

CAROLINA CONNECTS



BY BECCA MOORE
SENIOR WRITER

Mark Laabs is a senior majoring in international studies at the University. He is involved with student government and the men's crew team, considers "Dead Poets Society" to be one of his favorite movies and has spent time studying abroad in China.

I am not friends with Laabs.

I know all this because Laabs made information about himself public through an account on the popular social networking Web site Facebook.com.

It's easy to pick out anyone's interests and what they are involved in within five minutes of browsing an account. Thousands of UNC students have profiles on the Web site, composing a small fraction of the 3.6 million users registered at more than 800 colleges nationwide.

Student government, of which Laabs is chief of staff, also has a presence on the Internet that makes it easy for UNC students to familiarize themselves with the goals and activities of the organization.

And thanks to the efforts of a handful of people in student government and the office of the vice chancellor for student affairs, every one of the 627 student groups on campus will soon be able to craft a Web site and heighten its visibility in the campus community.

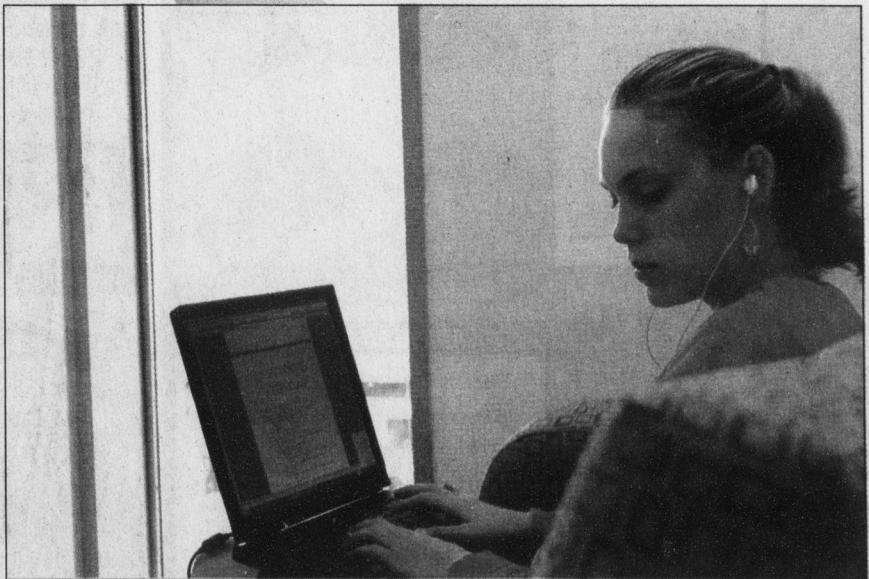
The project, which student government hopes will be launched later this semester, will utilize free Web-design software called Mambo.

Toting the tagline "power in simplicity," Mambo is designed for creating and updating user-friendly Web sites. Even with the free technical support and Web space that is provided for students on UNC's official online network, it can be daunting to create and maintain an online domain.

Brian Payst, director of technology and systems support for the office of student affairs, said having Mambo generally available will benefit all UNC students.

Payst found Mambo, which he calls "powerful and easy to use," while working to implement a

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