



an Art of the Past

University budget cuts result in the loss of Arts Carolina, a 3-year-old umbrella organization, leaving its director without a job, its separate parts without a leader and administrators in mourning

BY NICK PARKER, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

The arts community has never been a cohesive unit. Each of the eclectic fields of the fine arts — dramatic, studio, musical, performance, written — has its own lingo, its own advocates, its own world.

Weaving together a song and dance in front of a massive modern mural is a logical step in creating a mixed media production, but bringing it all together is another story.

"It is very difficult to bring a bunch of different, ego-driven performance folks together collectively," said Jim Ketch, chairman of the UNC Department of Music. "Everyone has

their own goals and own idea of what message they want to tell."

Art, no matter the form, is a vehicle for expression. It is sacred because it is so individual. Therein lies the problem in bringing the arts community together for a single, collective goal.

But for the past three years, Arts Carolina — an umbrella arts organization established in January 2000 — has made such collaboration possible. Arts Carolina, or more specifically its director, Amy Brannock, focused voices, events, volunteers, ideas and creations from across the campus community on a central goal. And it worked.

Arts Carolina consistently updated a Web site promoting the arts, printed a tabloid section every semester highlighting almost every campus arts event, established a balanced working relationship with town and University officials and organized massive events of its own, combining the skills and expertise of various University departments.

"Arts Carolina and Amy really pulled their weight," Ketch said. "She exceeded the initial hopes and even the idea of the program." But a dream can't last forever.

As of June 30, Arts Carolina is no more. The nation is experiencing its worst budget crisis since World War II, and its effects can be seen everywhere.

UNC alone lost \$23.7 million in funding this year, and cuts have been felt all over campus. From computer labs and class funds to HEELS 4 Health and the First Year Initiative, administrators faced a series of tough decisions about what to nix.

Arts Carolina, with a \$120,000 annual budget, was one of the largest cuts. When it was established three years ago, it was a pilot program funded by the College of Arts and Sciences.

But in December 2002, Arts Carolina received a glowing review from a committee headed by Darryl Gless, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and officials decided Arts Carolina should become a permanent program.

Its funding was renewed temporarily for the spring 2003 semester while leaders searched for permanent funding. The money was never found.

"Between December and May, clearly not enough efforts were made to find new funding," Brannock said. "I was never allowed to commission directly to the administration and was never given a satisfactory answer about the money I asked about. Apparently, other things took priority."

Those other priorities, administrators say, were exactly the motivation for the program's elimination.



Top: Students share their views on the Iraqi conflict at last spring's Prayer for Humanity. Above: The Sept. 11 memorial wall was erected to give citizens a form of free expression.

Gless — the same Gless who so vehemently praised Arts Carolina in December — had to make cuts within his college, and he chose to preserve as many classes as possible.

"There was just no money this year for extra programs," Gless said. "I drafted that (December) report myself, but my responsibility is to protect, first, programs that serve an educational purpose."

Brannock said that she understands and accepts the cuts but that she is frustrated by what she views as the sudden and cruel nature of the process.

"I have been disappointed in the way that I was treated," Brannock said. "I was given no severance package, only a two-month notice that Arts Carolina would be eliminated, and no preferential treatment in finding another job in the University. The job ended, and I was left on my own."

But since the University is, first and foremost, about academics, administrators said they believe the core curriculum — not extracurriculars — must be its primary focus.

"Amy was a real champion of the arts with high visibility in the University, and she did

a great job. No one is disputing that," Provost Robert Shelton said. "But we have to make sure that we have quality classes and instructors. Otherwise, we compromise our reputation as a leading public university."

But that doesn't mean Arts Carolina will not be missed. Students and departments have come to depend on the Arts Carolina calendar and its organizational efforts.

Student Body President Matt Tepper established new Cabinet co-chairmen in the spring — the Arts Advocates/Liaisons — who were slated to work closely with Arts Carolina.

"This cut is hard on everyone — the students, the departments, the arts liaisons," Tepper said. "It seems to me like the University is stopping and reorganizing, which may be better for the future but is creating problems now."

What the program's loss really means for students, the arts liaisons and especially University departments is a lot more work with fewer tangible results.

The Arts Carolina steering committee,

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BRIEF HISTORY

Spring 2000
The Arts Carolina Web site is established soon after the program's initiation in January. It provides a common place for promotion and organization of arts events. In the coming months, the Web site begins to run calendars for the arts community.

Sept. 19, 2001
The Sept. 11 memorial wall, erected around the flagpole at Polk Place and serving as a blank slate for student reactions to the terrorist attacks, is dedicated by members of the arts community. It was dismantled by members of the Chapel Hill Fire Department one month after the attacks.

February 2002
Chancellor Moeser and a special committee, along with Arts Carolina, begin discussion about a public art program for UNC.

Sept. 11, 2002
In cooperation with the mathematics department, Arts Carolina sponsors what is arguably its most memorable event — the stone spiral Sept. 11 memorial. Circling the Polk Place flagpole once more, the spiral of small stones — one for each life lost — ran through six wreaths commemorating the six UNC alumni killed in the attacks.

December 2002
As the program's three-year pilot period expires, the Arts Carolina Evaluation Committee grants temporary funding through the College of Arts and Sciences. A task force report urges that Arts Carolina funding not only be continued, but increased.

March 30, 2003
The Arts Carolina-sponsored Performance for Humanity takes place at the University United Methodist Church. An evening of drama, spoken word and song, the event allows members of the UNC community to voice their opinions of the impending war.

June 30, 2003
Amy Brannock is informed April 25 that Arts Carolina will receive no further funding. After running many successful events on temporary, decreased funding, the program permanently ceases to exist at the end of June.



DTH FILE PHOTO

Chancellor Moeser joined students and citizens in remembrance at Arts Carolina's first anniversary Sept. 11 memorial.

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ONLINE

Apparently, age finally has caught up with flipping, twirling martial artist Jackie Chan, as special effects and wire-fu rule the action sequences of "The Medallion."