

# N.C. to release new grad rates

BY TANISHA PALVIA  
STAFF WRITER

North Carolina's first four-year cohort high-school graduation rate will be released today by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

The cohort rate has been a federal requirement since 2002, when President Bush passed "No Child Left Behind," the elementary and secondary education act.

"North Carolina, like many other states in the nation when the bill was passed five years ago, was not in a position to report a cohort rate, which involves following the same students over time," said Lou Fabrizio, director of accountability services division in the state superintendent's office.

The rate will illustrate the percentage of ninth-graders who entered high school in 2002 and graduated by June 30, 2006. It will include information broken down by gender, race, ethnicity and dis-

advantaged groups.

Fabrizio said North Carolina was using a yearly on-time graduation rate, which determined how many graduating seniors had completed high school in four years or less.

The new cohort graduation rate reflects a four-year study, said Stephanie Knott, assistant to the superintendent for community relations in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools system.

"It freezes a group of students during that group's freshman year of high school," she said. "It then takes a look four years later at where that group of students happens to be."

The graduation rate is expected to be anywhere from 59 percent to 71 percent, which Fabrizio said will include only students who graduate in four years or less.

The cohort rate does not count dropouts, students who graduated in more than four years or those pursuing a GED as graduates.

"It's a very conservative graduation rate," said June Atkinson, N.C. state superintendent of public instruction.

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro school system also will release the rates of its first cohort study today.

"Our goal has always been to achieve a 100 percent graduation rate," Knott said. "That is something that the district continues to strive towards."

Atkinson said that while the state has not established a specific goal for the cohort rate, the study should motivate public schools and encourage graduation.

"The high-school diploma is part of a gateway for students to have options after they finish high school," she said.

"At the end of the year, there really is no other compelling measure than this for our high schools."

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## CAA

FROM PAGE 1

in some duties and from students in others.

Allred and Curtis named other organizations, such as the Residence Hall Association, senior class officers and the executive branch of student government that operate under similar principles.

But those opposing the amend-

ment argued that CAA has too strongly refused students' authority to be accepted as part of student government and that the amendment wasn't in compliance with the Court's ruling.

Allred strongly criticized Congress' actions — drawing harsh responses from several Congress members.

"I think it's important that the student body understand that Congress has undertaken a con-

certed campaign to consolidate power and gain control over virtually all other branches of student government," Allred said.

He cited quotes from Farley and Congress' lack of participation on boards — such as the Student Ticket Review Board — to back up his claim.

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## BLACK FACULTY

FROM PAGE 1

total enrollment, leading some to call for more black faculty to mirror the student breakdown.

Daye also led the Chancellor's Minority Affairs Review Committee, which submitted a report in 2000 that recommended a campuswide assessment of minorities and the development of a diversity plan. He said that diversity is not the end by itself but a tool used to expand the educational experience.

"I think students are impressed by what they observe," he said. "If we're going to talk about a society where everyone is valued, it won't do unless we create an institution where our values are evidenced."

Napoleon Byars, who graduated from the School of Journalism in 1976 and returned 21 years later to teach, said he has noticed substantial

improvement in student and faculty diversity since he was a student.

Byars said faculty diversity should be achieved not for diversity's sake but for the good of society.

"There's a responsibility we owe to the residents of this state to reflect the state's population," he said.

Coming from the University of California at Los Angeles to UNC, Geography professor Jim Johnson said he saw a similarity between the importance university leaders placed on diversity at both campuses. At UNC, Johnson said he was impressed by the camaraderie that exists among the faculty.

Faculty said that they believe that UNC values a diverse faculty but that more can be done.

"Competition for African-American talent is becoming more fierce. We have to understand that reality and become more competitive," Johnson said. "The commit-

ment exists on this campus." Johnson said UNC should look in nontraditional places to get more talented black professors.

"We have to have people who believe it's important, and we have to have incentives," Daye said, suggesting awards for departments that achieve diversity.

Byars said increasing mentoring opportunities for minority students is needed to engage students early on and encourage graduate work.

Joe Templeton, chairman of the faculty, said he hasn't received any race-related complaints since he has represented the faculty and said UNC encourages diversity.

"The University is proactive in trying to identify a diverse pool of applicants," Templeton said. "It's not just reactive but proactive."

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## SEPARATED

FROM PAGE 1

orders for her deportation in 2001.

"When we found out this was a final deportation notice, we were panicked," Barton said.

Barton and Wright contacted lawyers and told Fallahi's story to anyone who would listen.

Fallahi's chances improved when Stroud found out who represented Fallahi in her 1999 application.

Chee was disbarred and jailed in 2005 after pleading guilty in a U.S. District Court to conspiracy and fraud and misuse of visas or permits.

"When he realized (Chee) was her previous lawyer, he realized that maybe we did have a cause," Barton said.

Stroud and Jorgelina Aranedo agreed to take Fallahi's case and have argued that Chee failed to provide Fallahi with adequate council. Stroud said Chee never informed Fallahi that her attendance was required at the hearing.

"Sima had an attorney, and yet for some reason Sima never had a trial on her asylum case," Stroud said.

He also said after the appeal was denied, Chee never informed Fallahi of the 2001 deportation order.

Fallahi's situation is a relatively common immigration problem. According to a September 2005 Department of Homeland Security report, roughly one-third of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. entered the country legally, as Fallahi did. The report estimated 3.6 million such "overstays" remain in the country.

### Neighbors lend a hand

If Fallahi was overstaying her visit, her Carrboro hosts still were welcoming.

Residents for the last five years, Fallahi and her daughter were active in the community.

"I don't know that anyone was aware of her legal status, so it came as such a shock," said Jackie Helvey, one of Fallahi's friends. "Pretty much the whole town was stunned when they found out."

Following Fallahi's arrest, local officials and town leaders made pleas for her release.

"I think everyone I know called me and said, 'Help, what can you do about this?'" said N.C. Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, a former Carrboro mayor.

Kinnaird contacted U.S. Rep. David Price and spoke with his staff regarding Fallahi's situation.

It was Price who was able to arrange for Fallahi to be held in Charlotte, instead of Atlanta where most detained immigrants are held.

"We wanted to make sure that she and her daughter were still in close proximity ... so they could stay together as long as possible," said Paul Cox, Price's spokesman.

Barton said they make the drive to and from Charlotte every Sunday.

Carrboro also has come to Fallahi's aid. The Board of Aldermen heard of her case at its Dec. 5 meeting, and approximately \$4,000 of private contributions have been contributed to Fallahi's defense fund.

The Chapel Hill Town Council heard a similar petition at Monday's meeting. The council referred the petition, which called for clarification of police department immigration procedure, to town staff.

At the meeting, the council also was asked to contribute to Fallahi's legal costs, a resolution which also was referred to town staff.

Her lawyers estimate legal costs totaling as much as \$15,000, and even more if her custody hearing is successful, allowing her to resubmit her application for asylum.

"Basically we've got some pretty steep legal bills," Wright said. "There's still a lot of legal cost involved."

### Hoping for compassion

Since the arrest, Sima and Leila have met only on Sundays and for 30 minutes at a time.

"They were both very teary-eyed. It was kind of a shock (for Leila) to see her mother like that, in jail," Barton said, describing Leila's first visit to see her mother. "We were only allowed to see ... through the glass partition. And that's hard for

a family that's so close."

Leila said it is hard only being able to speak with her mother through the glass.

"Sometimes it's hard to hear, and you have to go like this," Leila said, cupping her hands around her ears. "And sometimes they make us leave early."

Friends have been waiting for her release since she signed papers in January with Immigration and Customs Enforcement that could have allowed for her temporary release due to jail overcrowding.

"We had our hopes so up, just thinking 'Any day now, any day now,' ... but unfortunately they have not called," Barton said.

ICE assigned a new case officer to work with Fallahi, and Barton said they were told the new assignment could delay her release.

But today's decision is just one step in the process, and Wright said the issue of her deportation still will have to be dealt with.

Fallahi's lawyers have requested a flat cancellation of the deportation order, what Barton says is "the decision we are praying for."

If that cancellation is granted, Fallahi then will have to resubmit an application for political asylum.

Only if that request is granted will she be allowed to stay in the U.S.

Otherwise, Fallahi will be deported to Iran, where her friends say her life could be in danger.

American-born Leila will remain in the U.S. and will live with her mother's brother, Behrooz, in Illinois. Leila will move in with Behrooz at the end of the school year if her mother is still in jail.

Burton said she will stay optimistic about Fallahi's fate, though.

"We're pretty hopeful that things will go well, but it's not a sure thing," she said. "We're just praying for a compassionate, moral judge."

And while Leila is excited about the prospects of her contact visit Sunday, she'd prefer to have her mother with her.

"They should let my mom out of jail so she can come home."

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## BUDGET

FROM PAGE 1

hospitals. Officials worry that the cap will place strain on area emergency rooms that are not equipped to treat psychiatric cases.

Rep. Verla Insko, D-Orange, is the chairwoman of the N.C. House's Mental Health Reform committee and said she'd like to see more funds going to the mental health system.

"It's very skimpy, and I hope we can get additional funding," she said. "The governor has clearly focused on education."

Easley's budget, which still has to undergo scrutiny in both chambers of the N.C. General Assembly, includes an 11.3 percent increase in funding for the university system, the largest increase in recent years.

It also calls for a 5 percent average pay increase for teacher's salaries statewide and funds the governor's Learn and Earn program, which aims to make higher education more attainable and affordable.

But even within education issues, many legislators debate the governor's redistribution of lottery revenue from school construction

to winnings. The extra revenue would go toward increasing the percentage of winning scratch-off tickets, currently at 50 percent.

Rep. Bill Owens, D-Pasquotank, who sponsored the original lottery bill, said he does not support that item in the budget.

"Property taxes alone can't keep up with school construction,"

Rep. William Current, R-Gaston, said that those who would benefit from Easley's proposed elimination and reduction of income taxes for almost 1.2 million low-income North Carolinians, are the same people who play the lottery the most.

"It looks to me like you're freeing up money ... so that people can play the lottery," he said.

For Sen. Kay Hagan, D-Guilford, the governor's priorities are right on target, despite the changes the budget needs to undergo in the House and Senate.

"I believe education is the most important thing the state government can do."

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## LYRICS

FROM PAGE 1

before announcing the five winners March 17.

Sugarfix then will collaborate with Risk to set the winning poems to music. All five songs will be posted by April 10, at which point viewers of Sugarfix's blog can vote on which song is the overall winner.

Sugarfix said he and Risk have a very open process for creating.

"We'll look at the lyrics, figure out who's going to do what," he said.

The contest already has drawn entrants from as far away as England, Sugarfix said, adding that multiple entries are allowed.

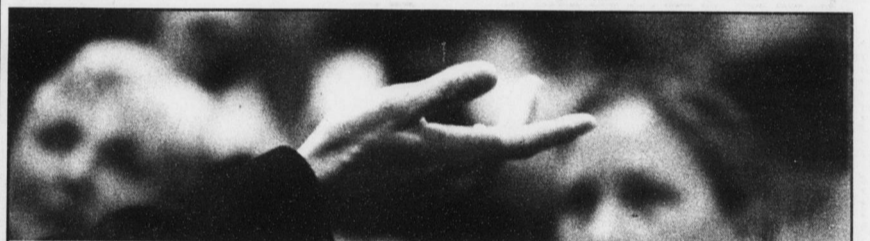
Sugarfix said he definitely hopes to do it again.

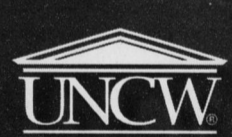
"It brings something fresh into my musical world," he said.

As for the question regarding how much attention and fame the contest will bring to Carrboro, Sugarfix said the town is sitting pretty.

"I think we've already put Carrboro on the map."

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