

State, UNC align on safety

BY REBECCA PUTTERMAN
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

RALEIGH — When 32 students and faculty were murdered at Va. Tech last April, colleges nationwide recognized how gaps in their campus safety plans could yield tragic results.

In North Carolina, state Attorney General Roy Cooper mobilized a task force in June to evaluate how campuses could better prepare for critical incidents, such as having a shooter on campus.

"In one context, these might be viewed as simple things, but they become very important in the context of crisis management," said Brad Wilson, chairman of the state task force and a member of the UNC system's Board of Governors, regarding the report's 11 recommendations.

Cooper's recommendations closely mirror the campus security report released by the UNC system in November, reflecting a high level of collaboration between the state's review and the UNC system's internal task force.

"(Cooper's) report supplements (the UNC-system report) and complements the work that has already been done," Wilson said.

The N.C. attorney general's 11 recommendations for the improvement

of campus safety were the result of three months of research, conferences and surveys, and were presented to the public Thursday during a ceremony at Peace College.

The recommendations are meant for all 110 colleges in North Carolina, including public, private and community campuses.

The most actionable recommendation is to establish a Center for Campus Safety as a hub of cross-the-state safety coordination.

The idea for such a center encompasses the main goal of the state task force, as well as the UNC-system task force, which completed its own campus security report in November.

Both task forces focused on making improving security a continuous effort rather than a knee-jerk reaction to tragedy.

Leslie Winner, former UNC-system vice president for legal affairs, expressed that need for consistency in November.

"We need to have a way to lead this effort on a continuous basis," she said. "We've responded to tragedies, but in the past we have offered inconsistent messages and inconsistent help to campuses."

The state task force collected the testimony of those involved with Virginia's own task force and people

who witnessed the tragedy to fully comprehend what kind of mistakes could have been prevented by way of precautionary planning.

Many of the report's recommendations are direct solutions to specific preventable mistakes from the Va. Tech shootings, such as the incident in which a professor reported the shooter's bomb threat to the dean's office instead of to the police.

In response to that and other similar anecdotes, the report calls for faculty, students and staff to be trained in emergency response.

After re-evaluating what went wrong in Virginia, members of the N.C. task force focused heavily on the role that serious mental illness had to play in the shootings.

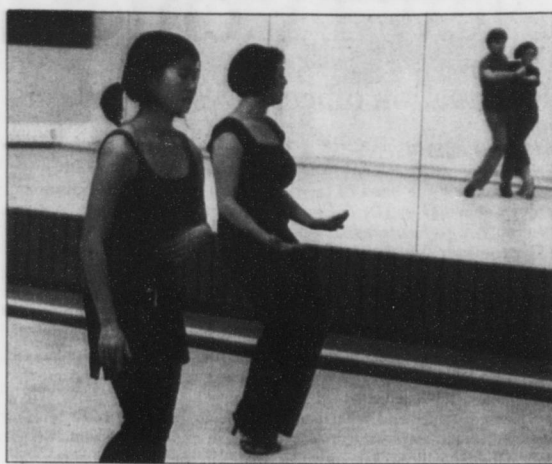
The report urges the N.C. General Assembly to amend background checks for gun purchasers to include whether a person has been involuntarily committed — a similar regulation became federal law Tuesday — as well as training campus faculty in mental health privacy laws.

Cooper was adamant that the recommendations become actionable. He said he would send the report to the chiefs of campus security, as well as to each campus president.

"I want to make certain that this isn't a stack of papers that collects dust."

Senior writer Eric Johnson contributed reporting. Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

DON'T STOP THE MUSIC



DTH/DAVID ENARSON

UNC Ballroom Dance Club Team members Jane Lee and team captain Carissa Chambers perform the samba in the Union Underground on Thursday. "I've been dancing for three years," Chris Chirdon said. "I started in high school. I really do wish more guys would do it."

CIO

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inside the organization and really cared about staff development and giving people chances to advance and to grow," she said. "After all, the staff of ITS is a huge resource for the University."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

OWASA

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Atmospheric Administration has predicted that the county's drought will persist or intensify in the next three months.

As of Tuesday, Orange County was listed as in an exceptional drought, the most severe category of drought. More than 51 percent of the state also is in exceptional drought.

The National Weather Service predicted a 70 percent chance of precipitation for today.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

CLIMB

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Farb's training also has become more difficult, but Decator said she has continued with it.

"There's a tremendous amount of stress when you receive that cancer diagnosis," said Pam Baker, officer support assistant for Lineberger's Patient and Family Resource Center.

Farb is using her climb as a way to solicit donations for the resource center, which provides patients with wigs, feel-better programs and self-image programs. Socks, slippers, pillows and other comfort items also are available. All of the services at the center are free of charge.

Farb's original goal was to raise \$10,000, but Baker said she already has exceeded that goal.

"We depend a lot on donations, such as Harriet raising money for us," Baker said. "Harriet understands the needs that we have here."

UNC's center, along with others, serve the many breast cancer patients and other cancer patients across the country.

According to the American Cancer Society, 178,480 women in the United States were estimated to have been diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007.

Of those diagnosed, about 23 percent — or 40,460 — were expected to die.

Farb, though, is making progress with her recovery.

As a nurse, she wanted to control her treatments, Decator said.

"She was always positive about what it was that was going to work out for her," she said.

Her motivation throughout the treatments has inspired patients at the cancer center, Decator said. "She's going to climb that mountain."

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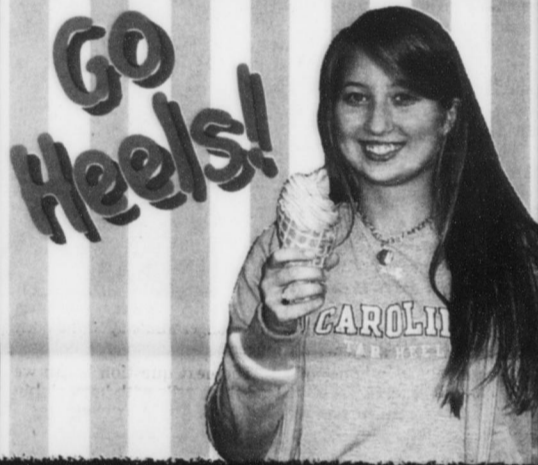
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