

Sciences INSPIRE Student Initiative

Sophomore to place students in schools

By JOELLE RUBEN
Staff Writer

When Rohit Prakash began contemplating a program to supplement the science curriculum at nearby schools last April, he didn't anticipate much interest. "I was expecting maybe 15, 20 e-mails from hopeful volunteers," he said. But Prakash, now a sophomore, said he has received more than 500 e-mail responses to join INSPIRE, his initiative to improve science education by pairing UNC students with area teachers.

In an e-mail sent to recruit volunteers, Prakash wrote that participants will enter the classroom weekly to "teach a science mini-lesson, help with field trips or assist the teacher in teaching science to kids."

The name INSPIRE is not an acronym but a reminder of the program's mission to "inspire students to want to do science," he said.

Prakash said the program, which

includes elementary and high school classrooms, is designed to actively engage local students in a specific subject matter.

"Most students are learning facts from books, but they're not really seeing anything," he said. "You can't have a passion for something if you can't see it."

He emphasized that INSPIRE is different from other volunteer organizations because it allows participants to take initiative, whether conducting an experiment or planning a lesson for 25 students.

Jennifer Allred, a pre-kindergarten teacher at Carrboro Elementary School, hopes to use an INSPIRE volunteer to run her classroom's weekly science center. She said college-aged students can devise basic experiments and explain things simply enough for the youngest students.

"My students are 4 and 5 years old, but it's important for them to learn about basic processes and the environment to gain awareness," she said.

Although she has hosted student teachers and APPLS students during previous years, she has never had a volunteer who focused solely on science. "We have a great science program at Carrboro Elementary," she said. "This

program will take that to another level."

University students participating in INSPIRE will receive one hour of course credit, but Prakash said he expects volunteers to spend two to three hours per week in the classroom.

Students will receive their assignments Thursday and then will set their own schedules. Participation will be verified through teacher evaluations, sign-in sheets and volunteer journal entries, he said.

Undergraduate and graduate students from all majors filled the 50 "course" spots on a first-come, first-served basis.

Prakash said the course credit is important during INSPIRE's first year because it will encourage volunteers to meet all program requirements.

Still, he hopes to run the program on a strictly volunteer basis in the future. He added that students reacted favorably to this potential change when he mentioned it at a recent interest meeting.

"That says something about our student body and the idea of community service here as a whole," he said. "I'm amazed."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

Construction Limits Space For Theater Productions

By BROOK CORWIN
Staff Writer

Campus construction has sent some student theater groups in search of performance sites for the upcoming semester, with several popular venues unavailable because of renovations.

As the Student Union prepares to begin Phases II and III of its three-phase renovation project, its underground Cabaret is closed for use. The Union's Great Hall is scheduled to close next semester.

Ryan Donahoe, director of events planning for the Union, said the closing of the two sites has put a strain on student theater groups, which often have used both venues to stage their performances.

"(Theater groups) are scrambling to find performance venues," Donahoe said. "There's not much space right now because all the renovations fell at the same time."

Construction on the Union is scheduled to resume this winter, and the final two phases of the project are expected to

take 10 months to finish.

Donahoe said his department has provided student theater groups with lists of alternative venues such as Gerrard Hall and the Union Auditorium, which will not close for renovations.

But Leigh Conaway, producer for the student theater group Company Carolina, said weekend dates for those venues and the Great Hall already have been booked for this semester. Conaway said her group is now looking at scheduling fall performances in large classroom spaces, which she said would limit the types of shows the company could perform.

Student theater producers said the closing of Memorial Hall for renovation has worsened the space crunch, forcing big-name acts to be scheduled in the secondary venues normally open for theater groups.

"It's sort of like a domino effect," said Carolyn Shook, producer for Lab! Theatre. "All the groups are being indirectly or directly affected by each of the closings."

Donahoe said some theater groups are looking into the possibility of scheduling performances in the Union Auditorium or Playmakers Theatre on weekdays instead of Friday and Saturday nights.

One group that did have success reserving Gerrard Hall this semester is the Pauper Players, which moved its annual Winter Revue from the Cabaret to Gerrard this coming February.

But Jean Kerley, an administrator with Pauper Players, said the venues' crowded schedules will force the group to cut back on the number of shows or rehearsal time.

Kerley also said that with not enough performance room to go around, even groups that are able to schedule performance dates are feeling the negative effects of the space crunch.

"The groups on campus shouldn't have to compete to foster the growth of the UNC arts community," she said. "It feels like we have to beat each other out."

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

carolina union activities board
a student programming organization

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Lack of Space to Hurt Shows, Budgets

Groups anticipate smaller audiences

By HARMONY JOHNSON
Senior Writer

Student-run theater companies will be scaling down their productions and bracing for tighter budgets this year as campus construction projects shrink available stage space.

Theatergoers can expect to see smaller casts, simpler scenery and possibly higher ticket prices as UNC acting groups vie for performance sites.

Pauper Players and Company Carolina are both dealing with the temporary loss of the Cabaret, now off-limits as the Student Union prepares for further renovations, scheduled for completion in late 2003.

Leigh Conaway, a producer for Company Carolina, said the group used to rely on the Cabaret when its usual venue, Swain Hall, was booked.

Departmental issues in Swain, which arose last spring, compounded the loss of the Union space. The company was left with only one guaranteed performance in Swain Hall this year.

The group has few options. Venues such as the Great Hall, Gerrard Hall and the Union Auditorium have already been claimed by events that would normally book Memorial Hall. Company Carolina found venues for most of its planned spring shows, but sites for its fall performances are still up in the air.

The group might have to compromise on show dates, moving them later in the semester and reducing the number and size of shows.

While smaller shows need less money than more elaborate productions, they'll likely draw smaller audiences as well.

The group also will perform fewer musicals than usual because musicals require twice as many actors as plays, she said. "We usually do a big musical in the fall and that's just not going to happen," Conaway said.

For the Pauper Players, the biggest hardship has been the loss of its storage space, said Adam Kuykendal, head administrator for the group. The group had housed costumes and props in the basement of Cobb Residence Hall for the last 10 years. Building renovations forced them out in May.

"We had to throw away years of sets and costumes," he said. "That was really sad to see go."

Salvaged items went to Company Carolina or were dispersed among the group's members for storage in apartments, closets and car trunks, he said.

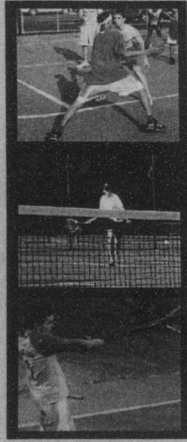
The group will depend more on cast members for costumes and use fewer props to maintain its operations. The group's tightened budget might even result in higher ticket prices for students and faculty, Kuykendal said.

"It's not something we want to do now," he said. "It's possible that we'll have to consider that."

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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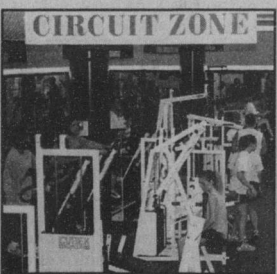
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