UNC leaders call research process safe

BY ALEX GRANADOS

Unethical behavior at academic research institutions across the country is causing concern for many groups, but officials say pro-cedures are in place to prevent misconduct at UNC.

Jack Corman, president of Institutional Review Board Services, a company that operates private ethics boards in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, said violations by research institutions held in high regard often are over-

"I think that there are serious structural problems at academic centers that are glossed over because of the reputation and esteem in which they are held," he

Corman said that there are at least a few scandals every decade at research institutions, and that the tendency is for academic researchers to dismiss any need for reform when they are singled out.

There is a tendency among academics that 'I'm better than you,'" he said. "So there is a patronizing attitude, even with regulations.

He cites such scandals as the Ellen Roche incident as examples of this academic arrogance.

Roche was a research volunteer for an asthmatic study, test-ing a new inhalable drug at Johns Hopkins University.

The study was approved by the school's ethics board, but the end result for Roche was death.

"Ellen Roche died because this board didn't do its homework,"

UNC is not exempt from allega-

UNC is not exempt from allega-tions of wrongdoing by a variety of groups, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. In 2001, PETA conducted investigations at UNC's animal research laboratories. The group documented abuse of the animals used, including overcrowding and failure to provide adequate vet-

erinary care.
Robert Lowman, associate vice rovost for research, said UNC's research procedures have improved since complaints were filed against

the University in 2002.
"I think that the attacks by PETA on this campus over the past few years make us better at what we do," Lowman said.

He said veterinary staff is on hand to oversee, the care of animals used in testing, and that UNC's review board does a thorough evaluation of all research projects planned. "At least 95 percent of the pro-

being and project design are all considered by the review board before a

research project is greenlighted. But Corman said that such projects often lack both preparation and attention to detail.

Researchers get too much inde-pendence in their work and not enough regulation, he said, and oversight boards don't do their

Mary Beth Sweetland, the senior vice president of PETA's research investigations department, said these problems are wide-spread, particularly in regard to

"I do think there is a systemic a universal problem," she said.

She cited specific well-renowned schools as major violators that fail to provide adequate attention and veterinary care to their animal research subjects

"These are failures to provide basic decencies required under the Animal Welfare Act," Sweetland

Many layers of protection, including a board that checks for conflicts of interest among researchers, are in place to ensure scrupulous adherence to rules and

But despite the meticulous

posals that come to the IRB, the IRB requires changes," he said.

Lowman added that animal well-lations are nothing but words on

Sweetland said UNC has not shown any evidence of change as recently as 2003.

"In 2003, we could not see evidence of improved veterinary care," she said, adding that she does not know what has happened since. "Maybe there was improvement.

I can only hope, because it could not get any worse

Lowman said the allegations directed toward UNC and other institutions will continue because of a fundamental difference in opinion between researchers and groups like PETA.

"There is always the debate as to whether we are ever justified in using animals in research at all,"

"That is a basic philosophical divide that I don't think PETA is

Still, Lowman insists that, despite past problems, UNC has done its best to juggle the demands of groups like PETA and the need for scientific research, all while

improving its procedures.
"It is a very different place today than it was a few years ago because of a very few people."

Contact the State & National

looks to freeze death penalty

BY MEGAN MCSWAIN STAFF WRITER

Gov. Mike Easley was presented Wednesday with 150 red handprints as a petition from the UNC Campaign to End the Death Penalty - part of continued efforts by death penalty opponents to pass a moratorium next year.

"There is increased support for a moratorium because of the recent exonerations," said Rep. Paul Luebke, D-Durham

The recent reviewing of the cases of Alan Gell and Darryl Hunt brought public attention to the flaws in the application of the death penalty.

Hunt was not on death row but served 18 years for the murder of Deborah Sykes. In 2004, he was exonerated when DNA testing was

applied to the investigation.

A new trial for Gell revealed that his original prosecutors withheld evidence. But Gell still was convicted of the murder of Allen Ray Jenkins and wrongfully sentenced to death.

The acquittals of Hunt and Gell

were two weeks apart.

The idea of a moratorium has

been proposed several times before.
A bill passed through the N.C.

Senate during the 2003 session but fizzled out on the House floor.
"We've not totally turned against the death penalty, but the questions about the implementation have grown more insistent and more intense," said Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern

Politics, Media and Public Life.

"It is the one penalty we can't come back and modify after it's become implemented. Once you've killed somebody, then it's irrevocable."

The Democratic majority in the legislature for the upcoming term has left many supporters of the

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"I expect to have sufficient Democratic and Republican sup-

port," Luebke said.

But some don't believe the Democratic majority ensures a freeze on executions

"I just don't think it is needed. The problems of the individual cases can be addressed right now," said Tom Lock, a Democratic district attorney for the 11th district.

Ann Warshaw, president of UNC's Campaign to End the Death Penalty, said racism is often a factor in sentencing. She pointed to a study conducted by UNC, along with the Common Sense Foundation and the N.C. Council of Churches, which found that cases with white victims are three-and-half times more likely to draw the death penalty.
She also said that many times,

unqualified attorneys represent defendants because the accused can't afford their own attorneys.

"I personally believe it is not worth the possible execution of one innocent person to provide the opportunity of vengeance for other people," Warshaw said.

Warshaw's primary goal is to educate students on campus about the faults of the death penalty in the state.

'The system as we have it right now does not have enough ways to prevent the possible executions of innocent persons," Warshaw said.

The future of the death penalty

remains unclear because the legisla-ture will be filled with new faces that have yet to vote on such a measure.

"I don't think the Democratic majority foretells that a moratorium is a prospect," Guillory said.

2004-2005 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

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IFC adds new site to shelter list

Another location has been added to the list of potential sites for the relocation of the Inter-Faith Council's men's homeless shelter.

The IFC now has expressed interest in looking at the townowned property adjacent to the

cemetery on Legion Road. "We've always had a number of different properties on a list that could be used," said Executive Director Chris Moran. "This piece has always been on our list."

Natalie Ammarell, former IFC president and chairwoman of stra-tegic development for IFC, submitted a petition to Chapel Hill Mayor

BY BLAIR RAYNOR

Carrboro's Latino community

will have the chance this year to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ

with a tradition familiar to some but new to the town

annual event celebrated in Mexico,

will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sunday

at the Carrboro Century Center. The event is being sponsored by El Centro Latino and the Church of

Tina Siragusa, the recently

appointed executive director of El Centro Latino, said Las Posadas,

meaning "the inn" in Spanish, com-memorates the Biblical story of Mary

and Joseph's journey to find shelter prior to the birth of Christ. Siragusa said this will be the first

time El Centro Latino will connect

with the area in such a way. Lisa Fischbeck, vicar of the Church

of the Advocate, said Las Posadas

will begin shortly after the church's weekly memorial service, which it will hold at El Centro Latino.

"As a church, (the Church of the

Advocate) is always looking for ways to engage in the community,"

Role-players will portray Mary and Joseph, and the Century Center will serve as "the inn."

Fischbeck said two members from her church have experienced Las Posadas in Utah and decided to

said he is hoping to have a Mexican native tell the story of the tradition

"We want to get someone who has a more personal way with the tradition," Olaiz said.

At the event, people will divide into groups of followers of Mary,

Joseph and innkeepers, Olaiz said. The groups then will sing traditional Mexican songs in both English

Olaiz said the event will include

the breaking of a piñata filled with candy and treats by the children— as is traditionally done in Mexico.

He said the event will be orga-nized to parallel Mexico's traditions

as closely as possible.

to start the event.

and Spanish.

bring the tradition to Carrboro. Hugo Olaiz, a member of the Church of the Advocate, is helping to organize the celebration and

"Las Posadas," which is an

STAFF WRITER

the Advocate.

Carrboro to start

Mexican tradition

Holiday event celebrates Christmas

Kevin Foy on Dec. 1, asking the town to consider opening discussions about the Legion Road property as a potential shelter site.

The petition was referred to Town Manager Cal Horton at Monday's Town Council meeting.

Horton now will discuss the potential for relocating the shelter to the site with Ammarell.

"It's good for us to look at several

properties to evaluate the pros and cons of each before making a decision," Moran said.

The shelter currently operates at

100 W. Rosemary St.
Ammarell said the IFC is trying to get comparable information about the property.

Latino employee and a Mexican native, said Las Posadas occurs in

Mexico nine days before Christmas.

The celebration varies by neighborhood but all locals participate.

In Monga and re-enact Mary and Joseph's journey, Ramirez said. The celebration lasts until Dec. 24.

When the journey ends, the town makes a large piñata for the children to break, and everyone

eats a Mexican specialty — tama-les — and drinks traditional holi-

day beverages, such as atoles and champurrados, Ramirez said. Olaiz said that having Las Posadas

in Carrboro will encourage the area

embrace its Latino population.

neighbors and to expose Anglos to the Mexican tradition of celebrating

Christmas," he said.

"We want to meet our Mexican

Contact the City Editor

at citydesk@unc.edu.

"It's good for us to look at several properties to evaluate the pros and cons of each before making a decision."

CHRIS MORAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTER-FAITH COUNCIL

"I think we feel an obligation to

look at every site," she said.

In the petition to Foy, Ammarell stated that the IFC is "interested in knowing more about the prop erty itself (e.g. size, topography) and about the process/conditions that might be associated with IFC's being able to take a deeper look at it as a potential site."

But IFC's desire to relocate has not been embraced by some community members.

IFC officials encountered controversy after they announced in August that a piece of property along Merritt Mill Road could be a potential site for relocation.

After the IFC acquired an option to purchase the property, residents began to speak out. Residents of the nearby Pine

Knolls community petitioned area elected officials to oppose the relo-cation, stating they did not want the shelter in their subdivision because it would attract crime to the area and be unsafe for children and senior citizens in the community. Residents and IFC officials met to

discuss the relocation, but both sides' positions remained unchanged.

But the IFC's "free look" at the Merritt Mill site ran out Nov. 30, meaning the IFC would have to pay if it were to continue looking at the site.

IFC officials say the expiration of the option does not mean that the Merritt Mill site has been

abandoned as a possibility.

"It's a good piece of property,"
Moran said. "We just need to have
a new discussion with the owners." Ammarell said the IFC wants to

keep all of its options open.
But the only locations the IFC is currently examining are the Merritt Mill site and the Legion

Road property, officials said. "We're always interested in any viable solutions for our facilities," Moran said.

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Alma Ramirez, an El Centro