

# Knowledge Helps Fight Ignorance

Nine months ago, I thought I had it all figured out. I assumed that, aside from a few glitches, this was going to be just an ordinary year, making my job as columnist pretty easy.

Boy, was I wrong. The year has been anything but ordinary. And for me, Sept. 11 was perhaps the most challenging event of the year. As I've said many times before, Sept. 11 changed our nation.

As a country, we understand that we can no longer display a facade of being indestructible.

We realize that the pride and confidence that built this nation into one of the most powerful in the world is now perhaps our greatest flaw.

Now we must figure out how to restore security in our nation without dissuading others from wanting to call the United States home.

And who can talk about politics without mentioning George W. Bush? After winning one of the more bitterly contested elections in our nation's history, Bush has in my opinion risen above any skepticism concerning his legitimacy as president.

Sure, we can argue that backing away from the Kyoto protocol probably was not the best thing to do. And to this day, I still do not understand the whole pretzel-fainting fiasco.

But despite the criticisms, after the September attacks our nation needed a strong leader to unify and inspire us and Bush stepped up to the plate.

On the home front, N.C. politicians are still grappling with digging our economy out of a billion-dollar deficit.

Unfortunately, I don't see how that can happen without touching crucial services, including education. All we can do is make the necessary cuts now and hope that more will not have to follow.

So with the year winding down, I am not ashamed to admit that I was wrong. This year was eventful if perhaps not always in positive ways.

I have little regrets over the topics I tackled this year through my column.

Well except one. Before I go, I just have one more issue to clear up.

I am not 100 percent anti-death penalty. I'm just skeptical of how it has been used in our nation.

If anything is going to deter future criminal activity, I believe the prospect of death will do it more quickly than any other option.

But we must not forget one thing: The death penalty is irreversible. Once someone is executed, you can't bring him or her back to life.

If we must continue to use this form of punishment, we need to ensure that the process is flawless.

So far, things don't look too good. One hundred death row inmates have been exonerated in recent years after DNA tests proved their innocence.

Thus, while I don't oppose the death penalty completely, I cannot fully support the practice given the number of mistakes discovered in recent years.


That being said, if I could close the year with one thought it would be this quote from Socrates:

"The only good is knowledge and the only evil is ignorance."

Although we might not like everything we read, see or hear nowadays, knowing what is going on in the world is a powerful thing.

So if I could ask one favor of whoever reads this column, it'd be this: Don't allow yourself to be ignorant.

Columnist April Bethea can be reached at [adbethea@email.unc.edu](mailto:adbethea@email.unc.edu).




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# Only 2 Congress Seats Still Vacant

By NIKKI WERKING  
Staff Writer

Seven more students who were elected to Student Congress in Tuesday's special elections accepted their positions by Thursday, leaving Congress with only two empty seats, the least amount of vacancies in the last three years.

The students join four other candidates

go to [dailytarheel.com](http://dailytarheel.com)  
For a list of students elected to Congress in the special election, see [www.dailytarheel.com](http://www.dailytarheel.com).

who accepted seats Tuesday night, filling 11 of the 13 seats left vacant after the Feb. 12 general student body elections.

There were no votes cast for the position in District Two, and one write-in candidate from District Five has yet to respond. Both districts are graduate and professional student seats.

In recent years, Congress has been plagued by a large number of empty seats. At the beginning of the fall 2001 semester, 11 seats in Congress were still vacant. In the last three years, no more

than 31 of Congress' 37 seats have been filled, student leaders said.

Speaker of Congress Tony Larson said having an almost full Congress will broaden its representation on campus and allow committees to have more thorough discussions.

"A greater number of students with more opinions and perspectives will lead to fuller debates," he said. "We'll be able to cover more topics."

Board of Elections Chairwoman Emily Margolis said candidates have 24

hours to respond after being contacted and notified of their positions. She said she contacted the candidates Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Candidates also must turn in their financial statements, which outline their campaign expenses, when they take their positions. Margolis said she already has received financial statements from the 11 candidates that have accepted their seats.

Even if only one seat remains vacant, See CONGRESS, Page 6

# Council Doubts Expansion

Some council members say they believe the widening of Weaver Dairy Road is not a good use of state funds.

By JAMES RUSS  
Staff Writer

Some Chapel Hill Town Council members have doubts that a plan to widen Weaver Dairy Road, which they approved and sent to the N.C. Department of Transportation this week, will be accepted.

The council voted 6-3 Monday to approve a plan that would expand parts of Weaver Dairy Road, a two-lane road, to three lanes. The earliest the plan would be approved by NCDOT is next week.

The council had approved a similar measure Jan. 22, 2001, but NCDOT did not approve that plan. NCDOT instead had recommended a four-lane road.

The council's current plan is more comprehensive than last year's. A section of Weaver Dairy Road running from Erwin Road to U.S. 15-501 also is recommended to be made three lanes, a change from the former plan.

Council member Edith Wiggins, who voted against the plan Monday, said the proposed widening seemed inappropriate given NCDOT's response last year. "It is absolutely ridiculous."

Wiggins added that the NCDOT had already refused the plan.

"I don't think NCDOT will widen the road to three lanes," she said. "We have a letter (from NCDOT) saying that they don't think widening the road is a good use of state money."

Council member Pat Evans, who also voted against the plan, said she has doubts about the plan being approved. "I'm not going to bet on it," Evans said. "I agree with (NCDOT's) position that

See WEAVER DAIRY, Page 6

# Architects Share Plans for Arts Common

By RUTHIE WARSHENBROT  
Staff Writer

Architects from the UNC Arts Common Master Plan came to campus Thursday to present their preliminary plans for a new, art-centered section of campus and to answer student concerns.

Polshek Partnership Architects, a planning and architect company from New York, was hired by the University in early December and has been working on planning the Arts Common, the second wave of UNC's Master Plan, since February.

Duncan Hazard and Peter Mullan from Polshek Partnership sat in the Pit area at noon Thursday to answer questions and gather ideas from students.

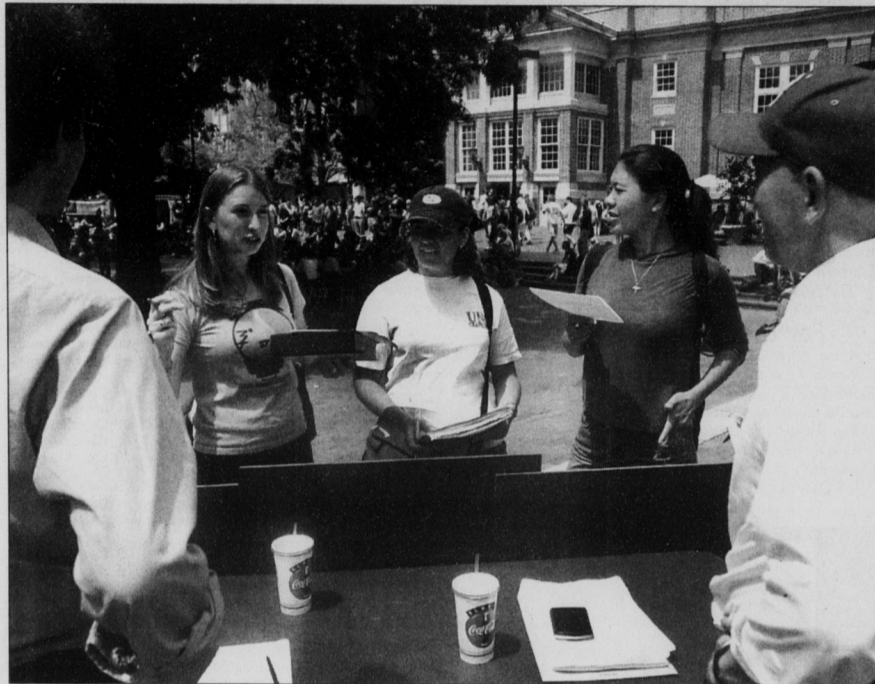
"We're very interested in student input," Mullan said.

Polshek Partnership was hired to plan the Arts Common - the section of campus between Cameron Avenue and Franklin Street and from South Columbia Street to the edge of McCorkle Place, as well as Playmakers Theatre and Gerrard Hall.

Hazard and Mullan have been meeting with the arts-related departments on campus to determine what the program needs are. "What we've done so far is programming - talking to the users about what they need," Hazard said.

"The next step, which is starting now, is to locate the new programs and decide

See ARTS COMMON, Page 6



Sophomores Kristen Kidd (left), Shaynah Kleber, and Gina Flakes talk with Polshek Partnership Architects Peter Mullan (left) and Duncan Hazard in the Pit on Thursday afternoon.

DTH/KIMBERLY CRAVEN

# N.C. Keeps AAA Bond Rating, Put on Watch

By DANIEL BLANK  
Staff Writer

North Carolina once again held onto its prized AAA bond rating, but the state was warned Wednesday that it could lose that status if the state's budget picture continues to dim.

Despite receiving the highest ranking possible, the state was placed under "credit watch negative" by Moody's Investors Service.

Bond ratings determine how much money a state has to pay when it borrows money. If the bond rating drops, the state might have to pay millions more in interest payments.

Ten states received AAA standing from Moody's, but North Carolina was the only one of the group to be put on the watch list. North Carolina also was placed on the watch list in the early 1990s, when the state was facing a similar budget crunch.

Moody's analyst Caroline Cruise said the service looks at the economic environment, debt levels and the fiscal analysis of the state to determine the rating.

Cruise said Moody's will take 90 days to review North Carolina's fiscal condition before deciding whether to keep the state at the AAA level or bump it down. "Basically, we'll look over these 90 days at the budgetary debate, what tax returns look like and look at the economy as a whole," she said.

Katherine Kirkman, director of public affairs for the N.C. Department of State Treasurer, said Moody's will be watching the state closely to confirm that the state is

moving in the right direction. "They're looking for North Carolina to step up to the plate and make sure our budget is balanced and that we're taking measures to be fiscally responsible," Kirkman said.

She said a higher rating results in lower interest rates on borrowing because it shows the state has a good credit history.

Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange, said keeping the AAA bond rating will be important for the N.C. General Assembly when it is called into session in May.

Lee said that if he were to rank the issues facing the legislature, bond rating would be high on the list, behind education spending and health care. "We can remain AAA if we can position ourselves so we have good revenue streams, reduce spending in line with the projected revenues, maintain a zero-growth budget, keep a strong commitment to adequate revenue funding and a long-term commitment to education," he said.

But Lee said he is confident the legislature will ensure that the state's rating does not drop. "I think we will (keep the rating) because it's so important," he said. "Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate - we're all committed to it."

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# Student Nurses Love for Medicine, Young People

By JENNIFER DRYE  
Staff Writer

UNC junior Siddharth Sura has always led a life of service.

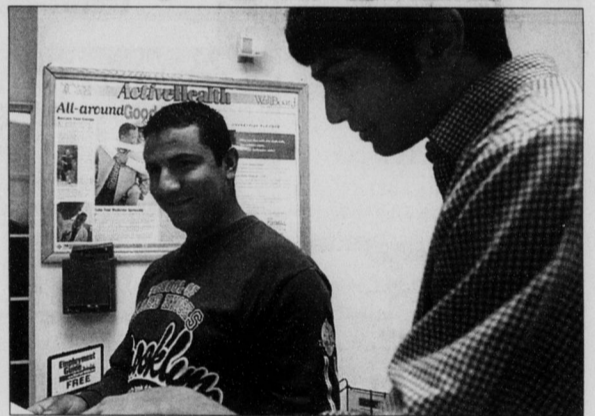
He has spent countless hours in hospital emergency rooms and local classrooms, and he has sacrificed several summers to spend time learning about medical practices in India.

Further dedicating himself to combining his love of medicine with his compassion for children, the health policy and administration major founded Student Health Outreach at UNC-CH in fall 2000.

His goal was to create a way to educate parents about the health care options available for their children.

The organization was originally an idea proposed as a service project for N.C. Scholars. When the group decided not to pursue the project, Sura adopted the idea to carry out himself.

SHOUT at UNC-CH has 70 members working to link parents to government programs like Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice that provide free or low-cost health insurance. The group works with the county Health Department, Student Health Action Coalition and El Centro Latino to find opportunities to speak with local residents.




Siddharth Sura (right) reviews health care forms with Juan Pablo of Chapel Hill. Sura is the founder Student Health Outreach.

DTH/REBECCA O'DOHERTY

SHOUT at UNC-CH became a University-recognized organization in January of 2001, and Sura said he expects it to continue growing and ultimately become independent of larger programs. One way SHOUT at UNC-CH See SURA, Page 6

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