

# Campus at Kannapolis opens; research begins ASG attempts to push past tarnished reputation

Thorp: UNC-CH will have close ties

BY GREG SMITH  
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Only three years after its conception, the N.C. Research Campus has opened three buildings, launched research projects and grappled with funding slowdowns — all while continuing to plow forward.

The \$1.5 billion campus, located in Kannapolis, houses the facilities for seven N.C. schools, including UNC-Chapel Hill, and biotechnology companies that collaborate on research into the links between human health and nutrition.

Billionaire David Murdock, owner of Dole Food Company Inc., conceived of the campus and has invested more than \$1 billion of his personal money.

Research has already started at the Nutrition Research Institute, UNC-CH's facility on the campus, Dr. Steven Zeisel, the institute's director, said in an e-mail.

Current projects include studying how maternal nutrition during pregnancy influences brain development, infant nutrition, food intake and the interaction between genes and a high-fat diet.

UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp, who visited the N.C.

Research Campus for the first time Nov. 17, promises close ties with the satellite campus.

The campus is giving residents new hope. The former mill town was devastated by the 2003 bankruptcy of Pillowtex textile company, which employed more than 4,000 local residents.

When the project was first proposed in 2005, it promised as many as 5,000 new jobs in the center city, many that could be filled by locals.

"We didn't know what would happen to the core of the city, which is where the mill was. The campus really transformed our economy," said Mike Legg, Kannapolis city manager.

Only eight jobs are currently posted on a Web site that advertises job availability on the campus and most are higher-level positions for postdoctoral scientists.

This will change next year when PPD, a global contract research organization, moves onto the campus, Kannapolis Marketing Director Karen Whichard said.

Early projections predict that as many as 200 to 300 jobs could be created by the PPD.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College will offer a new biotechnol-

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JEFF LOWRANCE, ROWAN-CABARRUS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ogy degree to locals who need training to work on the campus.

"We do see ourselves as a direct link for local residents to careers on the research campus," said Jeff Lowrance, director of college relations for the school.

"We'll work with companies to develop specific programs to train people for what (the companies) need."

Ninety percent of the campus is funded with private investment and 10 percent with public funds, Whichard said. Economic struggles have left the campus with more than \$168 million in unsold bonds.

The bonds will pay for infrastructure improvements in the city, including water lines, intersections, parks and greenways. Officials say they are not concerned because the market should improve before payment on the bonds is due.

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

BY OLIVIA BOWLER  
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Last year at this time, the UNC-system Association of Student Governments was struggling to regroup after its president resigned in the wake of assault charges.

This year the association, which brings together student leaders from all 17 system schools, has regained much of its legitimacy, beginning to address issues such as tuition increases and college access.

UNC-Chapel Hill has also been working to find its role in the association because of Student Body President J.J. Raynor's decision to send a proxy in her place — a move that has been greeted with some discontent by other participants.

The ASG receives \$1 in fees from each student in the system to finance projects and provide a voice for the students.

The association's reputation, which was tarnished by past accusations of corruption and inefficiency, was permanently stained after then-President Cole Jones was convicted of assault in August 2007.

"The association had really become an embarrassment in many respects," said Greg Doucette, the current ASG president. "No one really knew what it was like for the association to look good."

Doucette, who with Vice President Ashley Yopp came into office last spring, was elected by a margin of one hotly contested vote.

"Everyone talked about the fact that because we only won by a vote-of-one margin, we didn't have a mandate to make any big changes," Doucette said.

But Doucette said he feels that the association has repaired its negative reputation to some extent.

"We still have a long way to go."

Logan Liles, Raynor's official voting proxy, has increased his presence at the meetings and is working with Raynor to ensure UNC-CH's continued and effective presence in the association.

In August the ASG passed a new constitution and a new budget, two areas that presented problems in the past.

Later in the semester, the association weighed in on the issue of increasing tuitions.

The resolution consisted of the student-recommended tuition increase for each campus, as offered by the student body presidents and delegates from each university.

But UNC-system President Erskine Bowles chided the association for passing a resolution before members had all the information.

Bowles said the Board of Trustees at each school was in the middle of making recommendations and that the decision was made too hastily.

Despite the setback, the ASG plans to present those same student recommendations in the spring to the Board of Governors.

Most recently, a resolution stating

support for universal access to community colleges for undocumented students died in committee.

The resolution ended with no debate and many were disappointed with the lack of discussion. That resolution is likely to make a reappearance at the January meeting.

Doucette said that while the association has made some progress in the last few months, more work is necessary.

The association has seen a renewed effort to establish an Advocacy Corps, which trains students from each of the schools to lobby for student concerns in the state government.

ASG had some difficulty recruiting students for the program and schools without applicants had to appoint students. David Murray and Cristobal Palmer were chosen to represent UNC-CH in November.

In January the association plans to send students to Washington, D.C., to meet with legislators and tour the city. The Advocacy Corps also will host a students' day in Raleigh in March, where students will lobby the state government on issues like textbooks costs and tuition increases.

"We've had four really good meetings, we've learned a lot from all of them," Doucette said. "A lot of it is done, but there's a lot more left to do."

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