

Carrboro, Chapel Hill Developing Differently

By KATHRYN GRIM
Staff Writer

Carrboro and Chapel Hill share similar development goals, but the towns' distinct cultures, based on differing pasts, ensure that neither town plans to become the other.

Despite the similarity of the New Vision for Downtown Carrboro and the Comprehensive Plan for Chapel Hill, staff and longtime residents of both towns do not predict that either will be willing to give up individuality for progress.

The Carrboro Board of Aldermen last week discussed for the second meeting in a row whether to increase the town's height limitations to allow four- and five-story mixed-use buildings downtown.

Chapel Hill at the end of January approved similar changes to its development regulations as part of its Land-Use Management Ordinance.

Both towns have expressed interest in concentrating growth into a dense downtown area to prevent sprawl and to protect the rural buffer created by the 1986 Orange County-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Joint Planning Land-Use Plan.

After listening to reports from town staff and advisory boards and comments from Carrboro residents, the Board of Aldermen has requested further information about height limitations. It particularly was interested in the development of language that would protect historic buildings downtown. The board is scheduled to reach a decision in mid-March.

Originally a small-town neighbor of Chapel Hill, Carrboro is trying to deal with growth while retaining its village atmosphere.

Carrboro began as a mill town that sprung up around the railroad built to serve Chapel Hill at the end of the 19th century. Carrboro was home to the poorer white population of the area, whereas Chapel Hill was the more affluent and progressive part of town, said

Alderman Jacquelyn Gist.

As UNC expanded, the areas around it grew. The mill lost its standing as the center of Carrboro's economy, and by the 1970s, the old mills were converted into new houses.

New residents found more affordable housing in Carrboro than in Chapel Hill, and an area that once had been a haven for racial tension became a home for poorer minorities.

Over the years, Carrboro evolved from "that town across the tracks from Chapel Hill" into a vibrant, artistic community.

Alderman Joal Broun said a defining characteristic of Carrboro is that it is less suburban than Chapel Hill. "Carrboro is about neighborhoods," Broun said. "I certainly want to keep that flavor."

The cost of housing in the former mill town has been rising with Carrboro's growing popularity and recognition.

Chapel Hill also has evolved beyond its university town status, said Town Council member Mark Kleinschmidt. "Downtown Chapel Hill used to just be taverns and boarding houses," he said. "Now we're part of the Triangle."

Gist said that although Carrboro has a completely different atmosphere from Chapel Hill, the two have grown together.

"It had been that Carrboro was very blue-collar and Chapel Hill was very Ivy Walls, and the two didn't meet much," she said. "I think that distinction is completely gone. We're two distinct entities that form one community."

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New Job Doesn't Come With New Sex

By LAUREN RIPPEY
Senior Writer

An estimated 1,000 people in the United States choose to undergo sex change surgeries each year.

Despite these large numbers, few teachers and school administrators who choose to change their sex actually return to their positions following their transition.

Leandra Vicci, a UNC computer science professor and the director of the Microelectronic Systems Laboratory, was hired by the University as Vern Chi in 1981.

In 2000, Chi underwent gender transition surgery, and since then, Vicci successfully has patented a life-saving invention and continues to be an asset to the computer science field.

But Vicci's career fate is largely atypical to cases around the country, where transsexual school faculty and administrators have faced immense challenges and criticisms and have even lost their jobs for undergoing such surgeries.

In the fall of 2001, a middle school principal in Wilmette, Ill., faced harsh critique when she announced her gender transition.

Community members and parents of pupils at the school Deanna Reed served at for more than 12 years said they were concerned about the effect the principal's transition would have on their pubescent children.

However, at a public school board meeting with more than 250 in attendance, the Wilmette school board confirmed its commitment to keep Reed in her position.

In 1999, an award-winning teacher in Sacramento, Calif., was placed on administrative leave when he told his principal that he would be returning to

school in the fall as Dana Rivers, a woman.

After months of controversy and media attention, Rivers resigned from the school in exchange for a \$150,000 settlement and agreement that all record of the matter be removed from her file.

In Rivers' case, pupils and a majority of the community were supportive and accepting of the educator, who had once won the school's top teaching award. A handful of district parents, though, brought pressure to the school board to dismiss Rivers.

Seth Jaffe, a staff attorney for the N.C. American Civil Liberties Union, said there is a term used to describe situations such as these.

A heckler's veto is when unpopular speech and actions can be vetoed by a minority of individuals who don't like them. Jaffe said the ACLU's position is contrary to giving power to this veto and rather is to focus on the equality issue at hand.

But Laurie Charest, UNC's associate vice chancellor for human resources, said the University rarely has to address this issue.

"We do not have to deal with the parents of our students because our students are adults," Charest said.

But despite lack of parental dissonance, the University takes measures to deal with issues of sexuality within faculty and staff members.

Charest said that in her experience at the University, human resources works closely with the individual faculty members to offer support.

"There is not really a certain policy in place on how to deal with these issues," she said. "Our policy is that we don't discriminate on the basis of sex."

Charest said discussions typically are set up within the department to allow things to go smoothly.

"We rely completely on the employee and their doctor to determine when they want to officially change their records within the University," she said. "We take their word on these matters."

Charest said her experience has been that in the cases where employees have undergone these surgeries - Vicci's case is not the first - co-workers were extremely supportive.

"What matters is that you treat people appropriately in the work environment, no matter how you feel," Charest said.

Vicci said she felt this sort of appropriateness when she confided in fellow co-workers and University administration.

"I carefully selected the colleagues that were most important to me, and I provided them a written document to look over," Vicci said. "I followed that by meeting with them to discuss and answer questions, and I was pleasantly surprised with how accepting everyone was."

Although she was concerned particularly about reactions from her more devoutly religious co-workers, Vicci was told by one of her closest colleagues that he wasn't in the judging business, he was in the loving business.

To alert higher administration, Vicci also engaged in a joint meeting with the department chairman and associate chairman for administration. They then carried the news to the dean, provost and the late Chancellor Michael Hooker.

Vicci said she was particularly moved in the summer of 1999, when Hooker, despite being near the end of his battle with terminal cancer, sent an encouraging note saying that he admired her courage and wished her well.

Regardless of the support she received, Vicci said she knew her job security would not be guaranteed. "I had no idea whether I'd have a

job after I transitioned," Vicci said.

"But the reactions of my colleagues could have changed my career path but never my decision."

Jaffe said federal and state laws state that an individual cannot be fired on the basis of gender.

"The fine line is whether or not an administrator is being fired for their actual sex change," he said. "That becomes a question for the courts."

Since her transition, Vicci has had a patent issued on a design that combines the global positioning system with a microprocessor and cell phone chips to make a wireless connection.

This instrument will allow someone in danger to pull a necklace's pendant and, in doing so, send geographical location information to an emergency response service such as 911. The tool also will allow for a direct connection so the operator can hear what's going on at the crime scene.

In her situation, Vicci said, she has been pleased that her working relationship has not been compromised. "My transition hasn't affected my work," she said. "I am still a part of the team and still work with the team."

But Vicci said she does see a difference working in a particularly male-dominated field.

"It is most certainly different being a female in the science field than being a male," she said. "In situations where I meet new people, it is interesting that I have a lot more proving of myself to do as a woman."

"There is a distinctive difference in how men and women are treated, and I can be more objective about it since I've now observed it from both sides of the fence."

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6-Year Graduation Rates Drop, Especially in Football

By JESSICA BONNEM
Staff Writer

Six-year graduation rates for student athletes at UNC have dropped slightly, according to a recent study, with football players accounting for the most significant decline.

According to the UNC-system 2001-02 Intercollegiate Athletic Report, the six-year graduation rate for student athletes fell from 70.8 percent for the class of 1995 to 70 percent for students who started their college careers in 1996.

The rate for football players dropped from 54.1 percent to 47.6 percent, a decline of almost 7 percentage points.

The NCAA also released a study that reported that UNC's graduation rates for football players are 5 percentage points below the ACC conference average.

But John Blanchard, senior associate athletics director, said that if only one more football player had graduated, the rate would not have changed.

"The percentages are not statistically

significant if you look at the numbers involved," he said.

But Blanchard said the continuing low graduation rates for football players still is alarming.

"We want football (rates) to be much higher," he said. "Next year it will be at least 70 percent."

To combat declining graduation rates nationwide, the NCAA is implementing new academic requirements in the fall.

The new guidelines will place less emphasis on SAT scores in the college admissions process, allowing good high school grade point averages to compensate for poor SAT scores.

Once admitted, student athletes will have to maintain a 1.8 GPA in their freshman and sophomore years and a 2.0 GPA after that point.

Blanchard said he had serious doubts about the new policy's effectiveness in raising graduation rates.

"If it's easier to get into school and harder to stay in school, I just don't think it will increase the graduation

rate," he said.

But former UNC-system President Bill Friday - who headed the Knight Commission on Higher Education, which examined academic integrity in college athletics - said he does not think these objections are well-founded.

"(This policy) is the product of an awful lot of work by some highly qualified people in the NCAA," he said. "They think the best way to advantage the student athlete is through a program like the one they're implementing. We should give it a try."

Although he is unable to assess the new policy's effects on graduation rates, Friday said the guidelines will ensure that student athletes receive more academic support.

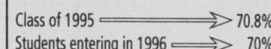
"Athletes will get considerable help," he said. "Most institutions feel a moral duty to do (their) best to qualify young individuals for gainful employment after graduation."

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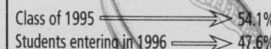
Athletes Graduating

New guidelines for academic requirements for student athletes (being implemented by NCAA next fall) state that athletes must keep a 1.8 GPA freshman and sophomore years and have a 2.0 GPA after that.

Six-year graduation rates for student athletes at UNC:



Rates for football players at UNC:



SOURCE: UNC SYSTEM 2001-02 INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC REPORT DTH/PRISCILLA TSAI

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