

Wednesday, March 22

■ A 20-year-old male was arrested for impeding traffic at the intersection of McCauley Street and S. Columbia Street. Police cited Eric Walter Vila Jr., of 6172 Southwind Dr. in Mebane and released him on one misdemeanor count of impeding traffic, reports stated.

Police viewed the subject dancing in the middle of the intersection. Vila initially ran from police, but stopped after police yelled at him, reports state. There was no bond.

Vila's trial is set for May 1 in the Orange County District Court.

From Staff Reports

Coalition Continues Tuition Fight

By KAREY WUTKOWSKI
Staff Writer

Coalition members embroiled in the fight against the UNC tuition increase since October concede that the increase is probable but say the fight is not over.

The Coalition for Educational Access met Thursday night to reorganize their efforts and prepare for the N.C. General Assembly vote on the increase.

In February, the Board of Governors approved a \$600 tuition increase over the next two years for UNC.

"The likelihood of getting them to get rid of the tuition increase is minimal," said Sandi Chapman, a coalition member. She said the group needed to focus on assuring that adequate aid accompanied the increase.

The coalition said its other goals included fighting the tuition increase and pushing the state to support capital

improvement.

Members are also attempting to broaden their efforts by establishing contacts with all 16 universities in the UNC system. The coalition recently evolved from Campaign for Educational Access, which formed in October after debate erupted about a tuition increase.

The campaign had a large hand in organizing a 400-student strong protest against the increase at an October Board of Trustees meeting.

"We're just in the initial stages of starting (the coalition)," said member Shannon Goodrum.

The campaign was a product of student government and the Progressive Student Coalition, an umbrella organization formed in early 1999 that represents such groups as the Black Student Movement, the Student Environmental Action Coalition and the Students for Economic Justice.

Despite student government having a hand in the coalition's existence, coalition members say the two groups have differences.

"At the beginning, student government said they would possibly support a \$500 increase," Chapman said. "There's not the assumption that student government is always fighting the same issues."

But coalition member Emily Waszak said there was not a voluntary separation between the two entities.

"It's not an exclusion," she said. "We're just the core people working on (the tuition increase)."

"Student government is good at what they do and that's working inside the system. We're good at what we do and that's research and mobilizing people."

Members also took up issue with Student Body President-elect Brad Matthews. "It's concerning," Waszak said. "He has put (the tuition increase)

on his list of priorities on his platform, but he hasn't done anything."

But Matthews said he had backed student efforts to battle a tuition increase. "We're all students legitimately concerned about the tuition increase," he said. "We're all interested in seeing it reduced if not completely eliminated."

Matthews said the distinction between the efforts of student government and activists was not fair. "It's a collaborative effort to make sure students are represented."

The coalition said it was now directing its efforts toward getting students involved in a lobbying campaign aimed at the state legislature. "It's not over," Waszak said. "Everybody's been saying if we have to take it to the state legislature, we would. And we will."

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Reactions Divided on Fee Ruling

The Supreme Court decision will allow Student Congress to keep its current system of doling out student fees.

By JOHN MABERRY
Staff Writer

The reverberations of Wednesday's Supreme Court ruling to allow universities to fund controversial campus groups with student fees have registered on campus.

While several UNC student leaders supported the decision, conservative groups on campus maintained that students should have the option of choosing which groups they fund.

The Court upheld the allocation of student fees at the University of Wisconsin in a unanimous decision.

The ruling overturned an earlier decision in favor of plaintiff Scott Southworth, who claimed that requiring students to pay for groups they might object to violated their First Amendment rights.

Those pleased with the decision saw it as an affirmation of equal rights. "My immediate response when I heard the ruling was, 'Oh my god, we won,'" said Student Congress Speaker Mark Kleinschmidt.

His support of the Supreme Court decision was echoed by Jon Curtis, the assistant director of Student Activities. "I'm very excited that they made what I believe is the right decision," Curtis said. "The University has provided for an incredible amount of dialogue by giving students the freedom to assemble, speak their viewpoint and wave their banner."

But for some UNC students, the Supreme Court's decision was a setback.

"We were pretty disappointed," said freshman Steve Russell, a writer for the Carolina Review, a conservative campus publication. "We still feel it's not a valid use of someone's money to support a viewpoint they don't agree with."

Carolina Review publisher Nathan Byerly said his stance had little to do with politics. "We don't believe student fees should be used to support ... political agendas. Our opinion is more based on principle than politics."

For Kleinschmidt, the decision reinforced UNC's system of allocating student fees. "I think this decision affirms the legality of the method we have at Carolina," he said. "For decades, we have functioned under a system of broad student autonomy in the way of student groups. An alternative decision would have been fatal."

The decision was especially timely for the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, which would fall under the umbrella of Southworth's condemned liberal organizations. This week's activities to educate students about the death penalty were partly funded with student fees. "Any group that has a social conscience should have equal rights to money," said campaign member Theander Brannon.

Kleinschmidt said the ruling was key to continuing discussion at UNC. "The reason I came to this University was the culture, and that would have been eliminated by an alternative ruling."

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A New Wave of Culture

Hispanics Seek New Horizons

By WALTER HERZ
Staff Writer

North Carolina has the third-fastest growing Hispanic population in the country, and in Orange County, it shows.

Whether legally or illegally, people from all corners of Latin America have made the journey to Chapel Hill and its surrounding areas, most of them seeking better lives than the ones they left south of the border.

Joel Harper, president of the Chapel Hill Area Chamber of Commerce, said Hispanics had established a prominent presence in the area in just the last few years.

"Heretofore, the Hispanics have mostly been a migrant population," Harper said. "They came to work for a couple of months, then moved on."

"In the last two or three years, however, there has been an increase in the permanent population of Latinos," he said. "They're staying to live here and sending money back to Mexico and other parts of Latin America."

The permanent Hispanic presence has raised several issues and difficulties for new residents, not the least of which is a lack of proficiency in the English language.

Maria Palmer, minister of the Hispanic congregation of the United Church of Christ and a native of

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Pilar Fort (back) meets mothers for the Early Head Start Program in Carr Court. The group was started to help mothers with children up to 3 years old begin the assimilation process into American culture.

Immigrant Tries to Give Back

By SARAH BRIER
Staff Writer

The challenge when moving to a new country is to balance heritage yet assimilate to the new surroundings and cultural practices.

For Pilar Fort, a Peruvian immigrant, the process was fraught with this challenge when she moved to Chapel Hill with her husband and three children in 1998.

But Fort's initial intimidation was overshadowed by her will to learn about the culture and feel like a member of the local community.

Fort said her first impression of Chapel Hill was positive, and even though she was faced with challenges, she was able to conform to the new landscape, people and culture and still maintain her heritage.

"The area is geographically marvelous," she said. "It is well-situated, and the people are very helpful here."

Three months after Fort's husband, Alfredo, was transferred to UNC to do research, the couple had already found a home.

After a short period of interim housing in a two-bedroom Chapel Hill apartment, the family of five was

relieved to move into a home. Her oldest son, Alfredo, 23, was not with them long because he went to New York to work on his Ph.D.

"Housing was easy in a way because of the newspapers and real estate agencies, but it was also not easy," Fort said. "We had a lot of support from my husband's office, and when we arrived they offered us an apartment to live in while we were looking for a house."

But Fort also said the process of finding a home was probably one of

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Surfing for the Perfect Place

Designed by a UNC junior, chapelhillrent.com helps students find the rental property of their dreams.

By MOIRA VANDERHOOF
Staff Writer

When Andrew Gray began designing a Web site for the Carolina Environmental Program two years ago, he had no idea what he was getting into.

It was because of this project that some small businesses and campus groups asked Gray, a junior from Windsor, Conn., to design their Web sites as a freelancer.

Gray called this "picking up a few clients on the side," but it was really the start of something bigger.

"Freelance was sort of jerky," Gray said. "It was not consistent; there were new people every week ... and it was harder to command a salary."

Gray's friend, Chris Francis, a UNC graduate and Chapel Hill native, approached Gray about designing a Web site for his uncle, Steve Mills, a local property manager.

This project started out as a way to put Mills' rental property on the Web, but it grew in a couple of months into a small business, chapelhillrent.com,

based out of Gray's bedroom.

Francis said the idea for this business popped into his head one day while listening to a radio advertisement for a rental property Web site.

"It wasn't doing things businesses want," Francis said. "Something was needed for mom and pop."

Francis' idea stemmed from the belief that people did not want to rent just apartments — they would rather live in houses. "The (Mills) project turned into one for the town of Chapel Hill," Gray said.

The Web site expanded into a directory that featured most of the apartment complexes and rental properties available to students in Chapel Hill.

"We have 150 to 200 unique visitors a day," Gray said.

Things really started to lift off when a local investor bought a part of Gray and Francis' company. The investor provided capital, office space in Carrboro, a business manager and advice on business legalities.

Gray and Francis employed seven other workers, started making a business plan, sent out brochures, started a mailing campaign and contacted real estate agents all over the state.

Their Chapel Hill-based business expanded into HometownRent.com, a site that listed real estate properties in



Raleigh, Wilmington, Greenville and Durham.

"We list everything for free," Gray said. "We spend investment capital, utilize Web sites with real estate companies and (receive money) from some advertising with companies like Gumbly's Pizza."

HometownRent.com became a way for property managers and renters to benefit in new ways.

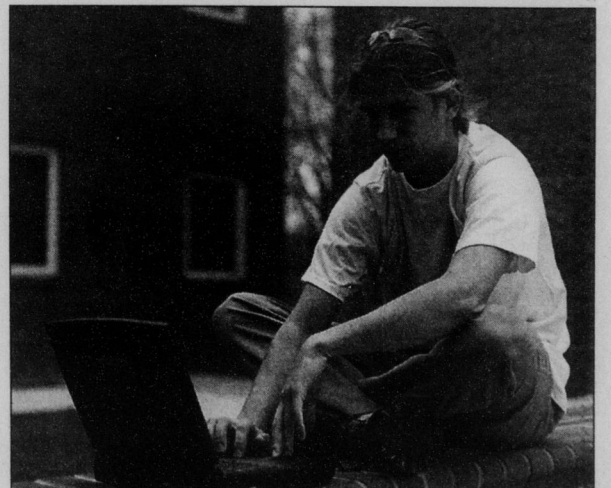
"It's two-sided," Francis said. "The property manager has direct control of advertising and has the tools necessary to compete in today's rental market."

"And the user is allowed to see the entire rental picture from the convenience of their living room computer," Gray said the ultimate goal for the Web site was to appeal to the user.

"We want to make a good Web site that really serves the people who use it as opposed to pressing advertising (at the user)," he said. "We view our site from the user's side ... the user just types in what (he or she) wants to know and it tells them."

But it is also a tool that serves realtors equally. They can go in at any time and change information like property prices and pictures, Gray said.

Besides the pressures of writing a business plan and the increased expenses of running the business, Gray



Andrew Gray, a UNC junior, designed the Web page HomeTownrent.com to "make the arduous task of finding a place to live more pleasant."

said he and Francis found satisfaction in the fact that people had taken them "pretty seriously."

"We're both a couple of young guys with not a lot of business experience," Gray said. "It's one thing to run a business out of your bedroom, but it's another thing to deal with increased expenses, management of taxes, a pay roll and paying your own Social Security."

But according to their clients, the two are living up to the demands. "They've done a fantastic job of

meeting needs of renters and at my end," Mills said. "I get my stuff out of a larger group of people for less money. Because of them more information is available for more tenants."

Gray said he and Francis were working on directly approaching investors for a bigger expansion. Both have made at least a two-year commitment. "We would love to make it a business we can run for many years."

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