

Study decries inequities in graduations

ECSU, ECU cited as positive models

BY WHITNEY ISENHOWER
STAFF WRITER

The graduation rate gap between whites and other students at U.S. public universities is at an alarming high, according to a report issued last week.

"A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates in Four-Year Colleges and Universities," a report issued by think tank The Education Trust, states that the graduation rates of low-income and minority students are consistently lower than those of their peers.

Nationwide, the report states, only 7 percent of lower-income students earn a bachelor's degree by age 26, as opposed to 60 percent of higher-income students. At UNC-Chapel Hill, 82 percent of white students graduate in six years, compared with 70 percent of black students.

Kevin Carey, the report's author, said researchers found an average gap of 10 percent to 11 percent between white students and black students at most institutions, putting the University right along the trend line.

Still, he added, some universities are doing well.

"Among the schools that succeeded their peers, the common thread is that they are not leaving the issue of student progression through college to chance," Carey said.

His report states that two schools in the UNC system — Elizabeth City State University and East Carolina University — are performing exceptionally well in lessening the gap.

Of the 2,000 students at ECSU, a historically black college, about

three-fourths are black. Two-thirds have household incomes that could qualify them for federal Pell Grants.

Still, in 2002, ECSU had a graduation rate of 60 percent for its black students and 53 percent for all students. Its peer institutions average 37 percent for blacks and 39 percent for all students.

Carey said that in his talks with Carolyn Mahoney, ECSU's provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, Mahoney said the school's success comes from a focus on easing students' transition from high school to college, promoting a connection between students and campus and having a mandatory attendance policy for all classes.

And ECU, the third-largest school in the UNC system, boasts a 54 percent graduation rate for all students and a 60 percent rate for black students. Like ECSU, it performs well when stacked up against its peers: ECU's sister schools have a 41 percent graduation rate for all students and a 32 percent rate for blacks.

Carey said a variety of factors help close the graduation gap. Making college more affordable, improving secondary education preparation for college, focusing on the first year of college and strengthening academics and advising all contribute to better rates.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, Provost Robert Shelton said the University works hard to decrease its gap.

"It's just making sure we don't leave people hanging out there, waking up in four years and realizing they don't have the credits to graduate."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Tour aims to reach out to citizens

Database initiated to inform state

BY FRED LAMECK
STAFF WRITER

Chancellor James Moeser announced his plans last week to tour the state in order to strengthen the connection between the University and N.C. residents.

During their May 27 meeting, Moeser told members of the UNC Board of Trustees that he plans to visit all regions of the state and commit a significant amount of time to his public service initiative, "Carolina Connects."

During the tour he will be highlighting the ways the University serves the communities and the people of North Carolina.

"Our message is that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill serves North Carolina every day in meaningful, relevant ways," Moeser said in a press release. "In short, 'Carolina Connects.'"

As he travels across the state Moeser will be discussing the University's work in economic development, healthcare and public education. He will be speaking with community leaders, elected officials, alumni and parents.

A number of UNC administrators will join Moeser in his trips across the state, including Mike Smith, dean of the School of

Government, and William Roper, dean of the UNC School of Medicine.

Moeser will not only be informing citizens of the University's work in their communities but is also planning to find out more opportunities for UNC to connect with the state and its issues.

Moeser also announced at the BOT meeting the debut of the new Public Service Database. He said the database is intended to be a source of help for the state. The database, produced by the Carolina Center for Public Service, catalogues more than 700 projects across all 100 of North Carolina's counties.

The purpose of the of the Internet database is to give an account of the ways the University is serving the different areas of the state. It also allows users to find out how to get involved in many of the University's projects, said Lynn Blanchard, director of the Carolina Center for Public Service.

"We hope the database will help interested parties learn about public service the University is engaged in, where it is happening, who the community partners are, and how to contact someone at the University to learn more," Blanchard said in a press release.



UNC NEWS SERVICES/DAN SEARS
Farmer Steve Mitchell shows seedlings to UNC faculty and administrators during a trip to his farm in Bunn during the 2004 Tar Heel Bus Tour.

The database allows users to search for projects by location and access links on a state map. Users can also look up specific UNC organizations such as the Campus Y or UNC collaborators like A Helping Hand.

Each of the projects contain links and contact information that allow users to get more information, Blanchard said.

Blanchard said that as Moeser travels around the state she hopes to add more projects to the data-

base. "UNC-Chapel Hill is a public university and has a real legacy of serving the community," Blanchard said Tuesday. "The chancellor's tour of the state reminds us this important mission."

The database can be accessed through the "Search the Public Service Database" link at <http://www.unc.edu/cps>.

Contact University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

UNC to launch cell phone initiative

BY JOSEPH R. SCHWARTZ
SENIOR WRITER

UNC is forging ahead into the information age, adding cell phones to its already expansive technological offerings.

Campus officials hope to roll out the new Carolina Wireless Initiative by the time C-TOPS begins next week.

The program will offer students cell phones with Cingular service at a low cost and eventually will provide link up opportunities to laptops.

Three models are being offered

ranging in cost from free to \$99.99. Calling plans begin at \$39.99 a month.

Phones will be serviced through the Academic Technology and Networks, which also fixes laptops.

Although CWI is a completely voluntary program, Associate Vice Chancellor John Oberlin said that eventually it will act as a supplement to the Carolina Computer Initiative.

"What we're trying to do is provide a lower cost solution with better functionality to the students," he said. "But in time ... we'll start

bringing more and more truly academic applications."

He said CCI has spawned an e-mail revolution on campus with students packing computer labs to check their inboxes.

Students who choose to buy one of the high tech cell phones would be able to avoid the lines and check e-mail on their phones.

Oberlin said a lot more innovative applications could be added further down the road.

Students could use the CWI phones to check Blackboard and the campus calendar for assignments and class cancellations.

Cingular was selected to provide the service because they have the most cutting edge technology at the most affordable price, Oberlin said.

Officials hope that eventually the phone will utilize five-digit dialing for campus calls and Cingular offers the greatest probability of achieving this goal, Oberlin said.

All of the exciting innovations aside, Oberlin said at the very

least the service will be cheaper than going through an outside retailer.

"One of ways we intend to get lower prices is to buy a couple thousand phones at one time," he said. "Currently Any one student is kind of at the whim of the market."

Oberlin said that students shouldn't expect the phones to offer all of the new technology immediately but the program is young and will progress quickly.

"It's going to do some really neat things over time," he said. "You have to start somewhere and this is the pilot."

The phones can be ordered through the CWI Web site: www.unc.edu/cwi.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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CORRECTIONS

•The outline for a page 2 photo misspelled the name of Lickity Split, the business depicted.

To report corrections, contact Managing Editor Laura Youngs at layout@email.unc.edu.

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