

Historic airport's future uncertain

Airport tied to town and University

BY BRIANNA BISHOP
CITY EDITOR

Since its humble beginnings in 1928, the Horace Williams Airport has continually made its way into the town spotlight.

With plans for Carolina North looming in the future, the tract is once again making local history.

And if N.C. Area Health Education Centers program is relocated to the Raleigh-Durham International Airport, a new chapter might begin in the story of the site's history.

Doug Eyre, a former University professor and local historian, said the airport began as Martindale Field when Charlie Martindale, a local builder, purchased the 50 acre tract from Horace Williams in 1928.

At the onset of World War II, military preparedness was recognized as a necessity, and thus

a joint effort between UNC-CH, N.C. State University and Duke University was launched to build an airport and encourage training of civilian pilots, he said.

The 50-acre tract was purchased by the University from Martindale, and Williams willed his remaining land which totaled close to 1,000 acres to the school.

"He wrote in his will that he hoped the University would hold his property instead of selling it," stated an article in the Chapel Hill Weekly from Dec. 20, 1940.

The airport, renamed the Horace Williams Airport, became the second in the state to be formally recognized by the federal government, Eyre said, adding that it was also the largest university-owned airport in the United States.

"After the war, there was a big interest in small aircraft ownership," he said.

Out of that interest grew a small commercial airport, and the Chapel Hill Flying Club emerged providing flying lessons and aircraft rental, Eyre said.

As the town grew, so did fears about the safety of airplanes flying so close to residential areas.

"Gradually over the '50s, '60s and '70s in particular, there was a big boom of suburban growth," Eyre said.

He explained that while the airport once sat in isolation, it was now in the midst of neighborhoods and the relocated Chapel Hill High School.

In April 2001, a member of the Chapel Hill Flying Club was forced to make an emergency landing at the airport.

Two were involved in the crash, but no injuries were sustained.

According to an April 26, 2001 Daily Tar Heel article, the airport saw five crashes in three years.

"Some residents living nearby the airport see the risk of another

crash, especially a more destructive one, as a cause for alarm," the article stated.

As a result, the Chapel Hill Flying Club was evicted from the facility. Since then, AHEC has been the only group to utilize the airport, Eyre said.

AHEC continues to use the airport to fly its six planes.

The program, which began in the 1970s, aims to impact the availability of health care in the state especially in more rural areas, said AHEC director Tom Bacon.

A resolution in the state budget would allow the University to close the airport if AHEC is relocated to the Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

Concrete plans for Carolina North, the University's proposed satellite campus, will remain uncertain until the fate of the airport is decided.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Officials say provision doesn't usurp system

BY JOSEPH R. SCHWARTZ
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Despite a public outcry about a provision in the state budget that would grant tuition autonomy to UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University, officials maintain that the move would not be destructive to either the UNC system or tuition debates.

Records indicate that UNC-CH officials traded e-mails with Senate leaders and reviewed the provision line by line before it reached the Senate floor.

Even so, Chancellor James Moeser has declined to take a stance on the provision and officials have maintained that they looked at the legislation at the request of senators.

Both Moeser and Provost Robert Shelton said allowing the UNC Board of Trustees to set tuition would not change the process.

"If that provision were to be passed, I'm confident that the Board of Trustees would exercise a very responsible policy with regard to tuition," said Moeser.

Although he said the Board of Governors would do the same, he did say the body historically has been more reluctant to improve increases.

The reluctance was highlighted this year when Brad Wilson, chairman of the Board of Governors, called for a freeze on in-state tuition.

BOT members, who recommended a \$200 hike for in-state students, expressed frustration when the request was denied.

Moeser reiterated the concern to UNC-system President Molly Broad in an e-mail in April, alert-

ing her of the provision.

"As you know, there was widespread consternation on the BOT over the decision of the BOG to disregard the campus process and BOT recommendation on tuition," he wrote.

Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, said claims that the system would be irrevocably harmed if the provision is passed are unfounded.

"One size does not fit all," he said. "I think trustees are the people closest to the needs of the campus and also closest to the feelings of the students."

Even if the trustees are granted the final say, the BOG still would have influence as they appoint eight of the 12 members of the board.

Shelton said he feels strongly that the system wouldn't be damaged if its two major research universities were granted tuition freedom.

"Not everyone in the system has to be the same — has to be cut from the same mold," he said.

"In fact I would argue that means you don't have a system."

Moeser and Shelton both stressed that tuition is only one component of funding costly research and that corporate interaction, outside funding and grants can bolster efforts.

But the fundamental issue, they say, is remaining competitive.

"It's not about how to break up a system," Shelton said.

"It's about how to fund research universities."

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GRADUATION

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can catapult you to greatness. Your fulfillment extends far beyond your person and into your community."

Peter Gomes, professor and chaplain of Harvard University, parlayed these insights in his commencement speech, "The End is Where We Start From," beginning with his thoughts on public higher education.

"(N.C. citizens) have invested in you, as they have over 200 years, presumably because they believe that an educated citizenry is a good citizenry — that education and virtue somehow go together," he said.

Chancellor James Moeser said this year's class is equipped to show this — noting the resilience and strength the undergraduate group displayed after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which occurred early during the graduates' freshman year.

"As a class they have gone through the changes our country has experienced, and they are ready to enter a world that today seems far less certain and much more dangerous than it did (before the attacks)," he said.

But the core of Gomes' address laid in three pieces of advice.

With a voice only to come from a life lived at the pulpit, Gomes

encouraged the new graduates to cherish their failures.

"Cherish the things that have not gone right for you," he said. "Why? Because my sense is that most of us learn more from our failures than our successes."

The divinity scholar said considering failures allows for reflection. "Those are the occasions that invite the kind of inner reflection for which your education in this great place has prepared you."

Gomes also told the young adults to redefine personal success. He said he hopes they will do something not because they are good at it or because it pays well but because it is worth doing.

Finally, acknowledging the laughter and chattering from the end zone where undergraduates sat, Gomes said, "I want to suggest that you all try a little happiness."

"My advice to you is toss your balls while you can," he said as the beach balls popped back into the air.

"But all of your life has been a mere prelude to the day after tomorrow," Gomes said. "The day after tomorrow it will hit you. You are no longer a candidate for anything."

"Life has hit you full on and, by God, you better live it or die."

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MURDER

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focus on our students."

Students also met in their advisory classrooms Tuesday, where they were given information about the situation in an effort to keep all the students on the same page and reduce the spread of rumors.

"One of our goals in working with our students is to reduce speculation," Holdsworth said.

The Chapel Hill Police Department also has taken an active role in communicating with those close to the family.

After the bodies were found Saturday, the crisis staff spoke

with family members and notified the next of kin, he said. The police also have worked with officials in the school to prepare for the students' return.

As the school continues to heal, Jarvies said police officials will work to piece together what might have sparked the incident. Investigators are now focused on establishing a time line for the events leading up to and following the shooting, he said.

This is the first homicide in Chapel Hill since Demarcus Smith was killed last June.

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UNC SYSTEM

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reportedly added after two weeks of communication between UNC-CH lobbyists and the offices of Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight and Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland.

The senators' staffs asked UNC-CH officials for feedback on drafts of the proposal.

System officials first heard of the provision long after UNC-CH officials entered talks with the senators. "It certainly was disappoint-

ing," said system President Molly Broad of UNC-CH's closed-door communication with legislative leaders.

Some board members mentioned Friday the possibility of differentiated tuition plans for each system school, recognizing that schools such as UNC-CH and N.C. State might have special needs.

Opponents of the Senate provision hope distinction in tuition decisions might make legislative interference superfluous.

"Carolina is not trying to get out of the system," said BOG member Anne Cates. "I think the word is frustration. Remember these research universities, their government funds are being cut."

The BOG also approved Friday a motion against another last-minute addition to the Senate's budget that would allow out-of-state students with full scholarships to a system school to be counted as in-state students.

This would allow system schools to admit more out-of-state students than the 18 percent cap provides.

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AIRPORT

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Moeser's wish would mean.

Members of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, based in Maryland, have been e-mailing Moeser protesting the potential closing.

The group has almost 10,000 North Carolina members and has been effective in lobbying state officials to keep the airport open in the past.

Despite these efforts, UNC officials are wasting little time in moving forward with Carolina North discussions.

The provision puts a greater spotlight on next Thursday's Board of Trustees meeting at which officials will outline plans for Carolina North for the first time in months.

Waldrop said he expects the presentation to focus on the importance of the development, namely the need for space and the ability to partner with companies and boost the state economy.

The airport will be another key topic of discussion.

Moeser said the group will examine potential sites for the air-

port and planners will explain the entire process to the trustees.

Moeser said it took almost an hour and a half for consultants to show him their most recent work.

"This is going to be an intense downloading of information and discussion," he said, noting that trustees will be shown the "guts and feathers."

"I don't think our board will even be able to digest it fully in one board meeting."

The board is not scheduled to take any action on the development at the meeting.

With the airport situation becoming much clearer, Moeser and Waldrop said it's time to focus on selling the concept for Carolina North to the public.

"We can't even get to first base if we don't make that fundamental argument," Moeser said.

Several questions still must be ironed out before any construction.

Waldrop said the next key component is focusing on complex zoning questions for the tract as well as transportation issues.

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