

# NCSU Wins Funds to Study Crop Killers

By SALLY FRANCIS  
Staff Writer

North Carolina State University recently received a \$2.6 million grant from the National Science Foundation to conduct research that could prevent billions of dollars in damage to U.S. crops. The research will aim primarily at dealing with the genetics of parasites like nematodes and developing environmentally safe control methods to eliminate crop damage. David Bird, N.C. State associate professor of plant pathology, said parasites affect more than 2,000 species of plants. "There is a wide range of crops being

damaged — from tobacco to sweet potatoes, and vegetables — it's virtually everything," Bird said. By identifying and mapping the genes of living organisms, Bird said he hopes to better understand the genetics of nematodes and plants. Nematodes cause plant infections responsible for about \$3 billion in U.S. crop damage each year. "Based on understanding the interactions, the goal is to find weak links in the host-parasite interactions that can be targeted for parasitic nematode control," Bird said. He added that the current strategy of dealing with damaging organisms is

using chemicals, but they are being withdrawn because of the hazards they pose to humans and the environment. Julie Haigler, N.C. Department of Agriculture spokeswoman, said she favors designing environmentally safer controls than potentially toxic methods. "Anytime you are able to target the pest closely, it is better for everyone involved," Haigler said. The grant is part of the NSF's Plant Genome Research Project, which studies the genetic structure and function of plants in conjunction with their role in agriculture, health and the environment. In the past, the NSF has awarded multi-university grants, and although

this grant is exclusively for N.C. State, Bird said there will be collaboration with other institutions. Scientists at UNC-Chapel Hill, Santa Fe Institute and Washington University in St. Louis are participating in the research. Edward Bissette, a N.C. tobacco farmer, said he favors the research because potentially it could save him both time and money. "If they could eradicate the nematodes, it would save me \$40,000 a year in chemicals." *The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.*

# Budget Deadline Has N.C. State Scurrying

By LUCAS FENSKE  
Assistant State & National Editor

UNC-system President Molly Broad has given N.C. State University officials 90 days to implement the state auditor's recommendations on budget flexibility or risk losing that financial option. If N.C. State officials fail to meet the deadline, Broad will ask the Board of Governors to withdraw the school's budget flexibility option, which allows university administrators to reallocate unspent funding to meet their additional monetary needs. Broad said the deadline stemmed from system policy requiring chancellors to enact measures from an auditor's report in the event of a material finding. N.C. State Vice Chancellor George Worsley said school officials were already responding to the deadline. "We're moving forward to implement the recommendations," Worsley said. He said N.C. State officials would meet the 90-day deadline to tweak the school's financial guidelines. The auditor's report, released Tuesday, investigated the N.C. State Public Safety Office and former director Ralph Harper for misuse of public funds. The report stated there were more than \$800,000 in questionable purchases and expenses — including a pickup truck, a flat-screen television and 11 laptop computers. The auditor's report also recommended that the State Bureau of

Investigation examine alleged tape recording of safety department employee phone calls. Broad said there would be further investigations into the matter, resulting in requests for financial reimbursement regarding improper travel charges and several employees being asked to resign or fired. "A number of people will be separated from that university."



UNC-system President Molly Broad issued the deadline to N.C. State University officials.

The report cited a need for tighter controls on funding such as removing allocation responsibility from department heads. Broad said the BOG has already required that all monetary reallocations occur at least at the vice chancellor level. She said N.C. State Chancellor Marye Anne Fox plans to review and approve every reallocation through her office to ensure it is appropriate. "We're reminded again that no policy or legislation can ensure that people will behave with integrity or follow policy."

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# Coalition Seeks to Build Statewide Alliance

By MELISSA ANDERSON  
Staff Writer


During last year's tuition battle, a group of UNC-Chapel Hill students formed the Coalition for Educational Access to fight against the increase. Their efforts failed, and the UNC Board of Governors approved a \$600 tuition boost for UNC-CH and N.C. State University. Three other UNC-system universities — East Carolina University, UNC-Wilmington, and UNC-Charlotte — also raised tuition by smaller amounts. But that's not the end of the story. At the end of the spring semester last year, members of the coalition said they

hoped to form a statewide lobbying group. But those plans have not yet come to fruition. UNC-CH senior Shannon Goodrum, a political science major, said coalition members still plan to form the group but were delayed due to some people graduating and others leaving for summer break. "Our definite future goal is to build a statewide alliance of students, administrators and community about educational access, accountability and financial aid for students," Goodrum said. She added that members of the coalition are focusing their efforts on the

bond referendum and voter registration. The coalition has not officially met since the end of the 1999-2000 school year. UNC-CH junior Erica Smiley, a political science major, said the group has not been very active this year because members of the group have been focusing on other issues. "The motivation among the coalition is not there," Smiley said. "Everyone's attention is focused on different things such as the elections." She said there would be little structure to the organization until after the November elections. But Smiley said she hopes the group will be revived next semester.

She added that the purpose of the group is to establish a student network spanning the UNC system. If there is a need for statewide lobbying, the coalition could be the driving mechanism, Smiley said. She added that although the group was originally formed around the tuition increase, the coalition would not be just a reactionary organization. "We want to be proactive," Smiley said. "Our goal is to network among the 16 UNC campuses, but the fundamental networking has not been done." *The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.*

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