

Columnist Reflects as Break Nears

Welcome to the last week of classes of the fall 2001 semester. Congratulations for making it to the end – there's a chill in the air (or there would be if not for the signs of global warming that Chapel Hill seems to be experiencing), and after this week it'll be no worries until Jan. 8.



GEOFF WESSEL
UNIVERSITY COLUMNIST

Well, aside from the minor matter of final exams, that is. There's always something. But even with the looming threat of the blue-book blues,

we are in the home stretch of the semester. The time has come to look back, to ponder how far we've come and how much we've learned, to dredge up the semester's memorable moments, both good and bad, and to do all that good old traditional end-of-an-era stuff.

The big story this semester at UNC has been the debate over whether the Kenan-Flagler Business School should accept Qatar's invitation to open a satellite campus in the small Middle Eastern nation.

Many people on campus still oppose the proposal, but I for one continue to hope a satellite campus will be established. It is inevitable that some problems will crop up, but these are not likely to be insurmountable. And meanwhile, the opportunities that a campus in the Middle East would provide would be of unparalleled value to the University.

UNC will only have this one chance to pursue these opportunities, which would include the possibility of semesters in Qatar for faculty and perhaps eventually for students too, funding for distinguished visiting faculty in Chapel Hill to replace those who go there, ties to an entirely different society and culture and the chance to make a difference on a global scale.

Another reason we might remember this semester years from now is that it brought the beginning of the end of student parking on campus. Officials announced earlier this semester that on-campus parking for students living in residence halls will be eliminated completely.

It might still not be too late for polite and well-reasoned arguments from students to change this decision. There are any number of powerful arguments on our side – especially that students are the backbone of the University, and taking away their right to parking could lead to feelings of alienation and disaffection as well as a host of other problems.

Of course, the first thing that will come to mind when we look back on this time will be neither of these issues. Desert nations and overcrowded lots, Student Congress elections and David Horowitz, Chancellor James Moeser's speech on University Day – any and all campus issues pale to insignificance beside events that have been unfolding on the national and international scale.

On the other hand, in a way the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 and the fighting in Afghanistan have become campus issues themselves. Responses to these events on campus have been strong and visible, ranging from forums supporting military action to protests to prayers for the victims.

What most makes me proud of this University is that overwhelmingly the response has been to keep informed about what has been happening. There is not much else we can do besides watching the toll of death and destruction rise and hoping that the White House sees fit to consider the conflict resolved soon.

Against the backdrop of our awareness of world events, the semester still ends in much the same way semesters have always ended. There is something great about our ability to get worked up over who will run for student body president next semester in the morning, hold up an anti-war sign outside the Chapel Hill Post Office in the afternoon and then go back to the residence hall to make travel plans for Winter Break in the evening.

Without getting too emotional about it – this is my last column, after all – I'd like to wish all of you a good time, wherever you decide to go, and a nourishing rest before the spring semester brings us back to the old grind.

I'd also like to thank you all for reading, especially those of you who have responded to the thoughts that have appeared here. It's been a pleasure.

Finally, to my fellow students, good luck on those exams – there is, as I've mentioned already, always something.

Columnist Geoff Wessel can be reached at vroom@email.unc.edu.

Letter Accuses Broad of Chancellor Coercion

By ALEX KAPLAN
State & National Editor

A plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the use of quotas in selecting UNC-system Board of Governors members sent a letter last week to all state legislators alleging that UNC-system President Molly Broad coerced a chancellor to sign a letter opposing a legislative study of the BOG. Former BOG member Walter Davis – the letter's author – also has served on the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees. Davis filed the lawsuit in May, alleging that a 30-year state law that reserves

several seats on the BOG for racial, gender and political minorities was unconstitutional. The BOG opted in June not to challenge the lawsuit.

But before legislation changing state law could make its way through the N.C. General Assembly, a provision was attached to the bill calling for a study of the structure of the BOG – the UNC system's governing body.

Earlier this month all 16 UNC-system chancellors signed a letter to state legislators stating their opposition to the study.

The letter followed a similar one signed by former governors Jim Hunt,

Jim Martin, James Holshouser and Bob Scott, along with former UNC-system presidents Bill Friday and C.D. Spangler.

Both letters state that the study is poorly timed because the UNC system has to contend with several other significant issues – including budget cuts and high levels of campus construction – in the coming months.

"It is my understanding that upon learning that one of the chancellors intended to remain neutral on the proposal, she called that chancellor into her office and said the chancellor needed to take a position and oppose the study,"

Davis' letter states.

Davis would not specify to which chancellor he was referring.

Davis' letter also states that several UNC-system chancellors were hesitant to sign the letter until they learned that chancellors from both UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University had agreed to sign it.

Broad responded Tuesday with her own letter to state legislators stating that Davis' accusations are false.

"(Davis' assertion is simply not correct," Broad's letter states. "The chancellors are strong individuals who form

their own views, including their views on (the bill)."

The (Raleigh) News & Observer reported Friday that both House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, and Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, D-Dare, "paid no attention to Davis' accusation against Broad."

The bill, containing both the study and changes in selection of BOG member, passed the N.C. Senate last month. It has yet to be taken up by the House.

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KARA ARNDT AND KIMBERLY CRAVEN

A lack of educational goals, a seriously ill family member or the inability to pay tuition might give students reason to drop out of college. But according to officials, UNC has one of the best retention rates in the country.

Officials Explain Dropout Causes

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON
Staff Writer

As the stress of the end of the semester and the pressure of exams mount, many students begin to feel overwhelmed.

For some, the best way to deal with the demands of college life, whether as a result of exams or just the daily grind of the school year, is to leave UNC. Despite the negative connotation normally associated with dropping out of college, some University officials said it can be the right option for students in certain situations.

But officials said they are working to keep students in school as long as it is beneficial to them, and statistics indicate those efforts might be working.

Officials described UNC as having one of the best retention rates in the country. The freshman retention rate is 94.8 percent, and 78.9 percent of students graduate within six years, according to the Office of Institutional Records.

According to U.S. News & World Report, UNC's six-year graduation rate is almost identical to the retention rates at top-tier public universities, such as the University of Virginia and the University of California-Berkeley.

Carolyn Cannon, associate dean of academic advising, said few students withdraw from

UNC, and those who do usually are motivated by personal reasons, often because an immediate family member is seriously ill.

Students who choose to leave the University often choose to pursue alternatives such as service programs or job opportunities. Other students return to UNC as part-time students or participants in programs such as distance learning.

Despite UNC's relatively high retention rate, Sue Kitchen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said she believes there are three major reasons that students drop out of college, all of which hold true nationwide. "One of the reasons students don't persist is because they don't have clear educational goals," she said.

Students also might leave a particular university because they need some time to decide what they want to do and find that the college they have chosen does not offer a relevant major.

Kitchen said UNC has a good retention rate partially because of the University's broad academic offerings and its ability to have a double major and to tailor educational plans.

Also, many students drop out of college because they are no longer able to afford tuition, Kitchen said. But she said a comparatively low tuition rate, particularly for in-state students, allows many students to better afford UNC, boosting the University's retention rate.

"The institution has been working hard not only to meet needs but also to create merit scholarships," Kitchen said.

Kitchen said another explanation for UNC's retention rate is the high quality of students at the University. "I don't know that we have at-risk students – all the students admitted here have the academic qualities to succeed," she said.

For students who decide that conventional courses at UNC are not the path for them, many

options exist to help them figure out where to go next. Risa Palm, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said advisers and peer advisers can help students who are overwhelmed academically and are considering dropping out.

But there is nothing academic advising can do for students who do not seek help, Cannon said. "Sometimes students just sit in their rooms and don't reach out," Cannon said. "By the time their adviser finds out, it's too late."

The University also offers some specific programs, including Summer Bridge and first-year seminars, aimed at helping students adjust, she said. Summer Bridge teaches study skills to students the summer before their freshman year.

First-year seminars also put students in small classes, giving them the opportunity to interact with faculty, she said.

Provost Robert Shelton said there are other ways in which the University can prevent dropouts. Students need to connect to the University in more ways than just academics and need to get proper advising, not just on classes but on extracurricular activities as well, Shelton said.

"If you've got an array of connections, then you can get through the hard times."

But the process of preventing students from dropping out begins even before students arrive on campus. University officials said they strive to admit students who will fit in well at UNC.

Jerry Lucido, director of admissions, said that although UNC's high retention rate might be considered a recruiting tool, potential students tend not to ask about it because of UNC's excellent academic reputation. He said the University's reputation means students tend to enroll at UNC expecting to graduate on time.

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Tuition Freeze A Possible Goal For ASG Group

A newly formed tuition coalition will focus on goals stipulated Saturday, including possibly working toward a freeze on tuition.

By JENNIFER SAMUELS
Assistant State & National Editor

BOONE – The UNC Association of Student Governments formed a grassroots coalition Saturday that might work to initiate a systemwide tuition freeze.

ASG delegates settled on several goals for the coalition, including allocating more money to universities from the state budget, but were unable to unanimously agree whether a tuition freeze was a desirable goal.

ASG President Andrew Payne said convincing the N.C. General Assembly to adopt a tuition freeze is necessary because the burden of paying for an education at a public university in North Carolina is unfairly being placed on students.

But UNC-Chapel Hill Student Body President Justin Young said there are several questions preventing an agreement, including whether the tuition freeze the ASG would support would allow for inflationary UNC-system Board of Governors increases. "The direct result was that there wasn't any resolution," he said.

UNC-CH has formed a committee to consider the campus' second campus-initiated tuition increase in two years, and ASG members said they were concerned other campuses might consider raising tuition as well.

Payne said that according to the state constitution, all residents

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Moeser Taps UNC Alumna as New CCPS Director

Lynn Blanchard, the new CCPS director, was active with the Family Support Network and other service groups as a UNC student.

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON
Staff Writer

When most people come home after a long absence, they look forward to seeing friends and family.

But Lynn Blanchard, a Raleigh native and UNC graduate who has been approved by Chancellor James Moeser as the new director of the Carolina Center for Public Service, said she looks forward to giving back to the community in which she was raised.

"I'm actually thrilled to be coming back to UNC and North Carolina," said Blanchard, who is currently vice chairwoman of community initiatives at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network in Allentown, Pa. She will begin work here Jan. 7.

She graduated from East Carolina University before receiving a master's and a doctorate from UNC's School of Public Health. Blanchard, who was a teacher in Wake County before obtaining her master's degree, said she enjoys her work at Lehigh but misses the energy and enthusiasm of working with

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Ceremony Celebrates 50 Years of Integration at UNC

By ESHANTHI RANASINGHE
Staff Writer

Fifty years ago, several black students achieved a dream – a dream of being educated at one of North Carolina's finest universities.

As a result of the determination of those students, the U.S. Court of Appeals ordered the integration of UNC in 1951, deeming UNC's sister state university for black students in Durham to be inadequate.

In June 1951, Harvey Beech, J. Kenneth Lee, Floyd McKissick and James Robert Walker Jr. passed through the portals of the University, marking the beginning of a new generation of UNC scholars – students of color.

The Black Student Movement and the Black Faculty and Students Committee recognized the golden anniversary of UNC's desegregation Friday.

More than 100 people attended the celebration in the Great Hall of the Student Union. The program paid tribute to five honorees – Hortense McClinton, Hayden Renwick, Carl Smith, Harold Wallace and Edith Wiggins – all former UNC faculty members.

After an introduction by BSM President Kristi Booker and a musical selection performed by Harmonyx, Provost Robert Shelton presented a

proclamation recognizing the 50th anniversary of the integration of UNC. Archie Ervin, director of the Office of Minority Affairs, then presented each of the honorees with a certificate of recognition in appreciation for their contribution to the University.

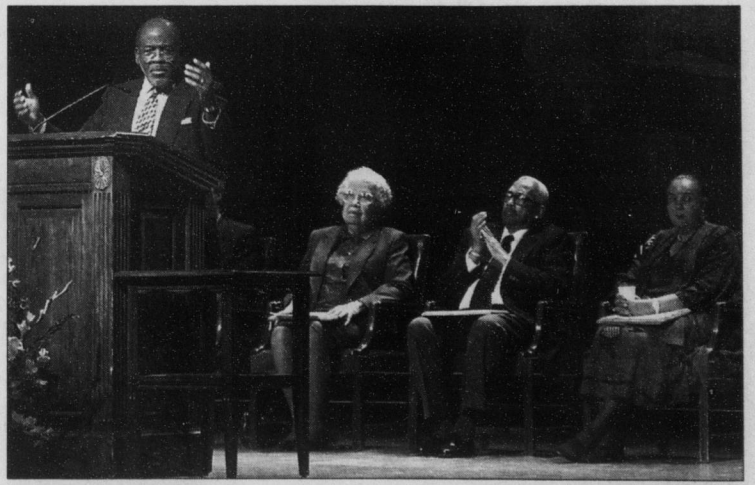
The honorees reminisced about their experiences at UNC and the challenges they faced as pioneer black faculty. "When I arrived to the University, the black student population was just over 850, and now it's over 3,000," said Smith, who was the first black administrator appointed to the provost's office. "It is long overdue to give recognition to the quantity and quality of the black students here."

Law Professor Charles Daye conducted the ceremony's keynote address. Daye emphasized the importance of imagination in the progress of the University and in the progress of every individual.

"There is something about imagination. ... Imagine the founders of this university imagining a great university," Daye said. "No one would have imagined women at this university. ... No one could include descendants of former slaves."

Harold Woodard, assistant dean of the office of

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DTH/BRIAN CASSELLA

Law Professor Charles Daye speaks Friday at a celebration honoring Hortense McClinton, Carl Smith and Edith Wiggins (left to right) for their work on integration.