decide who qualifies.

graduating class

ics or degree programs, as well as certain disabilities — to register

for courses before the rest of their

University Registrar Alice Poehls

said 12 to 15 groups, encompassing about 1,000 students, applied for

priority registration, which was lower than her expected turnout.

application process went well. "I'm pleased with the methods

people used to choose whether to

apply and evaluate the needs of

students," Poehls said.

But she said she believes the

Fla. reopens evolution debate Priority registration up for grabs Meeting will determine group status

Theory to be included in curriculum

BY MEGHAN COOKE

A recent state school board decision in Florida has reopened the evolution versus creationism debate, a controversy that has resurfaced in curriculum discussions nationwide.

Despite opposition from more than a dozen school boards, the Florida State Board of Education decided last week to officially include evolution in the science curriculum.

As a compromise, the curriculum now refers to evolution as a "scientific theory," a phrase that leaves the validity of the concept debatable.

Joe Wolf, president of Florida Citizens for Science, said the curriculum did not specifically mention evolution, leaving teachers to approach the subject at their own discretion

some skipping it altogether. (The old standards have been) universally judged as highly inferior, in the sense that it didn't teach much of anything," Wolf said.

T. Willard Fair, chairman of the

Board of Education, said there was not enough evidence to fully convince the board that evolution

should be taught as fact. "Most people said they didn't want evolution taught as a fact," Fair said. "They wanted their children to be exposed to creationism, as well as evolution, so that the kids could be able to draw their own conclusions."

Texas education officials are also expected to re-examine their science curriculum this year. While currently allowing evolution to be taught, the state permits students to critique the concept.

In January, the South Carolina Board of Education approved a biology textbook after a debate regarding its assertion that evolution is the foundation of life.

In 1997, a bill proposed in the N.C. House of Representatives would have ensured that public schools teach evolution merely as a theory, but the bill didn't leave committee.

Terry Stoops, education pol-icy analyst for the John Locke

Foundation, a conservative Raleighbased think tank, said that evolution is well established in N.C. schools' curriculums and that topics like abstinence education are a larger source of controversy in the state.

Stoops said students should be exposed to a variety of opinions about the origins of life, including creationism and intelligent design, the idea that life is too complex to have begun without a guiding hand.

Charles Lytle, president of the N.C. Academy of Science and a zoology professor at N.C. State, said creationism and intelligent design should not be taught in schools as they are unscientific.

Efforts to try to teach these theories in public schools have failed. In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that teaching creationism violates the Establishment Clause, which prohibits states advancing religion.

"Evolution explains so much about what we know about living organisms," Lytle said, adding that many people have tried to dis-credit the theory but that evidence against it has not been confirmed by scientific tests.

"The best thing as a scientist is to give you the best answer we have based on the evidence we have available"

BY ZACK TYMAN dents. A decision about each group should be reached by the end of the For students seeking priormeeting, and registration times will ity registration, their fate will be be announced by March 1. No late applications will be etermined this week

accepted, and no appeals to the com-mittee's decisions will be permitted, Friday was the deadline for campus groups to submit applica-tions for priority registration, and Poehls said.

Biology professor William Kier is part of the committee that will a committee will meet Wednesday evaluate the applications. He said that this is a new experi-Priority registration allows students who meet certain standards such as hours devoted to athlet-

ence for everyone involved. "This is the first time this is happening, ... so I really don't know

what to expect," Kier said. "The aspect of the process that really appeals to me is the openness." The meeting Wednesday is open to the public, as prescribed by the

PRAC's proposal, but no public input will be allowed.

Sophomore David Bevevino, one of two student members of the com-mittee, will provide a student perspective to the meeting.

"We aren't sure if we are doing this by vote or not," Bevevino said, Before the system was in place, some students received priority registration on an informal basis. Under the new system, the appli-"but I will be able to contribute."

Psychology professor Steve Reznick served as chairman of the task force that put together the origi-nal proposal for priority registration, which was approved by the Faculty Council in December.

In the proposal, the task force said that the program could ben-efit nursing and education majors, who spend a significant amount of

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time working as part of their curriculum, as well as varsity athletes and students with disabilities.

"We were trying to define groups eligible for priority registration," Reznick said. "It's not automatic that these groups would get it." Reznick also said he predicts

that 5 percent to 10 percent of the student population will be affected by the new system.

UNC is one of the last ACC schools to implement a priority registration program. And for John Blanchard, senior associate athletic director, it is a welcome addition.

"We've been advocating for this for a long time - over the last 15 years," Blanchard said. "It has been a long process."

But not every varsity athlete will necessarily receive priority registration as athletes are evaluated by individual sport.

Because this is the first time the priority registration process is taking place, Poehls stressed, it is in the experimental stages

"There is programming written to allow us to evaluate the progress," she said. "Right now it's a matter of observing and reporting."

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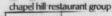
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