

YOUNG VOTERS
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with the Democratic ticket, which stars Kerry and includes the energetic North Carolina native John Edwards.

But even in a traditionally liberal hotbed such as the UNC community, you can find supporters of the Grand Old Party.

The stances taken by Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney on issues of morality, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, have kept followers faithful.

"People love this president," said Stephanie Evans, state chair for N.C. Students for Bush.

Turnout among voters under 25 has steadily decreased since 1972, but experts expect a rise in poll attendance this November, both among young voters and overall.

And so, for the first time in a long time, students matter again.

"Since this looks like it's going to be a close race, even the political parties are looking where those votes are going to come from," Delli Carpini said.

And some older voters, such as UNC Chancellor James Moeser, are encouraging young people to join in the healthy debate that stems from an evenly split electorate.

"I would be disappointed, frankly, if this campus doesn't become sort of electrified," Moeser said.

"I would love to see students really become so engaged that there is a massive turnout of students that vote."

University Editor Emily Steel contributed to this article. Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

COVENANT
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Shirley Ort, UNC's director of scholarships and student aid, said she hopes high school students who come from low-income families will not be discouraged from attending a university because of financial reasons.

"Eventually, I think word will get out that if you do well and get in here, you'll get funding," said Ort, who initiated the program.

The percentage of low-income students who graduate has been found to be much higher among those who attend a university than it is among those who go to a community college.

Archie Ervin, director of the Office for Minority Affairs, said that it is especially important to help low-income students come to UNC because they have demonstrated that they are among the top students by being admitted to the University.

"Many students who are Carolina Covenant students have been dealt an unfortunate hand to start with," Ervin said. "Their hard work and diligence has paid off."

Another Carolina Covenant student, Tasrif Ahmed moved to Durham from Bangladesh five years ago.

He said that the covenant will allow him to focus on academics, rather than on finding a way to pay for college. And he said that there is a message high school students should know about going to college.

"If you work hard ... there's always a way to get in (to college)," he said. "Don't worry about the money." Princeton University has a simi-

lar system in place, but UNC was the first public university to implement such a program. Several schools have contacted Ort about starting similar programs since the initiative was announced.

Fred Clark, a UNC professor who met some covenant students through the University summer program, said that this initiative embodies the purpose of a state university — to serve the needs of the students.

"The sort of set the pace for the rest of the country," Clark said. "It does make us the university of the people of the state."

Ervin echoed the idea that the Carolina Covenant is consistent with UNC's being a state university.

"If you close the doors on people simply because they can't afford it, you're going to miss out on some extremely talented students," Ervin said.

If she had not received money through the Carolina Covenant, Lozada would probably have had to get a job or take our loans to pay for school, she said.

The covenant has made her feel like UNC is making an extra effort to help students pay for college, she said.

"I know how it feels ... not having support or that you might not go to college because of (a) financial situation," she said.

Lozada said that she was offered financial aid at other schools, but no other scholarship programs were as helpful as the Carolina Covenant.

"I think (Shirley Ort)'s like my little guardian angel here."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

UNIVERSITY
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"At the deepest level, students want to feel comfortable at UNC," said Student Body President Matt Calabria. "That means being able to speak out on certain issues or being comfortable in the class or reading certain books. It really means student engagement."

Chancellor James Moeser said this controversy is what comes with striving to become the leading public institution in the nation.

"I think that it is the nature of a flagship," he said. "The flagship is the ship that draws the fire. It is out in front. It's the price of being the leader. It's the price of being prestigious, and it's the price of where we're placed."

During the past academic year, events at UNC spurred a federal investigation into the actions of a University lecturer, calling into question freedom of speech in the classroom.

Numerous lawsuits were filed during the summer, and more could be on the horizon as the University seeks to strike a balance between freedom of expression and respectful discourse.

Another national debate already is underway. A Christian fraternity that was denied recognition after refusing to sign a University non-discrimination policy has garnered widespread attention.

"Because of the prominence of this University, it just serves as quite a lightning rod for national groups, in part, that really want to make a name for themselves," said Richard "Stick" Williams, chairman of the UNC Board of Trustees.

The struggle for growth and the rally for development extends beyond the lecture halls and classrooms scattered across campus — it has seeped into contentious town-gown relationships.

Developments of various University projects, including Carolina North, a 70-year project to create a mixed-use research park, have slowed to a crawling pace.

"The debate with the Council has been more polarized," said

Provost Robert Shelton. "Some of the people elected had a platform of being pretty tough with the University, and what that means is we have to reach out and have more contacts with the city."

The polarization, so evident at UNC, reflects a national pattern of division.

"I think it is part of the larger, whole red state, blue state, liberal, conservative split," Moeser said. "Our country is becoming more and more polarized, and we're just caught up in that whole dialectic."

But many say there will be a push this year to bridge that gap.

"We are critically examining ourselves and finding out how we can become a better university," Calabria said. "We really are building a foundation and looking very carefully at what we can do to improve ourselves."

After a historically controversial student body president election season last spring, Calabria adopted some of the other candidate's platform goals during his first months in office. "We went into student government with the mind-set that we are serving all students," he said.

Higher up in the ranks, Moeser, now in his fifth year as chancellor, also is a little more settled. For the first time in several years, all the vice chancellor positions are filled.

While it appears that the dust is settling, another school year, filled with debate, growth and development, has only just begun.

Like every year, there will be plenty of debate. The fraternity controversy already tops the list, and tuition increases, corporate signage, faculty retention and the displacement of parking spaces aren't far behind.

"I think it is a real test for us to be, to maintain an atmosphere in which people can have opposing views and they can have sharp differences and still do it in a context of civil discourse," Moeser said. "I still think that is it. If that can't happen on a university campus, then I worry about our country."

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AIRPORT
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"Right now we're looking at all our options," said Tony Waldrop, UNC's vice chancellor for research and economic development.

Waldrop added that officials are working with outside consultants to decide what the ideal solution would be. He said he hopes to present a solution to the University's Board of Trustees in the next few months.

University planners are looking at developing Carolina North around the airport or finding other airports suitable for AHEC.

Tom Bacon, director of AHEC, said that the program is working to find an alternative quickly but that the search isn't easy.

"It's hard to find (an airport) that is as convenient as (Horace Williams)," he said. "But we're trying to figure out how we can continue to operate and go forward with development."

Bacon said that the group has considered airports in Roxboro, Burlington and Durham but that a final decision has not been made.

AHEC also considered Raleigh-Durham International Airport, but Bacon said it was ruled out because delays and air traffic at the airport could have affected the program.

"There's just so much traffic getting there and traffic at the airport itself," he said. "And it's just a lot less convenient."

Waldrop said resolution of the airport issue is garnering the majority of the University's attention. "There are a lot of things we're considering," Waldrop said. "But right now, a lot of focus is going into the airport."

But even if debate over the airport is resolved soon, town officials warn that final approval of the project still could take a long time.

Mayor Kevin Foy said Town Council members are concerned about other issues related to the development, particularly transportation. He said those questions and concerns must be addressed before the town will approve the development plans.

"The town's major concern at this point is transportation," Foy said. "How do we handle the volume of people ... without putting a burden on the town?"

Since the University officially unveiled the Carolina North development plans in December, town officials and residents have worried that Carolina North will bring additional noise, congestion and road construction with the influx of commuters into Chapel Hill.

But Foy said that if the University addresses those situations aggressively and works with town officials, approval doesn't have to be a drawn-out process.

Council member Mark Kleinschmidt said that the pause created by the airport debate might allow the town to bring more of its concerns about the plan to the University's attention.

"I hope the town takes advantage of that time," he said. "There's no reason to sit on our hands right now."

He said that by making recommendations now, the town could tell the University what changes it sees as necessary while planners are altering the design.

Kleinschmidt also said he believes that the tract needs to be rezoned. This lag time might allow officials to save time in the future by rezoning now.

"Right now, it's kind of a hodgepodge of zones," Kleinschmidt said. "It's just a big mess."

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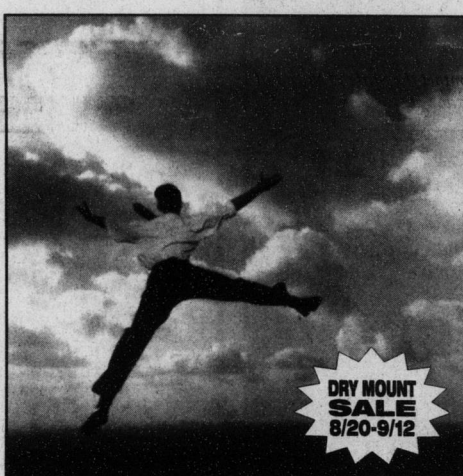
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