

NINERTIMES

An illustration of a person with brown hair and glasses looking at a tablet. The tablet displays a 3D architectural rendering of a building with blue and yellow sections. A red human figure is standing on a green area in the foreground. There are pink exclamation marks and lightning bolts scattered around the scene. A purple and yellow UI element with an upward arrow is visible on the right side of the tablet. In the background, there are various objects like a red box, a yellow box, and a green toy car on a desk.

Student-driven news since 1947

Jan. 23, 2024

OPINION:

Gen Alpha, the generation bound behind screens

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editor@ninertimes.com

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Jackson Holloman
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Lauren Steventon
Aarushi Mandel
Maya Hutagalung
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Chris Crews
Blake Rose

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Cover layout by Sunnya Hadavi
Interior layouts by Denise Soriano, Nam Phon, Aliyah Valcin and Sunnya Hadavi

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Student-driven news since 1947

The Niner Times is UNC Charlotte's student-run news publication founded in 1947 and has received both state and national recognition.

The Niner Times aims to provide accurate and fair news to the UNC Charlotte community. We cover campus happenings, news and events in the city of Charlotte and North Carolina and topics that are important to students. We publish written, photo and video content online (ninertimes.com), on social media and through our weekly email newsletter (sent every Tuesday at 9:30 am). We also produce a supplemental bi-weekly (every other week) in-print newspaper that hits stands on Tuesdays.

CONTACT INFORMATION

9201 University City Blvd. SU 042 Charlotte, NC 28223
Phone: 704-687-7148
Email: inquiry@ninertimes.com

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Lovin' Life Music Fest comes to Charlotte May 3-5, featuring Post Malone, Stevie Nicks and Noah Kahan

Jenny Kase | Asst. News Editor

Lovin' Life Music Fest (LLMF) is making its debut in Charlotte on Friday, May 3 through Sunday, May 5, featuring a lineup of globally acclaimed artists, including headliners Post Malone, Stevie Nicks and Noah Kahan, alongside over 40 artists across diverse genres beginning at \$269 for a three-day pass.

To purchase tickets, go to the LLMF website.

Presented by Southern Entertainment, a full-service event and production company that has organized over 500 music festivals and events across the U.S., Lovin' Life Music Fest is set to claim the spotlight as Charlotte's foremost major music festival.

According to the LLMF website, "After producing events all over the East Coast, we've dreamt of bringing a major music festival to Charlotte, and the Lovin' Life Music Fest is our passion project," said Bob Durkin, co-founder and partner of Southern Entertainment. "We're thrilled to support the ongoing effort to make our hometown of Charlotte a music city in such a big way."

Over the course of the three-day event, LLMF is expected to draw in an estimated 90,000 attendees and a projected economic impact of \$30 million in its initial year.

Southern Entertainment is collaborating with partners such as the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, Charlotte Center City Partners and the Hospitality & Tourism Alliance.

According to the LLMF website, "Charlotte Center City Partners and Music Everywhere CLT are deeply committed to growing Charlotte's music scene, and the Lovin' Life Music Fest will be a major leap forward," said Michael Smith, CEO of Charlotte Center City Partners. "We are excited about this three-day event that will continue to build the Queen City's reputation among music industry professionals, performing artists, and live music fans."

Lovin' Life Music Fest has announced additional artists set to perform, including Mt. Joy, Dominic Fike, Young the Giant and Jessie Murph. To stay updated on LLMF artist announcements, check out their website or follow them on their social media platforms.

Apart from the world-renowned musical lineup, the event will also include art, culinary, cultural activities and other entertainment.

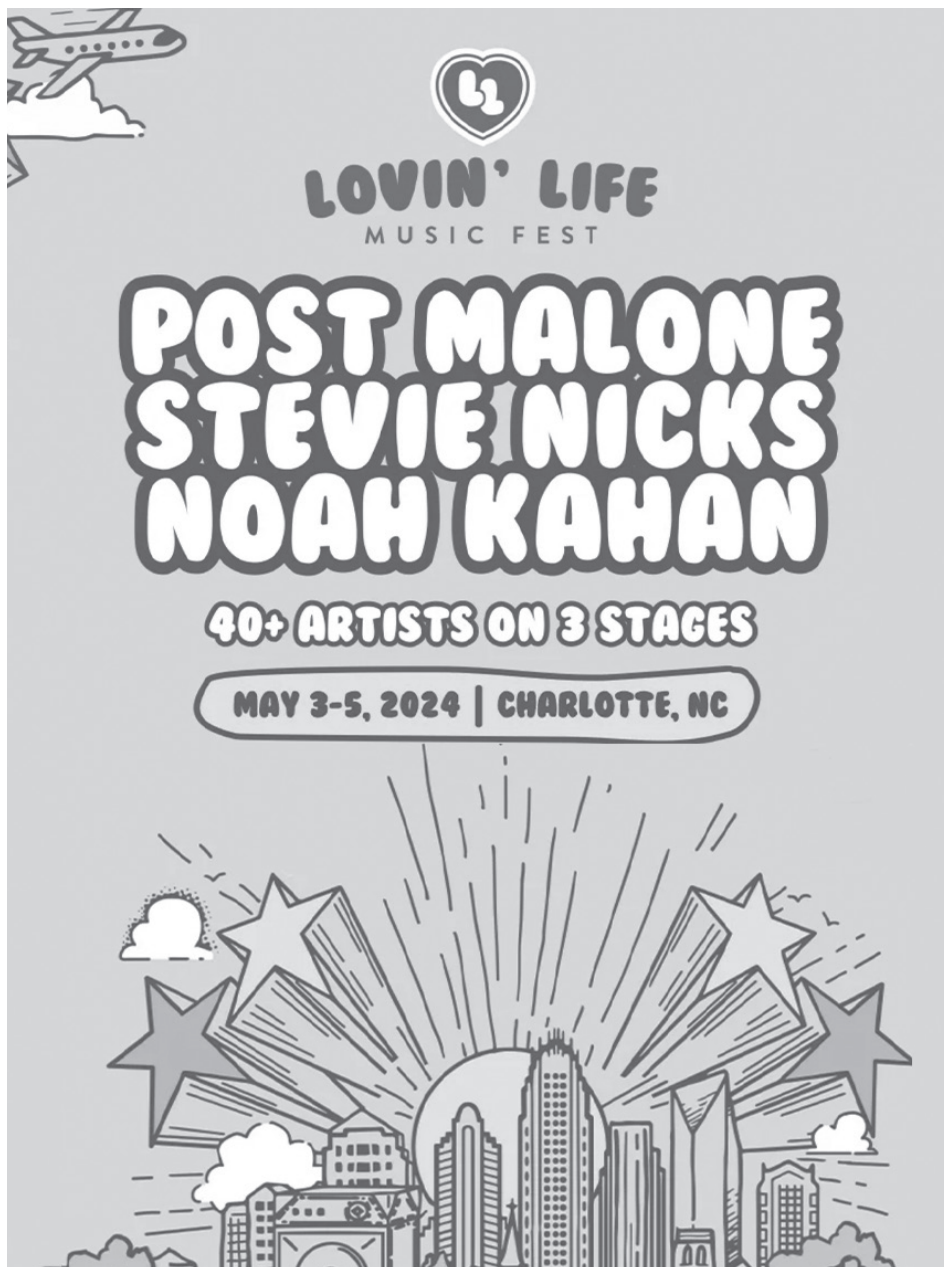
LLMF is also hosting the LLMF Ambassador Program to allow attendees the chance to meet

their favorite artists and get merchandise, front-row tickets and upgrades by downloading the SocialLadder app and using the code "lovinlifefest."

Guests can purchase three-day General Admission, three-day General Admission Plus, three-day Main Stage VIP or three-day Super VIP tickets. All sales are final.

They are also offering payment plans starting with a 20% deposit and later 20% payments due Feb. 1, March 1 and April 1. To receive a wristband, all payments must be completed by April 1.

For additional information, visit Lovin' Life 101 or email info@lovinlifefest.com.



Courtesy of Lovin' Life Music Fest

FAFSA introduces Simplification Act for the 2024-2025 cycle

Emma Wical & Olivia Fey | Staff Writers

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is changing for the 2024-2025 cycle and implementing a new Simplification Act to ensure a more straightforward application process and greater student eligibility.

As a result, the application was released in December 2023 instead of the usual Oct. 1.

The FAFSA Simplification Act will not impact Pell Grant eligibility; instead, it will help expand how many students can receive a grant based on family size and poverty level.

According to the official FAFSA website, "incarcerated students at the state or federal level will become eligible to receive the Pell Grant, as well as students whose schools closed while they were enrolled."

The new FAFSA will also measure college affordability through the Student Aid Index (SAI) instead of the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and modify the family definition. It will also remove questions about drug convictions and Selective Service registration. Additionally, it will add race, gender and ethnicity options that will not impact eligibility.

The new FAFSA has less than 50 questions, while the old application had over 100, reducing the time spent filling it out.

What is known as the "sibling discount" will be removed from the 2024-2025 FAFSA, meaning that families will not get a discount for having multiple children in college as opposed to previous years.

Additionally, the number of students who can receive Federal Pell Grant eligibility has increased.

According to studentaid.gov, "Starting in the 2024-2025 award year, an estimated 610,000 new students will be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant. An additional 1.5 million students will also be eligible to receive a maximum Pell Grant award."

For priority consideration, students in the UNC System must submit the FAFSA by June 1, 2024. It is recommended that the FAFSA be completed by March 1, 2024, as funds will deplete quickly.

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First-year students will be required to live on campus starting fall 2025

Kathleen Cochrane | News Editor

First-year students will be required to live in on-campus housing starting fall 2025. This decision was announced at the Board of Trustees meeting on Dec. 7, 2023.

The University decided to make this change after seeing the success it has brought other UNC System schools. They believe it will increase student success and help students sustain enrollment with the expected decline in high school graduates and demographic shifts predicted for 2026.

Over 6,000 students live on campus out of the 30,298 total enrollment.

“The data shows that if a student lives on campus, particularly in their first year, they have better success outcomes. I think there’s some correlation between them being more likely to be able to find the library and their professors and their books and all these good things and students becoming more ingrained in campus culture,” said Chancellor Sharon Gaber at the Dec. 7 Board of Trustees meeting.

Housing and Residence Life had an increase in students wanting to live on campus in the

fall 2022 and fall 2023 semesters, which caused them to house students in nearby hotels. Due to the increased demand, they started constructing Phase XVI, which was recently completed at the end of the fall 2023 semester.

“Additionally, with increasing demand for on-campus living year over year, the transition to this requirement helps Housing and Residence Life better manage space and meet the needs

of incoming students,” said a University spokesperson.

Within the UNC System, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Wilmington, North Carolina State University, East Carolina University, Appalachian State University and others require first-year students to live on campus.

“Many of our peer institutions in the UNC System and across the country have similar

requirements for first-year students. While a first-year live-on requirement is very common, we’re working to develop policies and practices that consider the unique needs of our students,” said a university spokesperson.

As of fall 2022, 75% of Charlotte students live off campus. Due to this high percentage of commuter students, there will be an exemption for anyone living in a county bordering Mecklenburg County and anyone over 21. There will also be exemptions for married students or students with children.

“Before anybody worries that somebody around this area would be required to do this. This is for our large number of students who are coming from across the state that are needing to move here and live somewhere,” said Gaber.

The Board of Trustees comprises 13 members, including Chairman Dennis Bunker III, Vice Chairman Donta Wilson and Secretary Christine Katziff. The board meets 4-5 times an academic year to propose and pass any changes to the University. Eight members are elected to four-year terms by the UNC Board of Governors, the North Carolina General Assembly appoints four members and the last is the student body president serving one year as an ex officio member.

They recently met on Dec. 7, 2023, to discuss changes to the University and new programs, like the demolition of Sanford Hall and the renovations of Upper Prospector and Burson Hall. They also introduced a new Charlotte Aviation program and the building plans for a U.S. Performance Center Bobsledding facility.

Any other specific exemptions and plans for housing are still being discussed. This is an ongoing story, and the Niner Times will provide updates as they are announced.

“

THE DATA SHOWS THAT IF A STUDENT LIVES ON CAMPUS, PARTICULARLY IN THEIR FIRST YEAR, THEY HAVE BETTER SUCCESS OUTCOMES.

- Sharon Gaber, *Chancellor*



Richard Nuzzo/Niner Times

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The indie and alternative artists making up Charlotte's music scene

Sunnya Hadavi | Editor-in-Chief

As seen in the last couple of years, more and more popular artists are adding Charlotte as a tour stop. The most recent news for Charlotte's music lovers has been the announcements for the Lovin' Life Music Festival, a three-day festival in Uptown Charlotte. However, as big artists come to the Queen City, local Charlotte artists are sinking further underground.

Here is a look at a few of the local indie, emo and alternative from Charlotte.

Check out Niner Times' Playlist: "Charlotte's Indie & Alt Sounds," featuring releases from each artist.

Big Backyard

(Instagram: @bigbackyardband)

Big Backyard is a Charlotte emo band that recently reunited in July 2023. Big Backyard has currently released four songs, three on an EP titled "Music for Your Porch" (2020) and a single titled "Durham" (2023). The band's next show is at The Milestone Club on Saturday, Feb. 17.

blankstate.

(Instagram: @blankstate.official)

blankstate. is a Charlotte indie-emo band that had its first show in 2018, and its first album, "The World Is Not Kind To These Things,"

was released in 2022. Their latest song, "big bad news" came out on Dec. 16, 2023, and the band has shows in Charlotte and other nearby cities.

briZB

(Instagram: @briihuyh)

briZB is a Charlotte indie artist who began releasing songs in 2022. With just four songs, she has received 41.8k streams on Spotify in 2023. Her latest song, "firefly," came out on Jan. 16.

Dirty Art Club

(Instagram: @dirtyartclub)

Dirty Art Club (DAC) differs from other artists on this playlist because he releases beats with varying instrumentals and fewer vocals. Primarily active on Bandcamp, DAC's earliest releases were in 2011, and the most recent was in December 2023 with "b sides (jacuzzi sushi/car test)."

GABUISLOST

(X: @jeibe_yub)

GABUISLOST is another artist from Charlotte with many releases available for listening on Spotify and Soundcloud. His latest song, "RUSH!" was released on Jan. 12.

Jenny Besetzt

(Instagram: @jennybesetzt)

Jenny Besetzt is a Charlotte band with three released albums. Their most recent release was their album titled "Goner." Jenny Besetzt's song "Mothers and Sisters" was also featured in season 2, episode 9 of "And Just Like That: A New Chapter of Sex and the City" (in the last 10 minutes of the episode).

Modern Alibi

(Instagram: @modernalibi)

Modern Alibi is an alternative rock band from Charlotte. The band was started by Holden Scott (rhythm guitarist and lead singer) as a solo project in 2021. In 2023, Modern Alibi had three song releases and is now working on their first EP. Their most recent show was on Jan. 5 at Amos' Southend.

Moving Boxes

(Instagram: @movingboxesband)

Describing themselves as "Midwesty pop-punky fifth wave emo whatevercore," Moving Boxes is a band from Charlotte and Raleigh. Moving Boxes releases their next album, "The Things We Leave Behind," on Jan. 26. Their most

recent shows were on Jan. 4 in Raleigh and Jan. 5 at The Milestone Club in Charlotte.

Oceanic

(Instagram: @oceanicofficial)

Oceanic is Charlotte's most prominent band, with over 25.3k monthly listeners on Spotify. Their debut album, "No, Human," is out now. Selling out their local shows, Oceanic's next show in Charlotte is on Feb. 16 at Amos' Southend.

Thurn & Taxis

Going back to the '90s, Thurn & Taxis was a Charlotte and Nashville band from 1990 to 1994. They specialized in melodic rock and roll and were described as "everything from '60s folk rock psychedelia' to 'crunching guitar rock' to 'the Manchester sound.'" Only one single can be found on Spotify, but Bandcamp features a collection of some of Thurn & Taxis' recordings.

Yugo

(Instagram: @yugoband)

Started in 2016, Yugo was a band that drew on '80s and modern influences for their releases. Yugo's most recent single, "memory," was released in May 2023. However, the band disbanded a month later.



Big Backyard performing at The Milestone Club on July 24, 2023. | Courtesy of Big Backyard/Zachary Tice



Denise Soriano/Niner Times

Looking back on the film industry and top films of 2023

Jackson Holloman | Staff Writer

We regret the lack of box office success for the many wonderful dramas this year and the increasing cost of making films, causing productions big and small to lose money. Or the projects never start at all, with the financial barrier to entry being too high for many studios.

It was the year of the postponement and cancellations. Warner Brothers canceled projects like “Coyote vs. Acme” and “Batgirl” for tax write-offs, destroying finished films that hundreds of crew members worked on. Even Disney will have to shift gears as they lost the top spot at the box office for the first time in almost a decade.

But there are still things to look forward to, and “Coyote vs. Acme” may still be released. The work of hundreds of people can be enjoyed and archived for the future. Disney’s failure at the box office could provoke them to make more exciting and varied films in the future.

Maybe the most important thing to big-budget cinema in 2023 was the success of “Barbenheimer,” bringing in \$2.3 billion between “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer.” A historical drama like “Oppenheimer” making nearly a billion dollars

is special. Something similar has yet to be seen in at least a decade, and it is Universal’s biggest non-franchise film of all time. The film’s success was primarily based on the massive cultural phenomenon and public adoration for the films rather than traditional advertising.

Big studios like Apple and Netflix saw the importance of film (and awards consideration) in their markets. They pushed dramas to get what they deserved, with “The Killer,” “May December,” “Maestro” and “Killers of the Flower Moon” having the financial backing they needed to be made and released.

The SAG-AFTRA and Writers Guild strikes were an all too necessary and difficult success story that helped balance power and supported creatives. It was a ridiculous attempt by major studios, as weeks into the strike, production company NEON complied with the guilds’ requests and continued to work. If a small company can make the necessary changes and pay what is fair, then the major studios have no excuse.

Two standout moments of 2023 were watching the success of U.S. theatrical releases of overseas films like “The Boy and the Heron,” “Godzilla:

Minus One,” “Jawan” and “Pathaan.” Showing that the subtitle barrier is slowly fading, and there is a hunger for these stories. There was also the exceptional performance of concert films in 2023, with “Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour” and “Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé,” showing that there are creative ways to bring out audiences to theaters in the future.

Things could have been worse, but most importantly, it was a terrific year for exceptional filmmaking. The list includes films that had a first-run release in Charlotte in 2023. Internet or theatrical limited/wide releases are all eligible, but these are films that Charlotte film lovers could have seen starting in 2023.

Top films of 2023

1. “May December”
2. “Beau is Afraid”
3. “Return to Seoul”
4. “Broker”
5. “Anatomy of a Fall”
6. “Passages”
7. “Poor Things”

8. “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse”
9. “Past Lives”
10. “A Thousand and One”
11. “Oppenheimer”
12. “The Royal Hotel”
13. “Sanctuary”
14. “Priscilla”
15. “Sick of Myself”
16. “Mission Impossible – Dead Reckoning”
17. “The Delinquents”
18. “Smoking Causes Coughing”
19. “Maestro”
20. “Showing Up”

Honorable mentions

- “American Fiction”
- “Dream Scenario”
- “Eileen”
- “Ferrari”
- “Huesera: The Bone Woman”
- “Joyland”
- “One Fine Morning”
- “Tori and Lokita”
- “You Hurt My Feelings”

Film Review: 'Mean Girls' musical remake was not really fetch

Brooke Black | Staff Writer

The name Regina George has been around for 20 years now, and that is because there is something so iconic about your neighborhood mean girl. The new musical remake of the iconic Broadway musical and 2004 movie gives the audience familiar faces and a familiar story but sadly misses what makes the original film iconic.

The new remake is full of cheap Shein outfits, corny jokes and promotions for companies like SeatGeek and e.l.f., neither of which Regina (Reneé Rapp) would even use. As a broke college student, I love e.l.f. because they constantly come out with a dupe of a product I cannot afford. But Regina would never use e.l.f. because she would already own the original. Regina would more likely look down on those who needed to use a dupe product.

The film was also full of modern touches that differed from the original. Where the original had four-way phone calls that messed up, this film had TikTok For You pages and cameos seen on the app from Megan Thee Stallion and Chris Olsen. Although it was interesting to see how the modern touches played out, it was unrealistic for a celebrity like Megan Thee Stallion to post videos about a random teenager named Regina George.

The entire point of the Mean Girls plot is to show that high school is 'cliquey' and that every school has its Regina, just like every school has the geek squad and the jocks. The plot line that celebrities would care about high school drama

seemed unrealistic, especially since the original felt so realistic to how high school felt for many people.

Almost the most infuriating for me to watch were the poor costume decisions. There were items worn in the movie that I have seen on the Shein website myself, as a broke college student who shops there. Regina George would not shop at Shein, much less go what seemed like the entire movie without wearing a skirt. Janis' costuming was not nearly as goth as her character is supposed to be and gave a more hippy approach.

Truthfully, the only character that did the original movie justice was Damian (Jaquel Spivey). His costuming was accurate to the original, his jokes were almost better than the original Damian, and his voice was to die for. Spivey did a phenomenal job and was a big reason why I stayed to finish the film.

In addition to Damian's character being a hit, Janis' character (Auli'i Cravalho) seemed true to the original character despite the costume changes that I did not like. I enjoyed how her art was adapted into a different style using stitching and that she was not as much of a hardass as the original Janis.

This new film was an injustice to the original film and Broadway musical, with bad costumes and corny additions. Every character seemed over the top and not in the iconic way many hoped for.

Rating: 4.5/10



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

Niner Cookbook: How to make loaded baked potato soup

Mathew De La Rosa | Writing Managing Editor

Loaded baked potato soup features a creamy base filled with chunks of baked potatoes, cheese, bacon and green onions.

This recipe uses 12 different ingredients and takes 30-45 minutes.

Ingredients

- **4 Russet potatoes:** The amount can be scaled up or down with other ingredients depending on how much soup you would like.
- **Microwaveable bacon:** Any bacon works, and the amount depends on your desired amount.
- **4 tbsp unsalted butter:** This measurement does not need to be exact. Unsalted butter works best in a soup.
- **2 minced garlic cloves:** Add to taste.
- **¼ cup of minced yellow onion:** Add to taste.

- **½ cup of all-purpose flour:** The type of flour is important for this recipe. All-purpose flour will help the soup come to a thicker consistency.

- **2 cups of low-fat milk:** This creates the soup base. Using low-fat milk is essential.

- **1 cup of half and half:** This gives the soup a creamier consistency.

- **2 cups chicken stock:** This balances the milk in the soup base and gives it a savory flavor.

- **1 tsp salt:** Add to taste.

- **½ tsp black pepper:** Add to taste.

- **1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese:** Add to taste.

- **1 cup sour cream:** Add to taste.

- **Chopped fresh chives:** Add to taste.

Cooking directions

Step 1: Prepare the potatoes – pierce them with a fork and microwave for 12-15 minutes until they reach a tender consistency. Once done, carefully halve the potatoes, allowing them to cool before peeling and cutting them into delightful chunks.

Step 2: Moving on to the bacon, follow the instructions on the package for the microwaveable bacon. Once cooked, give the bacon time to cool down, then take the cooled bacon and crumble it into small pieces.

Step 3: In a spacious pot, melt butter over medium-low heat. Introduce the garlic and onion, allowing them to cook for 2-3 minutes until the onion is translucent in color and has a tender texture.

Step 4: Gradually whisk in flour and continue stirring for 1-2 minutes. Slowly introduce milk and half-and-half into the mixture, ensuring a smooth consistency. Follow this with the gradual addition of chicken stock.

Step 5: Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer and whisk in the salt, garlic and pepper. Maintain the simmer until it slightly thickens, taking approximately 5-7 minutes.

Step 6: For those seeking an extra touch, consider reserving 1/4 cup each of cheeses and bacon for garnish. Stir in the remaining cheese, bacon, and sour cream. Remove the pot from heat.

Step 7: Scoop the potato chunks into the pot, breaking them into smaller pieces or leaving them chunky – the choice is yours. Serve while hot, and adorn it with garnishes such as cheese, bacon and chives for added flavor.



PHOTOS: STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ATTEND THE ANNUAL WINTER STUDENT ORG SHOWCASE

Photos by Dan Rice & Matthew De La Rosa

Kathleen Cochrane & Jenny Kase | News Editor & Asst. News Editor

UNC Charlotte's Winter Student Organization Showcase displayed around 50 clubs and Greek life organizations. The event was open for all students to see what clubs the university has to offer and was held in Halton Arena on Thursday, Jan. 18.

At the showcase, various student groups come together to present and promote their respective clubs or organizations to the broader student body.

Members of these groups engage with potential new members, providing information about their organization's mission, values and the benefits of joining. It is an excellent

opportunity for students to explore different interests, meet like-minded peers and become involved in campus life.

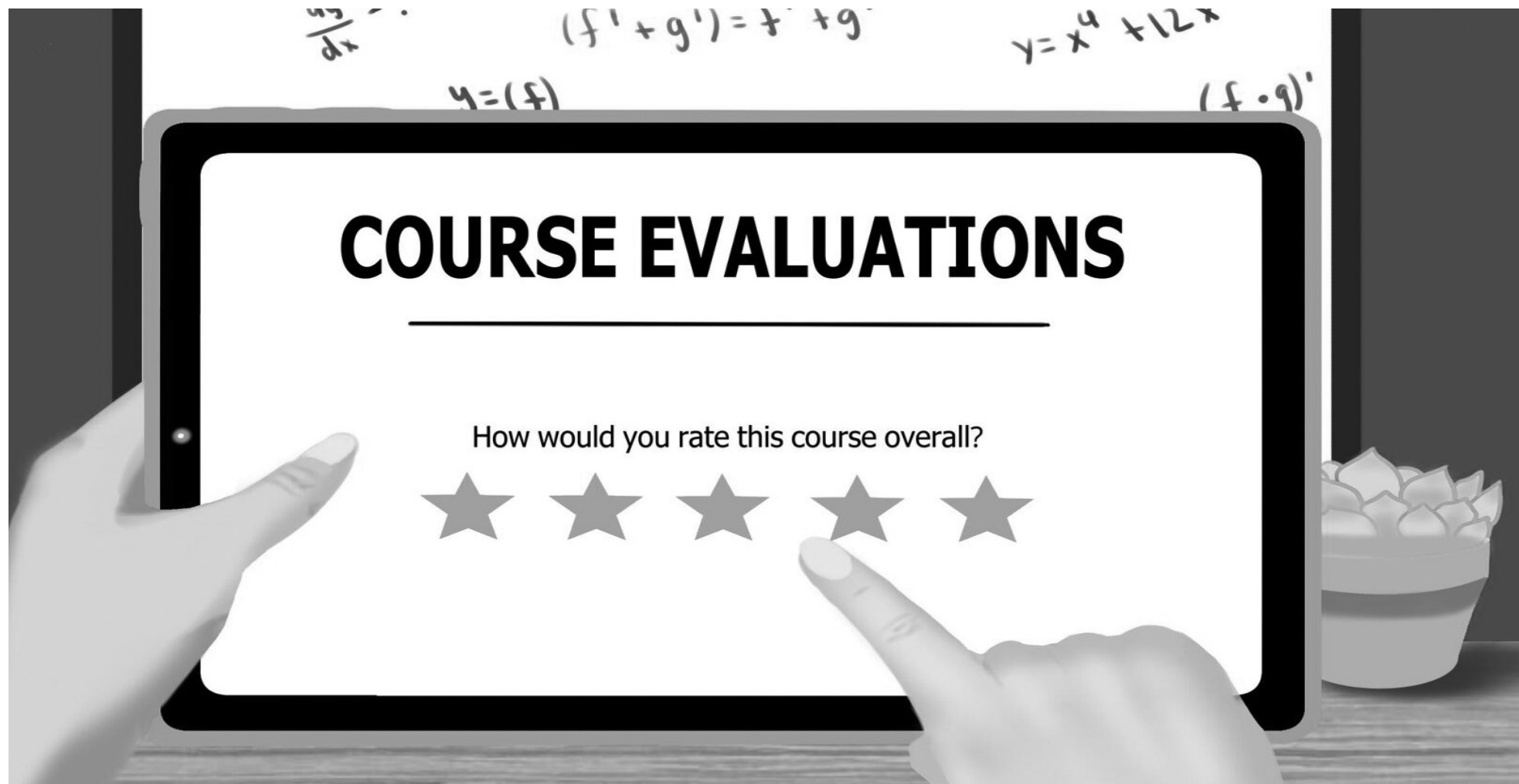
The clubs included in the photos are Habitat for Humanity, Phi Beta Sigma, Inc., Reformed University Fellowship, Health Care Justice, Russian Club, Zeta Tau Alpha and Autohaven Enthusiasts.

There is a Student Organization Showcase at the beginning of every fall and spring semester to help integrate new students that want to get involved. To see all the clubs and organizations on campus visit Niner Engage.



Course evaluations should be available for students to view

Dakota Currier | Asst. Opinion Editor



Lauren Steventon/Niner Times

With the semester just beginning, students need to ensure they are set in their schedules and settle into their courses easily. Opening up course evaluations for students to view would allow for a smooth transition into the semester.

Selecting a class is easy: you look at the day and time (check). Then, make sure it is the proper course (check). Finally, you look at the professor. Who are they, and what are they like? Contacting other students who have had their course in the past is always a good starting point, but where do you go from there?

It would take the stress off of students' minds to know what to expect before they go into a course and prevent last-second switching if a professor does not mesh with a student.

At the end of every semester, the email rolls out, "REMINDER: Complete Your Course Evaluations," where students can anonymously submit evaluations on their courses. Still, they are not open for future students to view.

To prevent a clash, Dr. Ian Binns, a professor at the Cato College of Education, said, "It will help future students" if students fill out the evaluation form when they get it to provide timely feedback about the course.

"Let's pull back from just ourselves and focus on the idea of helping future people," said Binns. "It gives [students] an opportunity to have an anonymous voice."

These course evaluations help rate a professor's performance and the course overall.

"The course evaluation metric is a big part of

whether or not they're retained or promoted," said Dr. Nance Riffe, assistant teaching professor and director of forensics.

So, it seems almost obvious to open this up to students and possibly other reformations. After all, students are the ones rating the course and paying to take it — they deserve not just a say on the course but a view of what the course is like.

Riffe suggests a way to involve students in the course evaluation process.

"I think it would be worth student input on what questions are asked on course evaluations," said Riffe.

Unfortunately, UNC Charlotte course evaluations remain closed for future students to view, and Riffe admits this issue should be taken up with the Student Government Association.

"We know course evaluations have a tendency to favor middle-aged white male teachers who are straight," said Riffe. "The faculty senate has looked at course evaluations and has agreed that they are generally flawed."

However, there are alternative popular websites like RateMyProfessors that allow students to rate their course and professors to add comments about the course anonymously.

Opening up Charlotte evaluations would be useful to students in preparation for their classes while taking an extra layer of stress off students' backs, helping them feel more prepared for future semesters.

Gen Alpha, the generation bound behind screens

Aarushi Mandel | Contributor

The upbringing of Generation Alpha, otherwise known as iPad kids, has raised concerns regarding millennial parenting.

Children's exposure to technology has rapidly increased in recent years, particularly with the use of computers in schools; however, uncontrolled exposure by parents is being blamed for the creation of the 'iPad kid.'

These kids have grown up around technology but, most importantly, media. So-called iPad kids have had access to streaming platforms, video games and even social media from ages entirely too young to access such things. As a result, children grow up in an online world, leading technology to become a crutch rather than a tool.

According to the World Health Organization, children under five years old should be limited to 60 minutes of screen time a day. Still, kids under the age of 10 are spending hours on iPads, phones and TVs rather than participating in other activities that aid in development. Playing outside is slowly becoming obsolete as kids would rather spend their time behind a screen.

The internet has reduced these kids to misbehaved and bratty while failing to see the many issues that come when an iPad is handed one's way before they reach double digits. UNICEF states that increased screen time for toddlers can lead to a shorter attention span and even lower empathy as their ability to recognize faces decreases. Without face-to-face interactions, non-verbal cues become difficult to develop. Children must experience external stimuli during development; no matter how engaging the content, a screen will never have the same effect.

These short attention spans have created a multitude of problems in the classroom, something many on the internet are increasingly concerned about. The most jarring fact is that iPad kids can not read.

After conducting an assessment in 2022, The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) found that only 31% of fourth graders are at a proficient reading level, while nearly 40% are considered below basic standards.

The internet has been quick to blame parents for their kids' behaviors. Children as young as five years old now possess personal devices such as iPads and iPhones, often having unlimited access to social media and streaming services. This is simply setting one's child up for failure because



Maya Hutagalung/Niner Times

the costs always outweigh the benefits.

The use of media to distract children can be helpful at times; however, if made a habitual practice, children will become dependent on screens. TikTok users took to the app to recount horror stories of screaming children ignoring their parents, only able to be quieted by screens. Passive parents have been blamed for raising a generation that does not respect authority.

Riya Shah, a first-year student at UNC Char-

lotte, expressed her concerns on the matter.

"It makes them act out more because parents nowadays will enable them and enable that behavior to get them quiet, they give them their iPads," said Shah.

Shah further explained how an attachment to screens prevents kids from key social interactions such as spending time with family.

"It's ruining family and children relationships because kids nowadays will go to their electron-

ics rather than spend time with their parents," said Shah.

She referred to a recent family dinner where there was a lack of conversation as all of her cousins were on their phones and iPads.

The increase in the use of technology by children is harming them tremendously. If this pattern persists, children's social interaction will continue to be negatively impacted.

Disadvantages of the UNC Charlotte housing lottery outweigh the benefits

Ruhshona Soledjonova | Opinion Editor

On-campus housing issues are not breaking news at UNC Charlotte, but Housing and Residence Life (HRL) has introduced a new lottery-style room selection process in an attempt to fix the housing crisis. This change does not solve the lack of housing, nor does it secure spots for returning students.

Students must apply for housing between Jan. 22 through Jan. 26 to be entered in a lottery pool. The number is randomly assigned and will determine when students can select available spots.

This process is intended for every student to have an equal chance at claiming a spot. However, it can cause serious problems for students facing housing insecurities and those in need of certain accommodations that Disability Services do not approve.

In the past, Return to Campus Living (RTCL) allowed students to make roommate groups of more than two students, and same-room selection was an option.

“After analyzing student choices during and after RTCL, we revised the process to better align with best practices at other UNC System campuses and to support the University’s enrollment goals. The changes are intended to level the playing field for students who really want to or need to live on campus given the finite number of beds available,” said HRL.

In attempts to ‘level the playing field,’ the housing lottery strips away the seniority many returning students expect from the room selection process. Seniority is important. Returning students, especially ones who have lived on campus for two or more years, are doing so for a reason.

It feels like HRL is trying to steer students away from living on campus with the introduction of the housing lottery. What does this mean for incoming students? Will they get prioritized for housing instead of those returning?

At least HRL is honest with students when admitting there are no secure or guaranteed housing spots even after they have applied.

Roommate groups being limited to two individuals and cutting the same room selection does not make sense. Much confusion surrounds how students will get prioritized in this housing lottery process. Students will not know what the outcomes of the lottery will be until after the second step of the application process, claiming their space at the beginning of February.

This change does not solve the problem of limited housing on campus, even though Phase XVI,



Isabella Lain/Niner Times File Photo

a newly completed first-year style dorm, recently opened for move-in. Through the challenges of Phase XVI and students having to live in hotels for months, it is not surprising that many are concerned and anxious about future housing problems.

Roughly two months ago, a Charlotte Redditor, AtlanticNord, posted, “As a student who is homeless due to not being given a space last year (multiple issues arose in securing an off-campus location), the new system is just going to make it worse for returning students who rely on on-campus housing for school.”

Others commented similarly under the post, emphasizing that students are not being valued and hoping there are better solutions.

If students’ only option in attending college is to live on campus, they must pay close attention

to deadlines and get clarification from HRL and RTCL before applying.

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Riley Felts sets the bar for success at Charlotte

Davis Cuffe | Asst. Sports Editor

Charlotte's Riley Felts was named American Athletic Conference (AAC) Conference Athlete of the Week on Jan. 16, 2024. The redshirt senior set a new school record in the pole vault at the Virginia Tech Invitational with a clearance of 14' 6" (4.42 meters). The mark not only earned her first place at the meet, but Felts currently holds the No. 2 mark in the country as of Jan. 19.

When asked what earning such a mark felt like, Felts said, "Honestly, I'm in shock half the time. It's really amazing, once-in-a-lifetime feelings for sure, but I feel like half the time, I'm like, 'What? I just did that?'"

Felts is no stranger to this feeling. In her freshman season, she broke the indoor and outdoor track and field school records for the pole vault and was the Conference-USA (C-USA) champion in both seasons.

Returning from injury

While Felts' career as a 49er has been as successful as any, it has also had its ups and downs. After winning her third straight C-USA indoor pole vault championship in her junior season, Felts got a procedure done on a lingering shoulder injury and missed the following outdoor and indoor season.

"That was pretty devastating," said Felts regarding the injury, "I was really sad, but I was also trying to get my body healthy again, so after the procedure, I was just super eager to get back to it."

Often, when athletes miss extended time, they may rush the recovery process or grow frustrated with their sport. This was the opposite for Felts.

"[During my recovery process, I was] taking everything slow with the weight-lifting, the training itself," said Felts. "My coach has been super helpful with me altering my training plan."

Felts said her love for the sport was also a big help in her comeback.

"You really have to love the sport, which I do," said Felts. "You have to be super motivated, too, so if I wasn't as motivated and didn't enjoy the sport, I definitely would not have come back with the same energy that I did."

Adjusting for success

A significant change Felts made following her return from injury was using a taller pole during her vaults, going from 13-foot poles to a 13-foot seven-inch pole. The change in height was something that Felts said took time. Until last season, the change stumped her for some

time after using 13-foot poles all her life.

"I had honestly tried it again and again, and kind of came up shallow a lot or landed on the front mats, so it had never really worked out before," said Felts. "The training plan is meant to make you stronger and faster, so that helped, and at a certain point, it just clicked. It was a great feeling, and now I use them in every meet."

The adjustment is apparent in Felts' progression. In the 2023 outdoor season, she broke her personal and school records, smashing the mark by over half a meter.

Another change Felts made as a 49er is how she thinks of pole vaulting marks. While she had a very successful high school career as a state champion in the 2017-18 indoor and outdoor season, she never cleared a mark over 13 feet (3.96 meters). Because of this, Felts was daunted by higher marks.

"When you jump higher, I guess you don't realize how hard it is and how much better you can be," said Felts. "So when I came in here [Charlotte], I was like, 'Wow, 13 feet is really good,' but then I was like, 'Wow, 14 feet is really good,' and now I'm like, 'Wow, 15 feet is really good!' So setting the bar higher is literally what I've done."

Star in and out of sports

While all student-athletes have a cramped schedule, Felts may be a notch above the rest. In between track meets, practices, team meetings and treatments, Felts is a full-time student as an engineering major and intern during the school year.

Despite her heavy commitment to track and field, Felts is a star student. After graduating high school with a 4.4375 GPA, she lost no momentum in college. Felts is a multiple-time All-C-USA academic team member, a member of the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) All-Academic Team, a recipient of the C-USA Commissioner's Academic Medal and more.

When Felts gets a moment to decompress, she enjoys spending time with her friends, teammates and family, along with watching television or movies.

Looking back

With her time as a 49er ending, Felts said that her experience at Charlotte has been "just really fun, honestly." Despite all her wins and accolades, Felts highlighted her time with teammates as something she will especially miss.

"After college, you're not going to be in the same environment that you were before," said

Felts. "My teammates push me now, and it would be great if I could just do that forever."

"My biggest goal right now is 15 feet," said Felts.

Goals for 2024

Currently holding the second-highest pole vault mark in division one, Felts would be set to appear at the national championship meet, but she has her sights on higher marks.

Up next

Felts and the 49ers will compete next at the Bob Pollock Invitational at The University of Clemson in Clemson, S.C. The meet will be from Friday, Jan. 26, to Saturday, Jan. 27.



Redshirt senior pole vaulter Riley Felts | Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

Charlotte men's basketball clinches first in the AAC with defensive 56-44 win over North Texas

Josiah House | Staff Writer

The Charlotte men's basketball team defeated the North Texas Mean Green on Jan. 20 at home, in Halton Arena. The 56-44 win for Charlotte marks the 49ers' fifth consecutive win since their first conference loss to Southern Methodist University (SMU) on Jan. 2.

Charlotte's win brings them to 11-7 on the season, and 5-1 in American Athletic Conference (AAC) play, knocking down North Texas and clinching No. 1 in the AAC. The Mean Green fell to 11-6 on the season and 4-1 in AAC play.

Dominant start in Halton Arena

The 49ers started strong, with a 15-2 early run in the first half.

Charlotte burst out of the gates quickly with a three-pointer from redshirt junior guard Lu'Cye Patterson. Followed by a triple from junior forward Igor Miličić Jr. and another Patterson swish from downtown.

Paired with Charlotte's early success from behind the arch, the Niners defense held North Texas scoreless for the first four and a half of the game. Charlotte never gave up a lead from the moment Patterson's first shot was scored.

Stifling defense throughout the second half

The 49ers' overwhelming defense carried into the second half, where Charlotte held North Texas scoreless on a 9-0 opening run, giving the Niners a 14-point lead.

Charlotte held North Texas at arm's length for the rest of the second half. The Niners kept the Mean Green to 28% from the field in the second half, including 0-9 from the three.

Junior Aaron Scott, North Texas' leading scorer, was held to six points in the second half, with Scott scoring the last points of the game with two minutes left in the second half.

Halton Arena and the rowdy sixth-man

Halton Arena packed in 4,514 fans, hitting a new season-high attendance record.

Head Coach Aaron Fearne spoke about the impact of the fans on the game.

"It's great," said Fearne. "The big thing we're



Sophomore guard Nik Graves (10) against the University of North Texas. | Chris Crews/Niner Times

trying to do is to bring some real juice and energy back into the building. That's what I want to see. That's what I want this community to have. A team that they love to follow and love the way we play. The atmosphere was awesome."

The Charlotte men's basketball team dove into the student section after the game, causing a bold symphony of celebration from the fans. A storybook ending to a winning effort.

Star Charlotte guard Patterson spoke about the energy from Halton Arena.

"When the fans come, it brings a different feel for us," said Patterson. "The fans help us a lot. They are like a sixth man out there."

Takeaways

The icing on the cake for Charlotte's defensive performance was holding North Texas to a season-low 44 points. The Mean Green could not find an offensive rhythm, finishing with a season-low 5.9 three-point percentage.

Conversely, Charlotte's chemistry led to flashy alley-oops and a game-high 20 points for Patterson, his second 20+ point game in a row. The Niners improved to 5-0 with a

starting lineup of Patterson, Miličić, redshirt sophomore center Dishon Jackson, junior guard Isaiah Folkes and sophomore guard Nik Graves this season.

Charlotte's electric fanbase continues to energize the team, causing sparks to fly on Charlotte's 5-0 game run. The Niners advance to 8-1 in Halton Arena, proving to be one of the harder stadiums to play at in the AAC.

Stars of the game

Patterson's 20 points were supported by his performance from behind the arch. Patterson shot a career-high 4-7 from the three against the Mean Green.

Charlotte's center Jackson snagged nine of the Niners' 26 defensive rebounds and denied the mean green twice with two blocked shots. Jackson's defensive efforts spearheaded Charlotte's relentless takedown of the ex-division-leading Mean Green.

Charlotte's Miličić went 4-7 from the field and 3-3 at the line, securing a combined five rebounds and assists along the way. Miličić scored 13 in total, matching North Texas lead-scoring scorer Scott.

ELT

CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

RECENT GAMES

JAN. 7 - 21

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan. 10: Charlotte 84, Tulsa 76

Jan. 13: Charlotte 66, UTSA 58

Jan. 16: Charlotte 81, Rice 79

Jan. 20: Charlotte 56, North Texas 44

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan. 11: Charlotte 61, Rice 54

Jan. 14: UTSA 81, Charlotte 80

Jan. 17: Charlotte 66, Tulane 64

Jan. 21: Temple 73, Charlotte 68

MEN'S TENNIS

Jan. 13: Charlotte 5, Queens 2

Jan. 14: Charlotte 7, The Citadel 0

Jan. 21: Charlotte 4, UNC Asheville 2

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Jan. 14: Charlotte 7, Queens 0

Jan. 14: Charlotte 6, Presbyterian 1

OVERALL STANDINGS

Men's basketball: 11-7, 5-1

Women's basketball: 12-7, 5-2

UPCOMING GAMES

Men's basketball

Vs. UAB on Tuesday, Jan. 23 at 7 p.m.

Women's basketball

Vs. Tulsa on Saturday, Jan. 27 at 4 p.m.

Men's tennis

@ Virginia Tech on Sunday,

Jan. 28 at 9:30 p.m.

Women's tennis

@ Chapel Hill on Friday, Jan. 26

Dazia Lawrence's rise to Charlotte stardom

Blake Rose | Staff Writer

Through 18 games of the 2023-2024 season, Charlotte women's basketball is currently 12-6 and No. 1 in the American Athletic Conference (AAC). Redshirt junior guard Dazia Lawrence has been an absolute standout and is making her mark on Charlotte basketball with a current average of 18 points, 3.6 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game.

Who is Dazia Lawrence?

Born in Greenville, N.C., Charlotte's Lawrence, began playing basketball at four years old. Lawrence became obsessed with basketball at just six years old and knew she wanted to pursue it. Once she hit fifth grade, she joined her first AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) team in Fayetteville, N.C., and never looked back.

Early basketball days

Lawrence moved to Charlotte in sixth grade, where she played with an organization at the time known as Carolina Basketball Club (CBC), which pushed her to become serious about basketball and want to play at the next level. Lawrence started her freshman year at Chambers High School and then transferred to Mallard Creek, where she began to make a name for herself.

"I have the scoring record there [Mallard Creek]," said Lawrence. "I scored over 2,000 points. I hold the record for the most points scored in a game, which is 42."

After an impressive high school career, Lawrence committed to Charlotte and was a freshman in the 2019-2020 season but redshirted the season. Although she was born in Greenville, Lawrence has lived in the Charlotte area for half of her life, and being able to go to school and play basketball for Charlotte is special to her.

"Charlotte is like my second home. I just love the city of Charlotte; I love everything about it, how it's a growing city," said Lawrence. "UNC Charlotte is a community school, and I wouldn't change it for the world."

On the court this season

Lawrence averages 18 points per game and has 307 total points on the season; both are team highs for the 49ers. However, she does not just score; she lands in the No. 2 spot for most assists on the season with 49 total assists and 2.7 assists per game. Lawrence posted a season-high 11 assists in their most recent matchup with Tulane on Jan. 17.

"Me passing the ball a lot more and trusting my teammates a lot more. Understand that I do not have to just be a threat by scoring. There are

other ways that I can be a threat, defensively," said Lawrence.

Lawrence has 51 turnovers this season and averages 2.8 turnovers per game. Passing the ball more is an aspect of her game that Lawrence looks to improve upon. Last season, she started in 31 games with only 68 assists, compared to the first 18 games of this season, where she already has 49.

"I definitely want to improve my assist-to-turnover ratio," said Lawrence. "That has been a growth for me since last year, but I feel like as the season grows, I will get better on that."

Lawrence has the most free throw attempts of anyone on the team, with 107. She has made 88 of those, giving her an 82% shooting percentage from the line. This speaks to her ability to drive inside the paint, get to the basket, score, or draw fouls to allow the team to refresh the offense.

"I used to play against older kids and boys, so I think it's rooted in that," said Lawrence. "I'm never scared to go against anybody because I know I finish really well around the basket. I've never been scared of contact."

Motivating factors

Staying focused, motivated and determined during such a long and demanding season can be challenging. Lawrence has had struggles with injury but remains focused.

One of her athletic role models is veteran NBA guard Kyrie Irving of the Dallas Mavericks. The two guards share many similarities on the court, including ball-handling, cutting to the basket, drawing fouls and creating opportunities for their teammates.

"My favorite athlete is Kyrie Irving. Just on the court, his ability to score around the basket, his finishing. But also the way he gets his teammates involved. He's very creative on the court," said Lawrence. "And I like to keep that mindset."

Irving is not the only person who impacts Lawrence's motivation to play basketball. She said her grandparents are key influencers in her drive and desire to play.

"They are always there for me. They are my biggest support system. Just knowing that my family is proud of me keeps me going and keeps me afloat," said Lawrence.

The basketball season is a long one. Staying physically and mentally motivated can be difficult with up to 40 games, including tournaments.

"We play multiple games a week. Mentally, with school, it can be a lot, but remember your



Redshirt junior guard Dazia Lawrence rises up for a layup against the University of Tulane. | Dan Rice/Niner Times

why," said Lawrence. "Doing things outside of basketball so you can just have a break from everything. I like to sleep if I need a mental break from everything."

Lawrence explains that caring for the mind and body is essential to keeping her game fluid.

"Doing the things that I need to do, whether that's extra recovery or drinking more water, we do cryo[therapy] sometimes. Things like that. Eating the right foods, making sure that I'm doing what I need to do to take care of my body," said Lawrence.

Leading the 49ers

Lawrence is a natural leader. As one of the team's oldest, most experienced players, she earned her leadership spot. Both on and off the court, she strives to be a role model for her

teammates, coaches and friends.

"Continuing to grow, but just being that leader that my team can trust, that my team can look up to and will listen to. Uplifting others and empowering others, I just want to continue being that for my teammates," said Lawrence.

Lawrence has also picked up several leadership skills from Charlotte women's basketball Head Coach Cara Consuerga. The two, along with senior guard Jaycee Busick, did leadership building to help each other build leadership skills. Lawrence has learned to be a team-first leader from Consuerga, among other leadership skills she has brought into the program.

"Coach Cara's leadership is amazing. She serves everyone around her before she serves herself," said Lawrence. "That's one thing that I really admire about her."