

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Tie in Student Congress race will lead to runoff election

A tie between write-in candidates in Tuesday's Student Congress special election will result in there being a runoff election next semester.

Heather Jankowski and Chris Sherman both received 16 votes in the race for a seat in District 7, which represents graduate students in the arts and sciences and the humanities.

Election officials still have not confirmed five of the six write-in candidates in District 9, which is composed of graduate students in medical schools. All candidates in that race received two votes.

SPORTS BRIEF

Curtain falls on former UNC football player, NFL standout

SARASOTA, Fla. — Bud Carson, a former UNC football player and the architect of Pittsburgh's "Steel Curtain" defense who later coached the Cleveland Browns, died Wednesday. He was 75.

Carson, who had been ill with emphysema, died at his home, according to his wife's employer, TV station WWSB.

He was a defensive back at North Carolina from 1949-51 before spending two years in the Marines. He coached the freshman team in 1957 and was the backs coach from 1958-64.

Carson was the Steelers' defensive coordinator from 1972-77, and shaped a defense led by Joe Greene, Jack Ham and Jack Lambert into one of the best in NFL history. During that time, the Steelers won two Super Bowl titles under coach Chuck Noll, and would go on to win another two after Carson left.

He bounced around the league as an assistant and was the head coach of the Cleveland Browns for one-and-a-half seasons.

"It was a privilege and an honor to have coached with him in St. Louis," said UNC coach John Bunting in a statement Wednesday. "What a great, great coach and a great human being. He was the original tough guy."

STATE & NATION

Supreme Court rules seniors, disabled must pay off loans

WASHINGTON — America's seniors and disabled cannot escape debts from old student loans, the Supreme Court ruled Wednesday, freeing the government to pursue Social Security benefits as part of an effort to collect billions in delinquent loans.

The Bush administration had argued that the ability to withhold Social Security benefits is an important tool in the pursuit of \$5.7 billion in student loan debt that is more than 10 years old. Overall, outstanding loans total about \$33 billion.

Government lawyers said that there is a limit on how much can be taken from benefit checks — 15 percent — and that the education department can forgive debts in some hardship cases.

The unanimous decision went against a disabled 67-year-old Seattle man who lives in public housing and who had sued, claiming he needed all of his \$874 monthly check to pay for food and medicine.

James Lockhart's benefits had been cut by 15 percent to cover debts he incurred for college in the 1980s. He has about \$77,000 in unpaid loans.

The court's decision applies to loans that date back more than 10 years and covers both disability and retirement benefits under the Social Security program.

WORLD BRIEFS

Court adjourns after Saddam failed to appear in trial Wed.

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Saddam Hussein followed through Wednesday on his threat to boycott his trial, and the court adjourned until after next week's national elections. Gunmen, meanwhile, kidnapped the 8-year-old son of a bodyguard for a judge in the case.

Inside the courtroom, one of Saddam's seven co-defendants lashed out at conditions of his own detention, saying guards offered only "the worst brands" of cigarettes.

Barazan Ibrahim's outburst came a day after Saddam, his half brother, warned that he would not return to the "unjust" court to protest the conditions of his detention. The group is on trial in the deaths of more than 140 Shiite Muslims following a 1982 assassination attempt against him.

The court convened Wednesday after four hours of behind-the-scenes consultations failed to resolve the standoff. After hearing from two more witnesses, Chief Judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin adjourned the hearings until Dec. 21 — six days after the parliamentary elections, which officials fear might coincide with a spike in insurgent violence.

— From staff and wire reports.

UNC housing changes in works

Officials review recontracting process

BY ERIN ZUREICK
STAFF WRITER

Students hoping to live on campus next school year might see changes when they recontract this spring.

Housing officials and members of the Residence Hall Association's board of governors met just before Thanksgiving to begin discussing possible changes to the way students sign up for campus housing.

Many potential changes loom on the horizon, and although housing officials remain mum on specifics, details should be available to students by the end of January.

Larry Hicks, director of housing and residential education, said officials are scrutinizing the technological aspects of recontracting after problems in March caused double bookings of rooms and login errors.

"It will be a lot easier and a better flow than before," he said.

Recontracting still will take place online, Hicks said, but he declined to comment on specific changes.

The process also likely will be pushed back to a later date this spring to limit the number of students who cancel room reservations, said RHA President Chasity Wilson.

"(It) will just give people more time to decide what they want to do," she said.

Last spring, recontracting for those looking to move across campus occurred between March 29 and 31.

The August opening of the Ram Village apartments, which will house about 900 students, might further complicate the process and necessitate a separate recontracting process, Hicks said.

Rising juniors and seniors will get the first shot at filling the rooms, and priority will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

And the opening of the five-building apartment complex on South Campus might relocate more upperclassmen to the area.

Wilson said housing officials have discussed the possibility of housing more freshmen and sophomores in North Campus dorms. Housing officials believe the hallway-style living in those dorms is more conducive to social interaction and academic life, Wilson said.

She said she anticipates a mixed reaction to the move if it's approved.

"Because we're all kind of fixed in our ways ... I think initially people are going to be a little confused and even upset if these changes go through," she said. "As time passes, students might realize that this is actually benefiting students."

And locating more juniors and seniors on South Campus could come naturally with the addition of Ram Village, she said.

Christopher Payne, associate vice

chancellor for student affairs and former housing director, said such a move has been occurring gradually.

"Over the past few years there has been a shift occurring where there's more of a rich mix of academic classification across campus housing," he said.

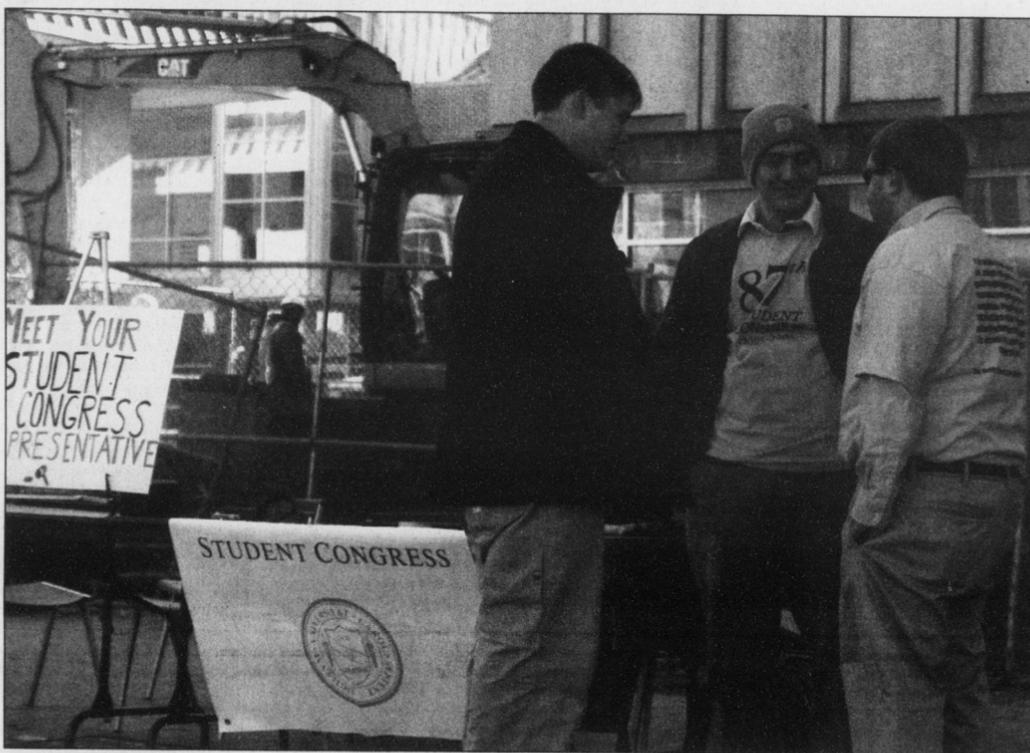
Last year 20 percent of spots in both North Campus and Middle Campus residence halls were set aside for incoming freshmen who met the application deadline.

Hicks said those numbers are not set in stone, but he declined to say if more spots will be held next year for incoming freshman.

Rick Bradley, assistant director of information and communication for housing and residential education, said officials now are evaluating all their options, and he expects decisions to be made by the end of the semester.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

"You can try as hard as you can to solicit student opinion, and no one gives you anything back." EMMA HODSON, DISTRICT 1 REPRESENTATIVE



Student Congress representatives Dax Dixon (left), Tyler Younts (center) and Luke Farley met in the Pit on Wednesday to talk with students. The event saw a smaller turnout than last year's event, but students still have a chance to meet officials from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. today.

CONGRESS BRASS MET WITH FEW

BY KATHERINE EVANS
STAFF WRITER

Prominent and influential student leaders gathered in the Pit on Wednesday to listen and respond to student concerns and needs.

But for the most part no one noticed. Student Congress representatives, who work in relative anonymity, staged their second annual Meet your Representative day in the Pit in an attempt to gauge and even create student awareness of their roles.

Easier said than done. "I know zero representatives," said sophomore biology major Mark Roth, a member of District 5, the Greek Housing district.

After almost four years at UNC, senior Mike Garlow of the off-campus district said he was completely unfamiliar with the

goings-on of Congress.

"I'm a senior, and I definitely can't name any representatives," he said. "And I was going to run for Student Congress."

But representatives said they hope their outreach effort, spearheaded by Speaker Luke Farley will change widespread student indifference toward Congress.

"I think it's important that we make ourselves available," he said.

This focus on outreach, which began last year with a similar event, also will encompass student surveys and a spring forum, Farley said.

The event will continue from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. today with representatives in the Pit.

The effort, which Farley said has more Congress members involved than last year,

is an attempt to both acquaint students with issues and determine student needs.

"(This is) especially important for people off campus," said Rep. Emma Hodson, District 1. "It's easier to outreach in dorms."

Rep. Caroline Spencer, District 5, said she had gone door to door talking to constituents before several congressional decisions. That kind of polling is helpful if she's in the middle of an issue, she said.

Student opinion can be hard to pinpoint, Hodson said, because some students simply have no opinion.

"It can be kind of hard," she said. "You can try as hard as you can to solicit student opinion, and no one gives you anything back."

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Renowned author scripts visit to UNC

BY ORR SHTUHL
STAFF WRITER

One of America's most celebrated authors is coming to Chapel Hill.

National Book Award-winner Joan Didion will spend about a week on campus in late February working with English students and faculty in a visit that will culminate with a public lecture at Memorial Hall.

Didion's visit is part of the Morgan writer-in-residence program, which annually brings top literary figures to campus to work with students in the creative writing program. The authors instruct students on a personal level, offering more discussion and interaction than a standard lecture.

During her stay, Didion will sit in on classes and discuss literature with creative writing students in a small-classroom setting.

Although the lecture is expected to draw the biggest crowd, spending personal time with such a



Joan Didion will come to campus in February for one week to teach creative writing students.

renowned writer is the highlight for the department.

"The thing about the program that is so phenomenal is access," said Susan Irons, English department director of events and special programs. "We can give students access to some of the best writers in the country. ... We have writers talking to writers, and I think that is a really important format."

Didion originally was slated to come to the University in 2003, but following the death of her husband, she went on sabbatical.

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Poll fries Southern identification

BY DESIREE SHOE
STAFF WRITER

The South. Rarely can a single region conjure up such different images.

Picturesque dogwood groves, sweet tea and fried okra, and the hospitality and friendliness of strangers.

And then there are the darker images of the South — the bloody horrors of the Civil War, racism, ignorance and slavery.

But as modern industries and sprawling suburbs emerge, not everyone wants to identify with the prototypical Southerner.

According to a recent Associated Press-Ipsos poll, only 63 percent of people living in the South identify themselves as "Southern."

Larry Griffin, a sociology professor at UNC who analyzed the poll data, says people who have lived in the South their entire lives are likely to identify themselves as Southern regardless of their ethnicity, religion or political views.

"By far the single most important factor is having grown up and

"The bottom line is that the South is changing in dramatic ways, but it will never cease to be the South."

BILL FERRIS, CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

continuing to live in the South," he says. "The culture becomes part of one's identity, even if one understands that identity has negative connotations."

And Griffin says he believes those negative connotations have discouraged some native Southerners from identifying themselves as Southern.

Junior Danielle McLean agrees. "People think Southerners aren't as smart as other people. Because we talk differently, people may think we're not as sophisticated and intellectual as other people that may not have an accent."

Griffin says many people reject the label because they don't like the history of the South.

However, the downturn of Southern identification isn't neces-

State details health option

System leaders skeptical of plan

BY ERIC JOHNSON
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

As the outlines of a revamped State Health Plan begin to take shape, university officials remain skeptical that a new design can meet employee demands for affordable coverage.

In an effort to address long-standing complaints with the state employee health benefit, state officials are negotiating the creation of a preferred provider option, or PPO, to offer employees greater choice.

The current indemnity plan offered to all state employees — the only insurance option available through the state — has long been criticized for its high out-of-pocket costs and steep premiums for covering spouses and dependents.

While there is no premium for individual employee coverage, and while overall benefits are generous, adding a family to the plan costs \$480.14 per month. There is no separate tier for spousal coverage, so any employee looking to add only a spouse to her state benefit has to pay the family rate.

"It costs a significant percentage of their income just to cover their families," said Ernie Patterson, the newly elected chairman of the Employee Forum at UNC-Chapel Hill.

The indemnity plan also has a family co-pay of up to \$1,050 per year, which greatly increases the cost of doctor and hospital visits.

The result, say officials from the university and the state, is that many lower-income employees forgo regular doctors visits and often can't afford full coverage for their families.

"It creates a barrier to care as opposed to allowing people to have the kind of coverage that they need," said Dan Soper, chief operating officer of the State Health Plan.

Establishing a PPO through an existing company — most likely BlueCross and BlueShield of North Carolina, Soper said — would allow the state to trim the cost of family coverage and reduce co-pays and deductibles. Employees would be free to stick with the existing indemnity plan, or they could opt into the PPO.

Though the state has yet to enter into substantive negotiations with BCBS or any other health care provider, officials already have presented employees with an estimate of what PPO costs might look like, based on the existing rates of the BCBS plan.

The new option would add a spousal coverage tier at a cost of \$405.14 per month and reduce family coverage costs by \$50 per month, down to \$430.14. It would also eliminate the deductible requirement for doctor appointments, charging only a \$20 co-pay for each office visit.

But UNC-system officials said the plan likely won't go far enough to reduce costs, particularly for lower-income employees.

"The rates are still, I think, expensive for family members to cover dependents," said Kitty McCollum, UNC-system associate vice president for human resources. "There's a lot that we're really not

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