

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT UNC CHARLOTTE

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"THE POWER LIES WITHIN US"

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Photo by Niyathi Sulkunte

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

April Carte

editor@ninertimes.com

EDITORIAL

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CONTRIBUTING STAFF

Lorenza Medley, Kathryn Caudill,
Gabie Stanfield, Kelsey Burgess, Gabe
Lapalombella, Jade Suszek, Sam Perry

COVER PHOTO

Bryanna Bowles

COVER DESIGN

Zoya Zalevskiy

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Megan Reid

mktdirector@uncc.edu

ASST. CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Megan Rice

MARKETING STAFF

Nina Cherry

NEWSROOM 704.687.7150

NINERTIMES.COM/STAFF

TWITTER @NINER_TIMES

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT UNC CHARLOTTE

Campus organizations collaborating to host events to celebrate Black History Month

by Lorena Medley
Staff Writer

Photo of BSU members
courtesy of Imara Menifee

The Black Student Union, the Office of Identity, Equity, and Engagement, and other organizations are partnering to host an entire month of Black History Month celebrations in February.

The events planned for the celebration are mostly collaborations between many organizations on campus, including but not limited to the Black Student Union (BSU), the Office of Identity, Equity and Engagement (IEE), and the Women and Gender Studies department. According to Maliah Graves, vice president of the BSU, the BSU always tries to collaborate with other organizations and bodies on campus during Black History Month.

Starting Feb. 1, the BSU will hold a tabling event and a virtual watch party. The tabling event is co-sponsored with the Campus Activities Board (CAB) and will go from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. "It's been a while, and we do miss them, so we're doing tabling so we can see their faces within the capacity limits that the school has," Imara Manifee, president of the BSU, said. At the tabling event, students can learn about the organization's mission, what they do on campus and how to join.

The virtual watch party for the "Just Mercy" movie will start at 6:30 p.m. "I think that speaks a lot to how it was back then and how it is now and how things really haven't changed when it comes to our legal system. So just highlighting that with this movie, I felt like it would be really impactful," Manifee said. Rianna Allen, corresponding secretary of the BSU, also emphasized the topic of mental health in the movie and its importance, especially for people of color.

The movie also talks about mental health in the Black community.

According to Allen, there is a stigma with African-Americans surrounding therapy and mental health. "Being African-American, especially at a PWI [Predominantly White Institution], it feels like no one's listening to us. So we get a group of us together, and that's what the Black Student Union is supposed to do, and that's what Black Student Union is doing," Allen said.

IEE and the Women and Gender Studies will be hosting "We'd Figured You'd Be Trouble" on Feb. 7 at 6:30 p.m. Candice Cunningham, a professor from Florida Atlantic University, will be featured and will be discussing civil rights activism in the south.

IEE and BSU are co-sponsoring the "Black Hair and Storytelling as a Form of Social Activism" on Feb. 8 at 6 p.m. St. Clair Detrick-Jules will be featured at the event. According to Ryan McKeel, assistant director for Leadership and Career Development at IEE, Detrick-Jules worked on a photojournalism project where she photographed and interviewed 101 Black women who wear their hair naturally and entwined it with black hair as a form of storytelling and social activism.

This is the first time the Black hair event will be taking place. According to Graves, there is a double standard in America for Black and brown people regarding their hair and many misconceptions and preconceived notions. "The Black Panther Movement, the ladies, they made sure that we knew; we understood their expressiveness, their flamboyancy with the afro, and to this day, the afro just stands as a message. A message of peace to black unity," Eclipse Whetstone, first-year representative at the BSU, said.

BSU, IEE, and the Women and Gender Studies department are co-sponsoring the Black Muslim Experience panel that will feature local artists and activists in the Charlotte area on Feb. 16 at 3 p.m. Hannah Hasan, Cam Montgomery and Ide Zayed Dew will be on the panel and Reem Abnowf, UNC Charlotte senior, will be moderating the panel. In addition, BSU will be hosting a community service event on Feb. 19. The event details are not finalized yet but will include giving back to the community.

BSU and IEE will be hosting a lunch at Crown on Feb. 21 and dinner at SoVi on Feb. 24. The annual dinner and lunch will highlight black chefs and employees on campus as well as feature recipes from the African-American Museum in Washington, D.C. obtained by IEE. "It's really good to appreciate them, not only on Black History Month but on every single month we should appreciate them," Rianna Allen, corresponding secretary of the BSU, said.

According to Graves, connecting with Black staff, like Alice and Adria in front of Crown and Shirley in front of SoVi, makes her feel more at home while attending a predominantly white institution. "There are many, many Black employees on campus that are not faculty or professors and are staff, and they don't receive the recognition that they deserve all of the time, so it's really important for us," Manifee said.

On Feb. 22, the BSU plans to hold a surprise event replacing the previously scheduled general meeting. The information for this event will be released at a later time.

This year, the guests of most of the events are black women. IEE worked with campus partners like CAP and Women and Gender Studies to create a list of speakers to invite to the events.

"It's important to highlight Black women and their voices and the work they're doing in civic engagement and community activism," McKeel said.





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UNC CHARLOTTE ANNOUNCES NEW STUDENT TAILGATING SPACE

A \$10 million donation from an anonymous donor will fund the development of a new tailgating and event space

by Madison Dobrzenski
News Editor

On Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022, Chancellor Gaber announced that with an anonymous donation of \$10 million, the University will begin construction on a three-acre outdoor complex that will provide space for student gatherings, including tailgating football games.

According to Inside UNC Charlotte, the Student Outdoor Event Venue and Tailgate Park will open in time for the fall 2022 football season.

In an interview with the Niner Times, Student Body President Dick Beekman spoke of his excitement about the announcement. “In all of my time in student government, one of the most consistent complaints or concerns from the student body has been that we need a better tailgate area, we need a more permanent tailgate solution, and we have gone back and forth between Athletics, Student Affairs and the Greek Life office trying to find a permanent solution.”

“When I heard that we were able to find a private donor who generously was willing to put up this money, I was absolutely ecstatic that we’re finding a long-term solution to this that’s going to be great for students and great for the game day environment,” said Beekman.

This announcement comes after the Charlotte 49ers accepted an invitation to the American Athletic Conference (AAC).

“As the Charlotte 49ers prepare to join the AAC, this facility will help us sustain momentum for becoming a nationally recognized institution,” said Chancellor Gaber in Inside UNC Charlotte.

Beekman anticipates an increase in student tailgating and game attendance

due to this development. “The location being right next to the stadium is key. For students to be able to easily get to the stadium after their tailgating experience, we’ll ensure that we’re able to keep a lot of them there,” said Beekman.

“I know athletics had concerns about the previous location with how close it was to North Village, and a number of students might show up at the tailgate but not end up at the game. So this is really going to help with that. I also think that the product Coach Healy puts on the field is also going to help with that. When the stars align, I think that attendance is really going to take off.

The donation process involves matching potential donors with their passions and interests. “They almost play matchmaker between donors and their interests. It just so lined up that they were able to find a donor that’s passionate about student affairs and athletics,” said Beekman.

Beth Crigler, the associate vice chancellor of development, spoke with the Niner Times about the donation process for this project and others like it.

“Development is responsible for fundraising. We have a Development team, and we solicit and build relationships with alumni, parents, faculty, staff, corporations foundations, and community leaders. Development is a part of Advancement and raises money for everything within the University, including Academics, Athletics and Student Affairs. Under Student Affairs are things like the Jamil Niner Student Pantry, the Student Emergency Fund, Student Health Center, UREC, and

anything that doesn’t fall nearly under a college, school, or Athletics.”

“The process is very donor-driven. The technical term is ‘donor-centric fundraising,’ said Crigler. “We have some donors that are scholarship-focused, or some may come to the table only because they had an experience in their life with a mental health issue, and they want to support students in that. Then we try and match their passion with whatever the need is.”

“This particular donor really wanted to focus on something for students, so for this person, it was a well-rounded experience. What helps students have that wonderful experience where they’re always thinking fondly of the University? There are millions of things to think about what students do outside of the classroom,” said Crigler.

“I learned early on in my time in student government that this position is one where you don’t reap the benefits of what you sow. I realized that when I met this guy, Dave Craven, who is now a state senator. He’s a former student body president and showed up for UREC’s opening, and that was years after his time. That’s when it hit me, ‘wow you don’t really get to reap the benefits.’ said Beekman. “It’s really inspiring from a legacy perspective that you get to see you’ve advocated for this need, and now future students are going to get to experience it.”

“I will definitely be here and show up for that season opener and soak it all in. I’m really looking forward to seeing how students are enjoying it,” said Beekman.

UNC CHARLOTTE'S DIGITAL BOOTCAMPS

The School of Professional Studies holds digital skill bootcamps that last between 12 and 24 weeks for non-traditional students

by Kathryn Caudill
Staff Writer

Since its start in 2016, UNC Charlotte's School of Professional Studies has offered digital skills and technology bootcamps to upskill and reskill adult learners. The newest program to be added in 2020 was the Financial Technology Certificate program.

In 2016, UNC Charlotte's School of Professional Studies began offering digital skills and technology bootcamps that last between 12 and 24 weeks to upskill and reskill adult learners to help pivot careers. Four programs have been developed and hosted through the School of Professional Studies. The programs include Coding: Full Stack Web Development Certificate, Cybersecurity Certificate, Data Analytics and Visualization Certificate, and Financial Technology Certificate. Since 2016, these four programs have produced 1500 graduates.

"As UNC Charlotte is the educational powerhouse for the region, we also want to be sure we are serving the community in means regarding career development, upskilling, and reskilling," said Asher Haines, the associate provost of the school of professional studies.

The mission statement for the School of Professional Studies states, "The UNC Charlotte School of Professional Studies ensures that all learners regardless of age, level of experience, or previous education, have opportunities to learn, grow, and achieve their personal and professional goals with a UNC Charlotte education."

These programs and the majority of the programs in the School of Professional Studies are typically utilized by adult

students who already have a four-year degree that are looking to upskill and reskill. Upskilling and reskilling refer to adding new skills to a resume in addition to other previous skills or adding a set of skills in another field.

The School of Professional Studies is marketed to non-traditional learners as defined in their vision statement.

30% of the students enrolled in these programs do not have a bachelor's degree; however, a bachelor's degree is not required, nor is a background in computer science or analytics.

"The world is finding that people change jobs every four and a half to five years, so it is good to have a resource back at the University for people to say 'alright let me do some upskilling and reskilling and see if I can pivot my career,'" said Haines.

According to Haines, most of the participants are not coming from a computer science background.

"Maybe they have been working in the finance industry, and they need to learn some coding skills or some technology application skills to help them in their current work or pivot into a more IT-focused role," added Haines.

The first program to be developed was the Coding: Full Stack Web Development Certificate program in 2016. This program teaches students how to build dynamic web applications and how to be a web developer through learning the basics of coding and algorithms.

The second program to be added was the Data Analytics and Visualization Certificate program in

2018. This program teaches students to analyze data and interpret it through learning to operate technologies such as Excel, Python, JavaScript, SQL Databases and Tableau.

In 2019, the Cybersecurity Certificate program began, where students learned IT skills, networking and information security. Tools such as Wireshark, Kali Linux, Metasploit, and Nessus will be taught with the ability to earn certifications in CompTIA Security+, CompTIA Network+ and ISC CISSP.

The newest program, the Financial Technology Certificate program, teaches students financial professional skills such as programming, data analysis and even cryptocurrency and the blockchain.

The programs are also heavily connected to employers. For example, students will participate in "demo days" where students can showcase their portfolios to employers who provide feedback and hiring opportunities.

Students who complete the courses receive certificates and can attend several job fairs offered by the School of Professional Studies.

"We hear great feedback from students and employers," said Haines.

On the School of Professional Studies website, there are several testimonials from graduates, including 2019 graduate Kari Gehrke.

Gehrke was enrolled part-time in the Full Stack Flex course, where they found that "this course has allowed me to have opportunity and potential in my career again along with a higher salary."

These programs are a part of the larger "portfolio" of other non-academic or professional development programs offered by the School of Professional Studies to serve various types of students and learners.

The School of Professional Studies offers professional development courses, career advancement certificates, graduate degree & certificate programs, and corporate/custom training and executive education programs in addition to the boot camps.

"We are always looking where we need to expand our portfolio," said Haines in regards to future program additions.

These programs are available to students currently enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at the university, and there is an alumni scholarship available.

"It is central and core to our mission to be able to respond to the Charlotte region. That includes the economic need and the economic drivers of the region," added Haines.

Classes are currently virtual, but they were mostly in-person before the pandemic.

UNC Chapel Hill, Columbia Engineering, Rice University and Vanderbilt University have also utilized similar programs in partnership with Trilogy, the same partner company used by UNC Charlotte.

Trilogy is an Austin, TX-based software company that helped launch bootcamps such as the FinTech boot camp in 2019.



Molina Williams covers all the bases for the 49ers as she has stepped into the starter role this season

by Gabie Stanfield
Staff Writer

Photo of Molina Williams
courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

There is always that player who covers all the bases in doing little things that help a team reach the next level. In just her second year on the team, Molina Williams has been a secret weapon for Charlotte all season long.

Williams, a sophomore forward, has stepped into a new role and started every game this season. Williams stays humble by carrying a solid work ethic and mindset that has gotten her far.

“I think just coming to practice not having the mindset that being a starter changes anything [is important],” said Williams. “You still have to play hard, and you do what you need to do on the court, and this year I just happened to be a starter. I think I worked for it, and I’m happy with the position I’m in right now.”

Being a starter comes with great responsibility and pressure that Williams sees as a challenge. Williams has fit right in as a starter and doesn’t feel much difference as she is still looking to accomplish the same goal.

“[As a starter], you can have a little bit more pressure, but I don’t feel much of a difference,” said Williams. “Starting on the bench, you get to see what’s going on, and you can talk with your coaches and say, ‘Did you see that?’ and you can

make that read. You get a little bit more confidence if you can watch and see the game first, but I do like starting.”

Williams is a native of small-town Graham, North Carolina, and attended The Burlington School. Transitioning from small town to big city living can always be a challenge, but Williams has felt comfortable and at home with her teammates.

“Coming from The Burlington School, my graduating class was probably in the low 20’s, so coming here has been a big difference,” said Williams. “Last year, as a freshman, I couldn’t tell there was a shift because of COVID [and] there was no one on campus or anything, so I was just around my teammates. Going back into classes, it’s different having 50 people in a classroom, but I’ve liked it so far, and Charlotte is a great city.”

The summer of 2021 was a big one for Williams as she spent it playing for the United States Virgin Islands National Team at the FIBA AmeriCup tournament in Puerto Rico. In a quarterfinals loss against the United States, Williams recorded ten points, two rebounds and a block.

Williams expressed how her experience with the Virgin Islands team helped her learn how to get used to back-to-back games and be prepared for them. She

also learned how to connect with her teammates pretty quickly, which is a lesson she put into play when she returned to Charlotte for this year’s season.

“When we started the season, we had kind of a new team,” said Williams. “We brought in several different faces, so I used those skills of being able to gel with people pretty quickly when I came back from that summer to get to know my team and find their strengths and weaknesses and work it out together.”

This new role that Williams is stepping into takes a lot of hard work to achieve. The little plays she makes on the court are what she believes to be her biggest skill playing with her team. According to Williams, these small things, such as taking a charge on defense or setting the screen to get her teammates open on a play, can act as a significant momentum shift on the court and are how she aims to help out her teammates.

When it comes to stepping into this new position on the team, there are certain aspects of the game Williams has had to build on, among herself and her skills. Raising her confidence has led to her taking the big step this season.

“Confidence plays a big part in it, being confident in my game and last year, getting

to play in all 22 of those games, you get to feel what you can do,” said Williams. “Toward the end of the season, I had a bigger role than I did in the beginning, so I just continued to grow that. A big thing is I’ve just been working on my shots, and that’s also boosted my confidence with being able to hit shots in the game.”

Most athletes will tell you that being a part of a team is synonymous with family. A supportive and nurturing environment within your team, among your coaching staff and teammates, leads to growth and development as an athlete. Williams touched on how her team at Charlotte has helped her succeed as an individual.

“It goes a lot with confidence as well,” said Williams. “Constantly hearing ‘Good job!’ or ‘You’ve got this!’ or just having that reassurance all the time goes a long way. Knowing that your teammates will have your back even if you mess up goes a long way as well.”

The team doesn’t take their motto “play with heart” lightly, and Williams has been doing just that and more for her team. She will continue to step into her new role more and more as the season progresses.



Charlotte baseball ready to debut new turf infield

by Sam Perry
Staff Writer

Ever since the Charlotte 49ers' athletic department unveiled the new branding for the program, Charlotte as a brand has grown in popularity and has needed to update its stadiums to reflect its new brand.

The football program redid their field to reflect this change before this previous football season, along with the basketball program and other sports updating their facilities with the new logos.

The Charlotte 49er baseball field has recently undergone a facelift that garners the 49ers' new logo and a new surface after many years without a change.

"Hope everyone likes the way it looks. It plays better than it looks, and it's really nice," said head baseball coach Robert Woodard.

What inspired this change?

"We played at Tennessee in the spring of 2020. They had just installed a brand new surface. Coach Bucknell and I walked out on the field, and we said this is what we want," said Woodard. "So we hired the same company and the same field crew. Everything

is the same as Tennessee, except we have a turf mound; they have a dirt mound," said Woodard.

Every coach, especially new coaches, has their wishlist of improvements they want to get done with the program. The change in turf was one of the high caliber wishes Woodard had with his new program.

"You kind of prioritize those things; you can't do everything at once," said Woodard. You know there are 14 or so other sports here, so we are always conscious of that and want to make sure that we are all getting upgrades at a similar pace."

Several factors played into the decision to green-light the renovation, between repair costs of the old turf, the new branding needing to be updated and the recent surge in Charlotte baseball popularity following a very successful season.

All those factors built onto one another to get the renovations signed off on.

"The previous turf has some repairs that had to be done on it," said Woodard on bringing

in new turf. "The cost of the repairs versus the cost of the install was honestly not worth it. You were going to keep having to pay for these repairs over and over," said Woodard.

Specifics of the renovations

The renovations installed FieldTurf's product for the field; the same companies that did Tennessee's 2019 renovations on Robert M. Lindsay Field.

The updates to Charlotte's Phillips Field aren't the only renovations being done. The old logos around Robert and Mariam Hayes Stadium are being removed and replaced with the updated team branding.

"The surface is awesome, the mounds are great, our guys love throwing on them. The batter's boxes compared to the old turf are way more level," said Woodard. "It's a little bit slower of a surface, hops are truer, lines are straighter. It's just a really nice playing surface. I'm really thankful to our administration, Mike Hill and Darin Spease, for signing off on that."

Photos of Charlotte's infield turf
by Matt Lower

Even though the infield is turf, to the naked eye, it may seem like dirt. Woodard says it was designed like that from the start.

"You'll actually see some grains on the dirt when a ball hits it or a pitcher lands or pushes off," said Woodard. "It kinda gives it that dirt feeling, but it's turf. We kinda like to keep things clean and simple around here, so we went with the mowed-in look"

What's next

As of now, the infield is the only turfing that has been done

on Phillips Field. But there are plans and designs in the works to do the outfield as turf soon as well. Some design options are being thrown back and forth for what to have in centerfield.

"It's a big-ticket item for sure, but I don't think it could have come out any better," said Woodard. FieldTurf did a phenomenal job. I'm really excited for once we do the outfield."

Charlotte will test out the new field when they host West Virginia to open up the 2022 season on Feb. 25.



HERE'S MY TWO WEEKS NOTICE!

WHY THE RATE OF WORKER RESIGNATION IN NORTH CAROLINA IS INCREASING

by Hiral Patel
Opinion Editor

Photo of the Uptown Charlotte skyline
by Jade Suszek

Burnout from the pandemic has affected all of us. Many people lost interest, chose laziness and let go of hope. But most outstandingly, the pandemic sparked a new train of thought that pushed workers to quit their jobs. Now that businesses and organizations have returned to running operations the way they were before the pandemic, workers have re-evaluated their career options and life decisions based on what North Carolina employers are providing for them. This ignited the “Great Resignation.”

This hasn't been the first mass resignation the state has seen, but it undoubtedly is more detrimental than what economists have seen in the past two decades. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4.3 million Americans left the workforce in Aug 2021, 90,000 workers from North Carolina. And, the number keeps growing. According to WalletHub, North Carolina is ninth for the highest resignation rate, with an overall rate of 3.22% last year and 3.6% just last month.

This is because North Carolina was voted the worst state to work in for two

years in a row. According to the OxFam Report, North Carolina ranked dead last in wages, worker protections and the right to organize. Though the limitations on the right to organize are obvious since North Carolina is a right-to-work state, mitigating the deep-rooted issues from low wages and poor worker protections can encourage workers to stay in the labor force.

The minimum wage in North Carolina still stands at \$7.25 since it was last changed in 2009. This equates to 23.2% of a living wage for a family of four in 2022 based on the OxFam report, which should be \$31.26 an hour. According to News and Observer, “North Carolina ranks among the last in the nation for average weekly unemployment benefits and for the time it takes to distribute them.” Moreover, unemployment benefits replace only 11.6% of the employee's wages to cover living expenses.

The way workers in North Carolina are treated is atrocious, and the pandemic could not make that any clearer. That's probably why the resignation rates have been so high for the past two years. During the height of the pandemic, workers were

laid off without benefits, health insurance, or proper pay, often working ridiculous hours without sufficient breaks. Workers finally realized they deserved better.

In an interview with the Charlotte Observer, Laura Stanley, a professor at UNC Charlotte's Belk College of Business, states: “The pandemic has caused people to re-evaluate their lives, and how they want to spend 40 to 60 hours a week.” Workers have been quitting their jobs in hopes of finding a better job with better pay and benefits and more vacation time that fits their passion and interests.

A lot of workers resigned and decided to retire. In an interview with WRAL, Economist Mike Walden at NC State explains, “There's also been an increase in retirements as older workers re-evaluate their future in response to questions about the future of the workplace, the impact of the virus reminding them of the fragility of life, and—importantly—strong gains in the stock market that may have supercharged their retirement accounts.”

Working parents also resigned to stay home and take care of their children. A

MetLife survey of 2,000 working adults conducted in Sept. 2021 found that 20% of women left the labor force during the pandemic. Many of these women left due to the lack of childcare. News and Observer reported that “as schools shifted to remote learning, families needed a parent to stay home to care for the children. More often than not, that parent was the mother.” Many mothers with babies and toddlers have to worry about potential COVID-19 outbreaks at daycares, especially since young children still cannot receive a vaccine.

Finding a solution to the issues of low wages and lackluster worker protections isn't hard. North Carolina state legislators can start by increasing the minimum wage to help stimulate economic recovery. Employers should provide an adequate number of vacation days, shift hours and breaks, especially for blue-collar workers. They should also provide better pay and benefits for retirement, healthcare and childcare. Maybe after practical changes are made to reform working conditions, workers would hold back from handing in their two-week notice.



QUEEN'S FEAST WEEK

WILL RETURN IN JULY 2022

Mark your calendars and prepare your appetites

by Kelsey Burgess
Staff Writer

Photos from restaurants in Charlotte
by Kelsey Burgess

The city of Charlotte has thousands of delicious restaurants, making Queen's Feast Week, also known as Charlotte Restaurant Week, a very popular time to get dressed up and enjoy a delicious dinner. Held every six months, tons of restaurants around Charlotte participate to encourage customers to come try their tasty creations, and customers inevitably become hooked on their delicious meals. Most of the restaurants offer a three-course meal, ranging from \$30 to \$45. Queen's Feast Week is an awesome opportunity for UNC Charlotte students to indulge in a high-end experience for a reasonable price. It also gives students a way to explore the city, as many of the participating restaurants are within walking distance from the light rail stops. Some of the restaurants that participated in the most recent Restaurant Week, held January 21-30, were Sullivan's Steakhouse, Fahrenheit, BLT Steak, Tupelo Honey, Mizu and many more, which was a great way to start off 2022.

The list of choices at each restaurant is wide in variety and mouth-watering in taste. For example, the prime New York strip and the broiled salmon are just two of the four entrée choices offered at Sullivan's Steakhouse. The broiled salmon is delicately seasoned with a lemon beurre blanc, richly satisfying to any palette, also plated with asparagus cooked to perfection. In addition, customers are welcome to enhance their entree with crab-

stuffed shrimp or an Oscar-style gumbo. At Sullivan's, customers can order a starter, entree and dessert for only \$45 per person, an unbeatable deal. Fahrenheit, known for its breathtaking views of the city of Charlotte, allows guests to sit on the patio in a heated area as they enjoy the lights of the city from the 21st floor. To end the evening, give in to the temptation and indulge in the dark chocolate torte or lemon cheesecake.

Queen's Feast Week will be coming back strong in July of 2022, with more delectable meals and locations to choose from. The week is a perfect chance to have a girls' night in Uptown, a romantic dinner in South End or a fun night out with friends in Plaza Midwood. Many of the restaurants are in close proximity to other attractions and events in Charlotte, allowing the possibility for dinner and a night out in the city. Begin saving money for the July options because it is guaranteed that you will be interested in trying more than just one restaurant.

These deals are only available for dinner at the restaurants. Make sure to make reservations in advance because if not, there will likely be none left. If there are dietary restrictions, call the restaurant ahead of time to ensure those can be met. For couponers, make sure to read the fine print or call ahead, as some restaurants will not be accepting coupons during the week. With only \$200, you can partake in at least

four exquisite dining experiences, and thankfully there is until July to save up a "feast week fund."

A contributing source to this amazing week of food and drinks is a favorite to many—Tito's Handmade Vodka—which will be available at almost all of the participating restaurants. As a way of giving back, for every Tito's Handmade Vodka Cocktail sold during restaurant week, Tito's will donate \$1 to Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina. Certain restaurants include a flavorful drink as a part of the deal. Those interested can Google "Queen's Feast Week" and find all things food, how to participate and what courses are offered at each location. The site offers restaurants categorized by location to ensure you find a restaurant in the area of Charlotte that best suits you. This is also a great opportunity to find a new go-to restaurant for birthdays, anniversaries, celebrations and other special occasions.

There is no better way to explore and taste the many locations that Charlotte has to offer in the most affordable way possible. After trying even one of the locations, you will be eager to make another trip. So gather your fellow foodies, and make sure to get involved in the next Queen's Feast Week of July 2022.





THE BEST OF sundance FILM FESTIVAL 2022

by Gabe Lapalombella
Staff Writer

Images from films shown at the Sundance film festival
courtesy of Sundance Institute

Another year of the Sundance film festival has come to an end with an all-online 2022 festival. This was my second year attending the festival, and its virtual component gave me the chance to see a whopping twenty-one films. With that many films, I decided to highlight nine of the best films I saw at the festival. Not all of the films on this list will be for everyone, but I wanted to highlight at least nine of them that stood out to me. While some of these films don't have distribution as of yet, they are all stories you should definitely keep an eye on.

9. "Fresh"

Sebastian Stan is undoubtedly one of the most popular actors working today. Besides his work in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, his choices outside of that have been impressive. With his latest film, "Fresh," he's adding another exciting and weird role to his growing filmography. Our story follows Noa (Daisy Edgar-Jones) as she's put into a fight for survival against her boyfriend (Stan) and his unusual appetites. The real fun of "Fresh" is watching the story unfold when you know nothing about it going in. It's weird and can be incredibly quirky, but both Jones and Stan are a blast in these roles.

8. "Emergency"

In his second Sundance feature after last year's "R#J," director Carey Williams returns with his new film "Emergency." Ready for a night of epic partying, three black college students are forced to consider calling the police when tragedy strikes. Williams has a difficult job of making a teen comedy feel painstakingly relevant. Hitting the quirky beats of a teen comedy

while also making us think made for an incredibly surprising film. This balancing act of tones and ideas is worth your time alone. Even when the social commentary is a bit heavy-handed, we're never taken out of the entertaining journey we started on.

7. "Dual"

Riley Stearns's "Dual" is probably the weirdest film I saw throughout the festival. We follow a woman named Sarah (Karen Gillan), who opts for a unique cloning procedure after being diagnosed with a serious illness. When she recovers and attempts to decommission her clone, it leads to a court-mandated dual to the death. That may lead you to think this is a serious drama, but it's actually a very bleak comedy. All of the dialogue is told in a stilted, almost robotic way, which makes it hilarious. Actors like Gillan and Aaron Paul are game for the "bleak-comedy" style humor and deliver a film so odd that it is hard to look away from.

6. "Fire of Love"

Sundance gives room to a variety of cinematic voices, including some really great documentary filmmakers. This story follows scientists and lovers Katia and Maurice Krafft, who died in a volcanic explosion. Brought together by a variety of video footage, we're given a peek of their love story with footage of their volcanic exploration. Seeing what drove these two people to do what they loved was absolutely fascinating. Even with some heavy-handed narration from filmmaker Miranda July, the imagery is one of a kind. It's beautiful, poignant and sad, which makes for an incredible experience.

5. "Am I OK?"

Dakota Johnson has made one of the sweetest films of the festival. "Am I OK?" tells the story of two friends (Johnson and Sonoya Mizuno) who help each other on a journey of self-discovery. Directed by Stephanie Allynne and Tig Notaro, the film has an incredible feeling of authenticity. Johnson and Mizuno's relationship really feels like two best friends, thanks to their committed performances and natural dialogue. Keeping the stakes rather small gives these actresses a chance to shine and deliver a sweetness we haven't seen from them before. Its pacing can be a bit slow, but at only 86 minutes long, our lead characters make the journey quite enjoyable.

4. "Emily The Criminal"

Aubrey Plaza has made a name for herself as a darkly funny comedian. Her comedic timing mixed with her dry delivery make a very interesting combination. "Emily The Criminal," directed by first-time director John Patton Ford, allows her to show a different side. Being a college student saddled with debt, Emily (Plaza) gets involved in a credit card scam connecting her to Los Angeles's criminal underworld. From a narrative perspective, the film doesn't offer anything we haven't seen before. It's Plaza's raw and committed lead performance that makes this crime story something special.

3. "892"

John Boyega has had the cards stacked against him after a lackluster Star Wars trilogy. In "892," he delivers some of his best work as Marine war veteran Brian Brown-Easily. We follow Boyega as Easily, dealing with both mental and emotional

challenges integrating back into the real world. Along with Boyega, director Abi Damaris Corbin crafts a sharp thriller with two other great performances from Nicole Beharie and the late Michael K. Williams. Even with being shot on a smaller budget, "892" still delivers as an emotionally involved and tense thriller.

2. "Resurrection"

Rebecca Hall and Tim Roth are a combination of leads I never knew I needed. To get the maximum amount of enjoyment from "Resurrection," go in knowing as little as possible. Hall stars as Margaret, a woman whose life is perfect and organized until her past comes to haunt her via her old "friend" David. Describing anything else in the film's plot would be a huge disservice to your viewing experience. Shifting genres between a drama, psychological thriller, and even a horror film made Resurrection one of my most enjoyable watches of the festival.

1. "God's Country"

The Western has taken on an entirely different form over the years. Instead of cowboys and Indians, the genre has morphed into humane stories of people. Thandiwe Newton stars as Sandra, a college professor in a small town who is forced to deal with the tragic loss of her mother. Forced to confront two hunters who trespass on her property, Sandra becomes engaged in serious physical and psychological warfare. "God's Country's" languid pacing is the sort of creative choice that won't be for everyone. Newton's commanding performance and the overall powerful sense of place make this a festival standout.

DEAR NINER TIMES,

how to AVOID BURNOUT

by Jade Suszek
Staff Writer

We are almost a month into the spring semester, and some professors are already discussing what to expect for their midterms which are quickly approaching. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the pressure academically, socially and personally. Signs of academic burnout are feeling constantly exhausted, lack of motivation, lack of creativity, increased tension, hard time focusing and more. To avoid academic burnout:

1. Take time for yourself

Whether it is connecting with hobbies you love, talking to loved ones, watching your comfort television show/movie or taking an extra nap, these things can help with relaxing and sparking motivation for working on academics. I try to do something creative like coloring or photography to make time for myself.

2. Develop good relationships with your professors

Life is crazy, to say the least. Professors want to see you succeed in their classes. With a good relationship, you can reach out whenever you feel like you are struggling.

3. Make manageable goals

Do not wait till the last minute to get all your assignments done. By setting attainable goals, you can divide your work in order not to overwhelm yourself. I usually divide the work of my assignments by the number of days I have to do them. For example, if I have three days to complete a reading each day, I would spend about 30 minutes leading to it being finished by the due date.

4. Most importantly, listen to yourself

If you need a break or a mental health day, take one because, in the long run, it will help you avoid burnout.

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Student Niner Media

LEADERS OF THE MONTH

November & January



ELIZA CYRIAC

Congratulations to Eliza Cyriac for being named the Student Leader of the Month for November. Eliza serves as the chair to the Student Media Board. She keeps the meetings on task, keeps all members up to date on new initiatives, and works with committees to keep Student Media moving forward. We look forward to seeing what Eliza will accomplish in spring. Hats off to Eliza for a job well done!

CLAIRE HAMBRICK

Congratulations to Claire Hambrick for being named the Student Leader of the Month for January. Claire serves as the editor in chief for Midas Magazine. Claire built the magazine from the ground up - building a full staff and publishing online since 2020. In December, Midas published its first print edition. The edition was celebrated at a Launch Party at the Dubois Center. Hats off to Claire for a job well done! We can't wait to see the spring issue!