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# OPINION: WE MUST TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT RACE-BASED HAIR DISCRIMINATION

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# NINERTIMES

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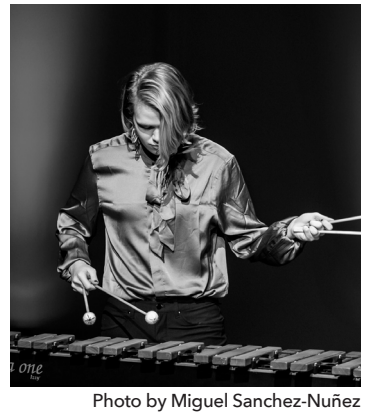


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# Food delivery robots come to UNC Charlotte early March

by Allyson Parsi
Staff Writer

Autonomous robots will be a food delivery option for students on the UNC Charlotte campus in early March.

Starship Technologies has partnered with Charlotte via the catering company Chartwells on campus. Charlotte will deploy 30 to 40 robots to start deliveries in early March.

The robots were seen on campus in the first week of the spring 2023 semester, mapping out the campus.

Jody Thompson, director of Auxiliary Services, said, "Originally, there were only two robots. They were here for a short time and weren't in full operation yet. They were here to map the campus."

To order food with the robots, students need the Starship Technologies mobile delivery app that will mirror the Niner Diner app.

Ben Kolnos, senior retail director with Chartwells, said, "Eventually, all the offerings that you can get on the Niner Diner app will be able to be delivered. The eventual plan is to have them [the robots] on our Niner Diner app."

The Starship Technologies app will also be connected to students' meal plans.

"The Starship app will be accepting the campus card dollars, so even if it is a separate app, you can still use your DB for delivery," Kolnos said.

The robots do not go into buildings and will have designated parking areas outside retail outlets. When an order is placed, the location receives it, and an employee will take the food out and load it into the robot to send it off.

"Parking will be outside the food locations, but if you are in any academic buildings, you can drop a pin and say, 'This is where I am. Please bring me my food to this location,' and that's where they will end up. Then they go back to get the next order after that," Thompson said.

They will be parked outside, ready in the morning and will sit there based on the hours of operation. The retail outlets will have them based on when orders are coming in, and they can be ordered from any location on campus.

"We don't have a huge dining presence on the PORTAL side of the campus past the football stadium. There are a lot of students that have classes over there, and they don't have time to return to the dining side of campus. We hope to utilize the robots to bring them the great offerings that we have," Kolnos said.

In preparation for its official launch, Charlotte is building a hub in the CAB building. The robots must go to every night while not operating and charging.

"Where all the robots will live every night is being finished up on campus. Once that is complete, we'll get the shipment of the robots and finalize things," Kolnos said.

The robots carry hot and cold items and contain insulated lining to keep food at its intended temperature until the end of the delivery.

According to Starship Technologies, they contain a "suite of sensors" and 12 cameras to enable the robots to see where they are going. They travel about four miles per hour and can navigate around objects, people and curbs.

"They will throttle based on how fast people are walking too. So they'll slow down if there's a group in front of them," Thompson said.

The Starship Technologies app also has song features and has programmed the robots to speak.

"There are some fun things that you can do in the app. For example, you can have a delivery song from Lizzo, or you'll see them on campus, and if you're kind of in the way, they'll say, 'excuse me,'" Kolnos said.

Starship Technologies will provide some opportunities for students to be employed on campus and work with robots.

"There will be a few students that are hired by Starship to kind of man the hub. So they'll be charging them at night and making sure that they're cleaned out, stay in good working order, and do repairs and things like that," Thompson said.

Charlotte started getting Starship Technologies robots on campus in 2019 after talking with other universities participating in the program via Chartwells.

"We like to be at the forefront of technology and always push the program for the students further. They're going to be a great addition to the Niner community," Kolnos said.




Food delivery robot | Photo by Sunnya Hadavi

# Charlotte Area Transit System implements changes to certain routes

by Jackson Martin
Asst. News Editor

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) implemented a new service change to select routes beginning on Monday, Feb. 6.

In the event of a strike, many Charlotteans would be left without a reliable means of transportation. The following bus routes have been adjusted to maximize efficiency.

24 – Nations Ford Road

56 – Arrowood

40x – Lawyers Road Express

46x – Harrisburg Road Express

77x – North Mecklenburg Express

82x – Rock Hill Express

Route 10 > West Boulevard will have structural changes. Route 10 will now provide access to Harris Campus at Central Piedmont Community College. However, Route 10 will discontinue the stops along Leake Street and Nobles Avenue. Riders can alternatively access Route 10 from New Renaissance Way or West Boulevard.

Route 290 > Davidson Shuttle will also see structural changes. Bus stops along Main Street (south of Concord Road), Jackson Street, Depot Street and Watson Street will all be discontinued. Riders who rely on these routes can alternatively board the bus from Griffith Street or Main Street (north of Concord Road).

Additionally, the LYNX Blue Line weekday frequency will increase to every 15 minutes between 7-9 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. This is to increase capacity and ridership during the peak morning and evening hours.

Those who rely on these routes should download the CATS-Pass app or visit www.ridetransit.org for further information.

# Charlotte Recovery Program is dedicated to assisting students in need

by Benjamin Greenzaid
Staff Writer

The Charlotte Recovery Program (CRP) assists students battling a drug or alcohol addiction.

The CRP offers access to Recovery Informed Therapy, which offers ways for students to get involved with leadership opportunities, scholarships, recovery-related trips and social gatherings.

"[The CRP is] a space where students can build a community together in their recovery," said Skye Sarac, an intern for the CRP. "For some students, that might be complete sobriety, so [that would mean] abstinence from substances. For others [it might be] harm reduction, so just consuming less or trying to reduce whatever the substances [are] slowly."

There are many types of programs and meetings for members to attend. There is the traditional 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous program (AA) and an All Recovery Group, which is offered for anyone battling addiction. The AA program occurs every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 4-5 p.m. The All Recovery Group happens virtually on Tuesdays from 7-8 p.m. and in person on Fridays at 12:30 p.m.




Student Health Center | Photo by Jacob Scannell

The CRP also holds a social, Recovery by the Slice, which meets on the last Tuesday of each month from 12-1:30 p.m. This program allows students to explore the meeting room and meet other members.

To join, students can visit the website and complete the CRP application. Once accepted, students can begin their path of recovery.

"30 people graduated from the program pre-COVID with a 100% success rate," said Associate Director Kisha Summers. "[There are] 11 members currently, and we're working towards a 100% success rate."

The CRP began in 2012 when a student asked UNC Charlotte for help with substance use. As a result, the University created the CRP in the Center for Wellness Promotion to help.

The program has evolved from a focus on abstinence, helping students explore different avenues of easing substance use. Additional options include complete, natural, harm reduction or holistic recovery.

# U.S. shoots down Chinese spy balloon off the Carolina coast following sightings in Charlotte, N.C.

by Sunnya Hadavi
Editor in Chief

A Chinese spy balloon flying over the U.S. was spotted over Charlotte on Feb. 4. As of 2:30 p.m. EST on Feb. 4, the U.S. military has shot down the balloon off the Carolina coast.

The balloon was first seen on Feb. 1 in Montana moving eastward. U.S. officials monitored the balloon and originally decided not to shoot it down due to debris and civilian safety concerns. U.S. officials noted the balloon payload was the size of two to three school buses, while the balloon itself was much larger.

According to U.S. officials, the balloon is meant for surveillance, despite explanations given by Chinese officials, and it violates U.S. airspace and international law.

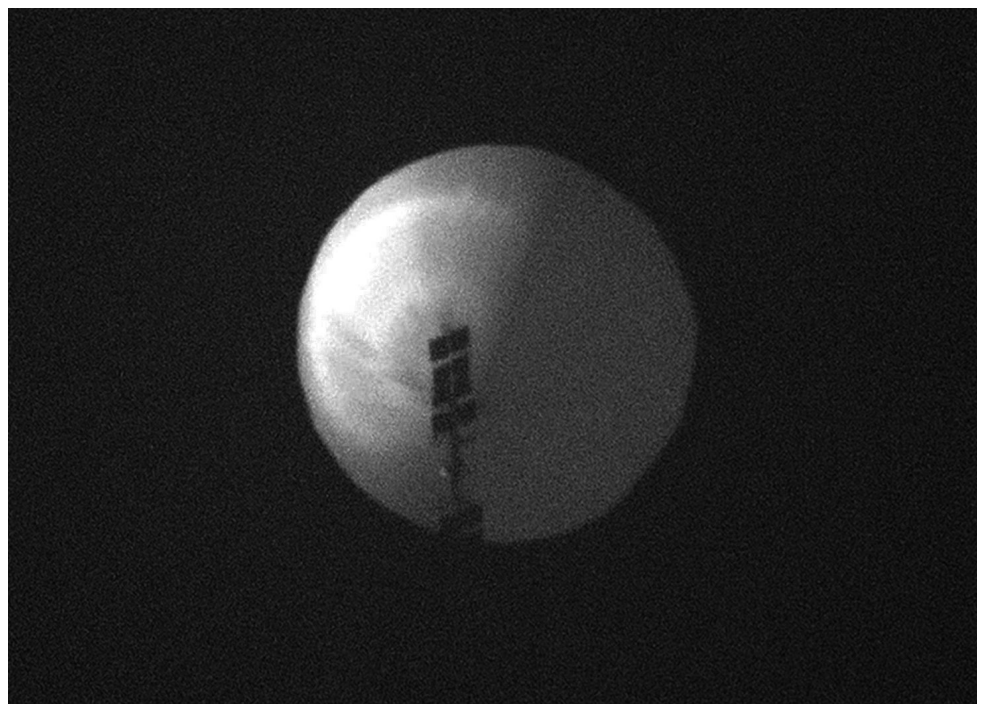
"We know that it's a surveillance balloon, and I'm not going to be able to be more specific than that. And we do know that the balloon has violated U.S. airspace and international law, which is unacceptable, and so we've conveyed this directly to the PRC at multiple levels," Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said in a press conference on Friday, Feb. 3.

China said on Feb. 3 that the balloon was a civilian airship "used for scientific research such as meteorology" that strayed from its original course. Chinese officials also said they regret the balloon's violation of U.S. sovereign airspace.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to visit China during the weekend, but the trip has been postponed due to concerns regarding the balloon and China's intentions.

The spy balloon incident comes three months after a joint meeting with President Biden and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China on Nov. 14, 2022.

"As the leaders of our two nations, we share a responsibility, in my view, to show that China and the United States can manage our differences, prevent competition from becoming anything ever near conflict, and to find ways to work together on urgent and global issues that require our mutual cooperation. And I believe this is critical for the sake of our two countries and the international community," said President Biden in official footage posted on Instagram from their November meeting.



Suspected Chinese spy balloon | Courtesy of BBC

# Black Student Union continues to advocate for equality after 54 years

by James Kmosko
Contributor

Today's leaders of UNC Charlotte's Black Student Union (BSU) continue the organization's long tradition of representing Black students.

The BSU was founded in 1969 to organize Black students as they advocated for equality and civil rights. According to Maliah Graves, a fourth-year student currently serving as the BSU president, the legacy of those students still affects the organization today.

> "So no matter if you're a first year, if you're a senior, no matter where you're from, or what your history or background is, we want to be there to provide resources for you, support you, throughout your time here."
>
> *Maliah Graves*
> *President of UNC Charlotte's BSU*

"Our founding principles surrounded making demands to the school, which is why we're the first and largest Black organization on campus because we were aiming to solve some of the problems that we saw, which are all listed in our constitution," said Graves.

The organization has since expanded to provide more services to Black students.

"We focus on different issues that affect the black community, and we aim to be a safe space for all Black students on campus," Grave said. "So no matter if you're a first year, if you're a senior, no matter where you're from, or what your history or background is, we want to be there to provide resources for you, support you, throughout your time here."

The BSU has 150 dues-paying members, but many other students attend meetings.

"I think a common misconception is you have to be a dues-paying member to show up, and you do not," Graves said. "I don't necessarily distinguish between due-paying members and non-due-paying members as members. Everyone who shows up is just a member. Anyone is welcome to be part of the family."

Events are hosted consistently every other Tuesday and irregularly on different days of the week.

"We'd like to try and focus on educational and fun events," Graves said. "We alternate between the two. We used to do a lot of PowerPoint teaching about the history of Charlotte and Black history in general. We find that sometimes students need a place to let loose, and they don't necessarily wanna be learning all the time."

"We do occasional Friday meetings now as well," Graves said. "Most of the time, the things that fall on Fridays will be more fun events, like karaoke nights or paint 'n sips; things that are more laid back and don't have as much of a directional focus."

The BSU also hosts events in partnership with other organizations.

"People are constantly reaching out to us to have partnerships and things like that," Graves said. "One event that will be great to look for is the Homage Exhibit, which features different NPHC organizations and their involvement in the civil rights era. It's going to be in Student Union 340. So we're excited to be participating in that."

Other events include Jeopardy Night and an annual dinner in South Village in celebration of Black History Month.

"Black History Month is our busiest month," Graves said. "We have six different events happening, and those are just things we are putting on. Then we have a partnership or co-sponsored events as well. The best way to find out when we have stuff is to check our social media."

Despite focusing on the Black community, the BSU is welcoming and inclusive to all UNC Charlotte students.

"You do not have to be Black to join the Black Student Union," Graves said. "I always say the requirement to join Black Student Union is to care about the advancement of Black people. If you want to be a better ally, if you want to learn, you're more than welcome. The door is never closed to anybody."



Black Student Union | Courtesy of Maliah Graves

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# Humans of UNC Charlotte: Dr. Reginald Silver shares his journey to becoming UNC Charlotte's first African American dean

by Cedric Baker
Contributor

Dr. Reginald Silver became UNC Charlotte's first African American dean in 2021, hoping to provide the graduate program and students with its best experience yet.

Silver holds many roles with the University, including associate dean of graduate programs and executive education, clinical professor of business information systems and operations management, as well as a clinical professor in data science and business analytics.

Silver joined the Belk College of Business in August 2014. He had previously worked for 18 years in healthcare operations and finance. Silver holds a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from North Carolina State University, a master's degree in business administration and finance from the East Carolina University and a Ph.D. in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"The journey hasn't always been easy," Silver said.

**Early life**

Silver grew up in Halifax County, N.C., with limited resources in his area. This is why Silver emphasizes the importance of never giving up on your goals.

"Coming from where I'm from, not a lot of people were going to college at the time of my generation. Our parents put a lot into us, but a lot of our parents didn't go to college or had limited access to those resources," Silver said.

He said that having parents who were part of the education system encouraged their children to have careers they would enjoy and sustain them.

Silver said that the message was, "you either go off to college and get an education or you go to work in a job that might not be as fulfilling."

Silver is thankful his parents instilled that mindset at a young age.

Because of his strong work ethic, Silver finished in the top five of his graduating class. But when he got to NC State as an undergraduate engineering student, he realized he was not at the top anymore. Many of his classmates had come from areas where resources were far more widely available, but this did not stop him. Instead, it made him want to work that much harder for his family.

During the early years of his undergraduate degree at NC State, he did not do as well as he had hoped.

"Freshman year, my undergraduate college, my GPA was less than desirable, and you know, it cost me a General Motors scholarship," said Silver.

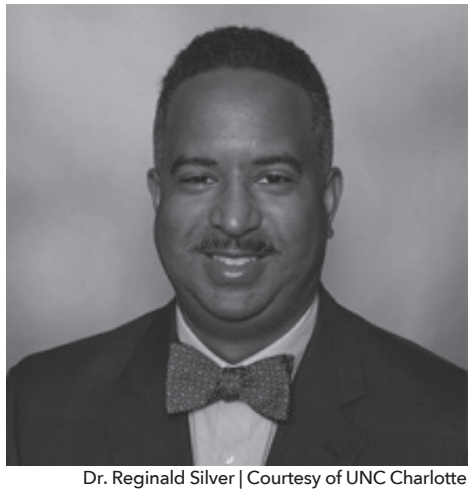
Silver has always loved cars, so that was a painful lesson that he said still haunts him. From then on, he was determined to get his act together.

During this time, he met his future wife. He said she would help him study and stay focused during those tough times.

Silver offered advice for students if they find themselves in the same position.

"[Understand] what your challenges are when you mess up. Get over it, but also surround yourself with people that can help you through that process," he said.

When asked about what he might do over, Silver said, "I wish I had started building my investment portfolio in my teens and kept stacking chips away even as a college student. Being savvy enough to manage my own investment portfolio and retirement planning didn't happen for me until later enough. I wish I had known more about these things as a high school student and certainly as an undergraduate."



Dr. Reginald Silver | Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

His ultimate goal for students is to absorb knowledge across different disciplines. With the world constantly changing, it can be easy to fall behind, he said.

"There is the concept of delayed gratification where you invest now in the things that will pay off for you later, whether it's an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, or a doctorate. A lot of times, people delay investing in themselves for any number of reasons," Silver says. "Invest in yourself always, even if you don't reap the benefits of those investments until later in life."

**Life today**

Silver and his wife have three children. Two of whom have attended UNC Charlotte, one having already graduated and one a junior. The youngest is planning to attend the University as well.

As dean, he is aware of how he sets an example, especially for other African Americans on campus.

"This lady stopped me, and I could tell she was getting off work," he said. "So, you know, I assumed she worked for some type of food services or maybe the catering service on campus, and she said, 'You look like a teacher,' and I'm like, 'I am something like that.' And she was like, 'You make us look good.' And when things like that happen, you realize it's not just about you," said Silver.

This is why he says he does everything he can for students.

"I want to be remembered for what my students say about me," Silver said. "I've been fortunate to work with some very brilliant and hardworking students who have already started to make an impact on society through their careers, and some even through their research."

'What's next?' Those words are Silver's motto, and he uses them to motivate himself and others.

"Wherever I am in the future, I hope to still be learning, growing, and evolving," he said. "I want to leave behind a body of research that informs practice and inspires leaders to practice the tenets of servant leadership."

## DEAR NINER TIMES, How do I maintain a hobby?

by Bethany Ivan
Arts & Culture Editor

As the semester starts to pick up and the school workload begins to pile up, many of our valued hobbies start to slip away from our routine altogether. Here are some tips on maintaining a hobby and incorporating it into our daily lives.

**1. Set a schedule**

Many students use planners to become more organized with their schoolwork. Using a planner is a great way to organize the upcoming week and schedule daily activities, school work and breaks. If you need a planner, you can stop by Barnes & Noble in Popp Martin Student Union.

**2. Make the hobby a motivation**

Try getting into the habit of creating a mindset of seeing a hobby as a reward or a motivation. Schoolwork can be tedious and stressful, but this is also where setting a schedule comes into play. Also, adopt the mindset of: "If I get this assignment done on time, then I will be able to reward myself with the hobby."

**3. Take advantage of your free time**

Eventually, finding free time from a busy work life can be exhilarating. Try incorporating a hobby into this newfound set of time. Doing so can be rewarding because it sets aside time to rest and relax. This free time can help to learn and process the nature of the hobby.

**4. Find a place on campus**

When taking or picking back up a hobby, do so by finding a place on campus. For example, if you want to read more, you can find a vacant hammock on campus, visit the Botanical Gardens or grab a cup of coffee at the Thoughtful Cup. If you are interested in learning how to cook, go and check out the schedule for UREC's demo kitchen.

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# Charlotte Art League hosts 'dys/connect: A multimedia showcase'

by Nick Caceres & Justice Angel Mascorro
Staff Writer & Contributor

On Jan. 30, the Digital Arts Center of the College of Arts + Architecture at UNC Charlotte hosted a diverse showcasing of multimedia art called "dys/connect." The event was held at the Charlotte Art League and included over 60 artists and their work, including digital animations, sculptures, paintings, contemporary performances and even mushroom-based designs.

Upon entering the building, there were many exhibitions, including augmented reality, by Ming Chun Lee, an associate professor of architecture at Charlotte. This exhibition involved maps of the larger Charlotte area, which, viewed through a specialized app on a mobile device, allowed the user to view the progression of neighborhoods in the Charlotte area.

Additionally, freelance artists, notably Rosie Brewster and Scotty Townsend, are interns of Airy Knoll, a Central Piedmont Community College program facilitated by professor Elizabeth Ross.

"This is a multimedia, interdisciplinary collaboration in the college that involves digital media, music, dance, theater and art as well. It's a community collaboration with the College of Arts + Architecture," said Joseph Skillen, UNC Charlotte's chair of the Department of Music.

The event had many noteworthy pieces surrounding contemporary performance and digital art. One of the performances was "The Crisis, A Masked Performance," which included three masked dancers portraying the idea that the human condition can be improved through coordinated social dynamics through nonverbal storytelling.

Another performance art included the experimental performance between dancer Kaus Sarkar and Jessica Lindsey on the bass clarinet. While the choreography, costume design and performance were all coordinated by Sarkar, this was the piece that first inspired the event.

"I started with a piece that I performed [with Sarkar]. That was all improvised, and so we talked about improvising in our different dance forms," said Lindsey. "We started building upon that, and we tried to build a lot with pieces that had electronics with acoustic instruments."

The accompanying Odissi music was composed by Jonah Elrod. The sound design of the piece was composed of bass clarinet spurs mixed with transcriptions of Sarkar's singing, resulting in a cacophony of layered sound.

One of these performances had audience members interact with the piece itself, "Decoupling," a collection of mini-games designed by Chelsea Brtis and Daniella Arias and Ilan Hutchison from UNC Charlotte's Game Design and Graphics course in collaboration with organizations, Women In Animation and Girls Who Code.

One of the most notable pieces was "The Phoenix," designed by Namita Modi, Dennis Wedlick, Jonathan Dessi-Olive, Rebecca Buntrock, Nat Oppenheimer and Omid Oliyan. "The Phoenix" was created with resources provided by the UNC Charlotte MycoMatters Lab. While the sound-absorbing sculpture is a work in progress, it is composed entirely of cultivated fungi-based material. "The Phoenix" was created to show the potential of alternative materials used for architecture that can help prevent buildings' impacts on the climate crisis.

Lindsey's event, dys/connect, unveils a vibrant artistic culture within Charlotte.

# UNC Charlotte Opera Workshop performs 'Carmen'

by Bryan Stoenner
Contributor

The UNC Charlotte Opera Workshop will perform "Carmen" by Georges Bizet in Rowe Recital Hall on Feb. 10 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 12 at 2 p.m.

The production follows the exploits of a woman named Carmen and a soldier named Don José. When José falls in love with Carmen and leaves his lover, dramatic consequences soon follow.

The UNC Charlotte Opera Workshop partnered with Central Piedmont Community College in November 2022 to perform the same production. Dr. Brian Arreola, the professor of Opera Workshop and the director of the show, discussed some of the challenges in preparing for the show this semester.

"The biggest challenge with this production that we're doing on the UNC Charlotte campus is that it's taking place in February, starting with a new cast of singers in different roles from what they did in the fall on the CPCC campus, has been a challenge for people to learn all that music and the staging in essentially six weeks," said Arreola.

Christian Souza, a fourth-year student playing José, also discussed the difficulties in preparing for "Carmen."

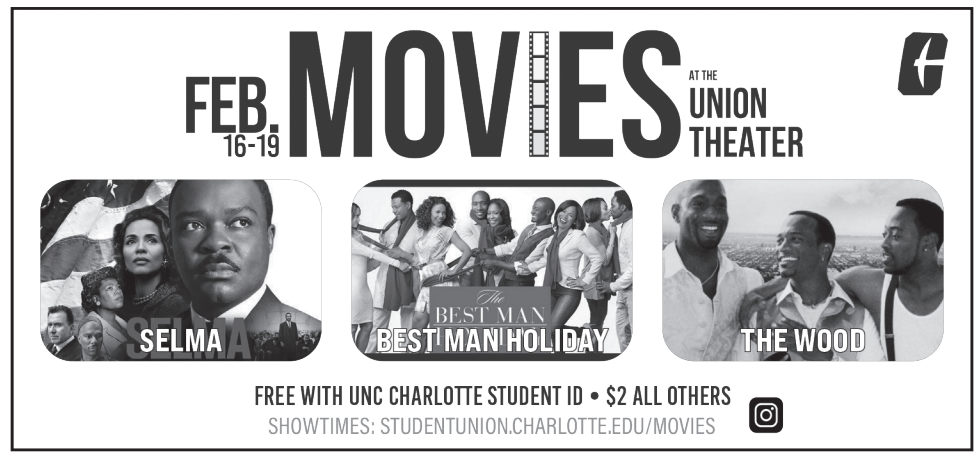
"I would say the biggest challenge about this show is the fact that we had such a quick turnaround at the beginning of the semester," said Souza. "We've only had a month and a half to learn all of these roles, and even though we're doing a condensed version of Carmen, it's still highly concentrated music in such a short period of time."

Despite these challenges, third-year student Frida Sophia Chacon Marmolejos, who plays Carmen, expressed her favorite parts of preparing for her role.

"The best part for me is probably just being able to hang out with my friends every day because I am friends with everyone in the cast, and it's really fun to have something in common. We all love singing together, which is something we get to do all the time, and [also] becoming your character because it's so different from who you are in real life, and when you're on the stage, you're not yourself. You're whoever you're playing," said Chacon Marmolejos.

The production boasts several students from the University's Music Department and a few non-music majors.

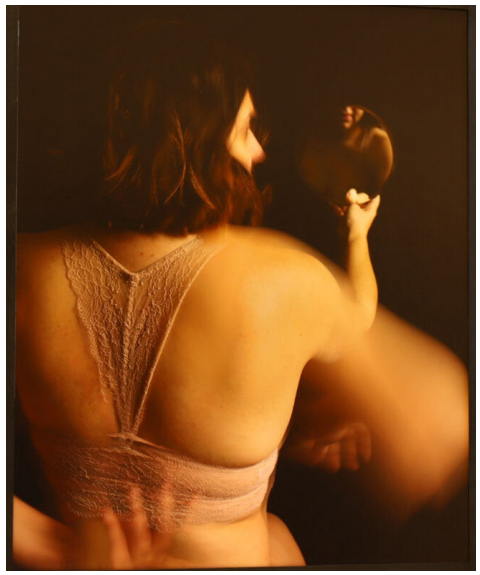


# Humans of UNC Charlotte: Sonja Langford shares her creative and honest approach through photography

by Cat Beck
Asst. Art & Culture Editor

From Jan. 15-27, the Popp Martin Student Union art gallery displayed "The Woman Who Was Not Drowning," an exhibit by student photographer Sonja Langford. As a sample of Langford's body of work, this exhibit demonstrated her approach to sharing her experiences through photography.



Langford is an undergraduate at UNC Charlotte majoring in art history and minoring in Southern studies and outdoor adventure leadership. She will graduate in spring 2023.

Her approach to photography aims to explore shared experiences in an open-ended way. She uses her medium to tell the truth while still leaving room for conversation.

"I think culturally, we view photography sometimes as truth-telling," said Langford. "We think of photojournalism. We think of photos we'd see in the news. And we automatically give it a kind of veracity."

"The Woman Who Was Not Drowning" exemplifies her approach. The exhibit was a combination of two series Langford is currently working on, one the show's namesake and the other entitled "Gynecological Instruments."

"What I find the most interesting is, every time I've shown this work, the number of conversations I've had about the experience of going to the gynecologist's office or someone's first period," she said. "And it never fails. I spend hours talking to people about their stories, and they always end with, 'I've never gotten to share that before.' [or] 'these experiences that I have, but I never see them put in a way that I feel like I could have a conversation.'"

In addition to the truthfulness that the medium of photography allows, Langford spoke about the manipulation of photos to express an idea. She argues that these two things – honesty and manipulation – can coexist in art despite their apparent conflict.

"I'm aware of the conflict. And I think, being self-aware of the conflict as an artist and the inherent nature of photography, that you can play with it," Langford said. "You've got to know the strengths and weaknesses of your medium, and then know how to push that and bend that and use it to say what you want to say."

The two series displayed in the Union both explored themes of womanhood, a theme that frequently appears in Langford's work. In addition, Langford's background growing up in the American South informs much of her perspective.

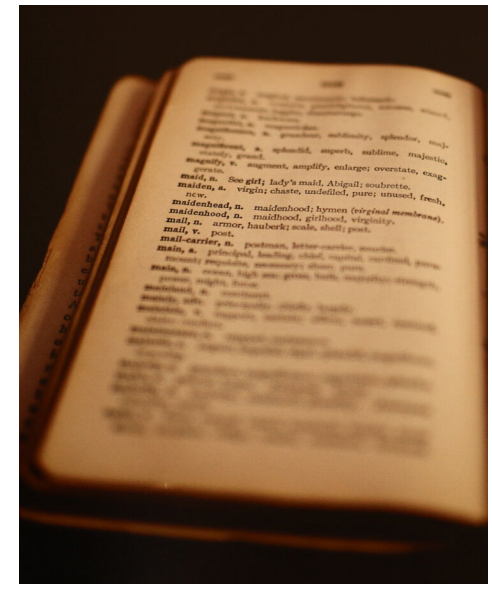
"The Southern landscape and the female experience are things that I find pretty inextricably linked," Langford said. "And by landscape, I don't literally mean the landscape, but as a cultural idea. So as a Southerner, someone who's lived in the South mostly for her entire life, I think it has informed a lot of my experience as an artist, as a woman, as a human being."

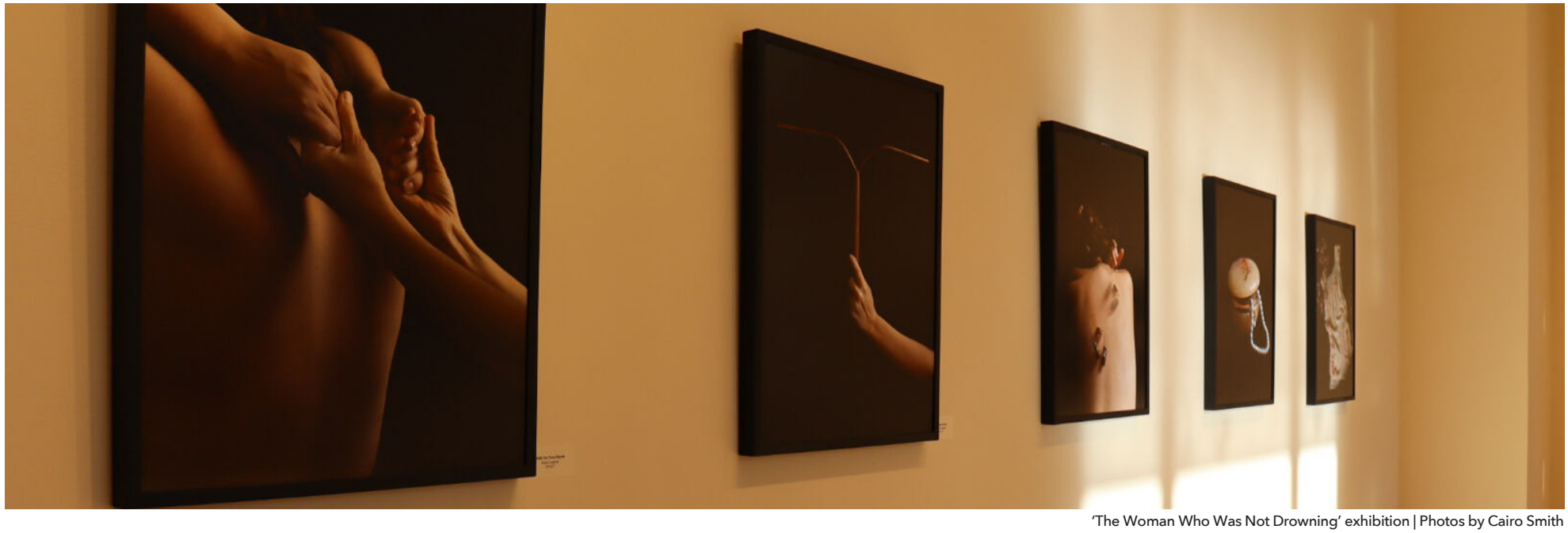
"Southern Churches," another series within Langford's body of work, documents the rural churches in the South. This series is an ongoing project exploring complex ideas, which is true of much of Langford's work.

"I don't necessarily perceive my work as like a period at the end of a sentence for me. It gives me an opportunity to express certain ideas that I feel while still leaving room for me to add more," Langford said. "Like both series aren't finished. There's still more to add, more I haven't said, more I didn't know how to say."

Discovering new ways to express the inexpressible is an ongoing process for Langford. This challenge drives her to use her talents and share them with others.

"I think there's a great responsibility in being an artist withw how you share what you share," Langford said. "And I enjoy the challenge of trying to express interests, experiences and research topics that I'm pursuing and things like that in a visual form."





'The Woman Who Was Not Drowning' exhibition | Photos by Cairo Smith

# Department of Music hosts annual Spotlight Concert

Photos by Miguel Sanchez-Nuñez

On Feb. 3, the Anne R. Belk Theater hosted the annual Spotlight Concert, presented by the Department of Music. It showcased a range of student performances from singers, instrumentalists and dancers. The music also showcased pieces from composers, such as J.S. Back,  William Grant Still and UNC Charlotte student Sydney Norwood. Some of the performances include "With You" from "Ghost the Musical" and "Gimme, Gimme" from "Thoroughly Modern Millie."




















# We must take action to prevent race-based hair discrimination

by Matthew Porto
Staff Writer

Cultural expression has always allowed people to feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. They can shed the insecurities and nuances of their personhood and become part of a constituency based on values of faith and love.

There is no right or wrong way to show cultural appreciation. While there is a vast array of ways people express themselves, many choose to wear a hairstyle that represents their cultural and ethnic identity. To dismantle someone based on their hairstyle is demeaning to the targeted person and the culture their features represent.

It is easy to overlook the amount of race-based hair discrimination in the United States, considering the other discriminatory means that intolerant individuals and groups attack a population. However, this issue very much still exists and takes place in schools, organizations and interpersonal interactions.

> "Persons shall not be deprived of equal rights under the law and shall not be subjected to prohibited practices based on their hair texture or style."
>
> CROWN Act
> *State of California bill SB 188*

A 2019 bill passed in California called the CROWN Act prohibits discrimination based on a person's hairstyle or texture. Congress.gov clarifies the specific nature of the bill, stating: "Persons shall not be deprived of equal rights under the law and shall not be subjected to prohibited practices based on their hair texture or style."

This bill is an arrow pointing in the right direction, yet it fails to satisfy as a blanket solution to this strikingly prevalent form of discrimination. Without a standard bill being passed as a ubiquitous no-tolerance policy for the entire U.S., and without the propulsion of more policies like the CROWN Act advocating for the disbarring of race-based hair discrimination, there can only be so much accountability to place on those deserving of it.

Too commonly, traditional beauty standards in the U.S. have conformed to ethnocentrism and the idolization of white, Anglo-Saxon features, while those with more ethnically diverse features are disregarded or disrespected based on unjust prejudice.

It is a sad reality that many feel they cannot live comfortably as themselves in their communities for fear of being left ostracized or confronted for their choice of expression. There is a strong need for change. In a time as fluid and ever-changing as now, there is not a more opportune moment to start tightening up. In doing so, we must leave discriminatory practices in the past and move forward to a more open-minded version of the society we live and grow in today.



Illustration of two figures with natural hairstyles I | Graphic by Arin Garcia McCormack

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**EMAIL: opinion@ninertimes.com** **ONLINE: ninertimes.com**

# We must improve our media literacy skills to deter misinformation

by Jesse Morris
Staff Writer

The unfettered access to knowledge is among the most significant aspects of the Information Age. For those with limited time to go to libraries, attend lectures or seek out factual information, the internet opens a new frontier of thought and ideas.

However, not all sources are equal, even if they appear the same or in flashier attire. Therefore, proper adherence to media literacy is necessary to ensure that the information one finds is the real deal.

**What media literacy means**

Media literacy, or one's ability to discern the factual nature, biases and credibility of information one finds in media, is critical to determining whether one can trust what is said to them.

Anyone who has taken an English class knows too well the importance of looking for good sources to validate an argument. For example, one might avoid a '.com' website over a '.gov' or '.edu' source with vetted information from a credible body.

Who is providing the information is another essential characteristic of a good source. For example, while "Hamilton" might excitingly convey history, some historians criticize it for lack of historical accuracy. Something written by a professional with accreditation in their field is a sure bet for validity.

With a little effort, one can find all sorts of valuable and credible sources out there in the media.

**Misinformation all around**

Much like one unable to read, a person who cannot correctly vet what they hear falls behind in the pursuit of knowledge. When one acts upon that information, it can become disastrous.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many misinformed claims about the virus and its related vaccine became a serious concern. By hearing incorrect statements and taking them as fact, many put themselves at risk over perceived issues related to both when, with good media literacy, they would have been safer.

In the wake of the 2020 election, unsubstantiated claims of widespread election fraud contributed heavily toward storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, to prevent the lawful elections of the republic from being carried out.

Misinformation issues became concerning enough that, in 2018, ten universities, including UNC Charlotte, earned spots as part of a pilot program to combat incorrect information in media. Charlotte worked to find ways to educate students on spotting incorrect information effectively by examining the author's history, the authenticity of a source, the credibility of the source and more.

**Why it matters**

Ignoring the accuracy of claims allows for the dissemination of incorrect information, which can influence public policy or induce individuals to take actions that put them or others at risk.

In 1898, the United States declared war on the Empire of Spain over their apparent attack upon the USS Maine in Havana Harbor. Newspapers fueled animosities over the incident, misleading the American public as to the nature of the event for attention.

During living memory, the United States launched an invasion of Ba'athist Iraq in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein over apparently substantial evidence of the production of weapons of mass destruction. Two years later, these claims were unsubstantiated — long after the invasion concluded.

Hundreds of thousands have died due to media illiteracy. Unfortunately, many millions more could follow.

As the stewards of the present Earth and the guides of future generations, people's actions today influence posterity for decades to come. Whether or not those decisions come from reliable information or what appears to be truthful is up to those alive today to determine.

# Cultural appropriation on social media can harm communities

by Amna Noyal
Staff Writer

Cultural exchange on social media can lead to cultural appreciation and education as well as cultural appropriation and misuse. Adapting aspects of another culture as some trend without considering the culture's historical significance can harm entire communities.

It can be challenging to draw the line between cultural appropriation and appreciation. To appreciate rather than appropriate, it is important to understand the culture you adopt, especially its history of marginalization and oppression.

Some claim that because no culture is entirely unique, appropriation does not exist. Others think culture is up to debate and interpretation, so creatives like musicians and designers get a pass. However, appropriation can reinforce prejudices and racism since it tends to romanticize or sexualize cultural aspects.

The misuse of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) on social media is an example of cultural appropriation occurring today. Often, non-Black people misuse and overuse AAVE terms and phrases online. The impact of online culture on young non-Black people's speech indicates how drastically standard English can change.

The impact of digital media on English slang has repercussions. Although the widespread use of AAVE by non-Black speakers may seem to reflect an understanding of African American culture or a way to ease racial tensions, it is not that simple.

Many people in the white community, who flippantly overuse and eventually dismiss appropriated AAVE terms as "outdated" or "no longer cool," ultimately lack a sense of appreciation for AAVE.

While social media significantly impacts cultural appropriation by promoting it, globalization has also played a role. With the click of a finger, various cultures, religions and beliefs are now much more accessible to the globe due to mobile devices.

Many cultures become exposed to others through social media, literature, education and television. On the other hand, growing individualism and looser social ties weaken the sense of community at a more local level. Individual choices, interests and rights are prioritized within the global fight for talent that defines present-day society.

The principles of equality, equity and social justice are in jeopardy due to the interaction between growing individualism and globalization. Education is supposed to be a resource to limit social obstacles and support social inclusion.

Finally, how can one know whether to embrace some aspects of a culture while avoiding others? A desire for education and a deeper understanding of a culture is necessary for appreciation. People who genuinely want to understand another culture show respect for its people and customs by only taking part when invited.

The chance to express thoughts and cultural knowledge is provided by appreciation. One may buy directly from creators if they purchase artwork, apparel or other products. Additionally, one may spend time researching the item's importance and the appropriate or inappropriate ways to use it.

An openness to admitting mistakes is necessary. While making mistakes is inevitable, one should not engage in offensive behavior after becoming aware of its harmful effects.

Online cultural appropriation can disrespect entire communities. While experiencing cultural exchange on social media or in real life, it is crucial to be open to education and to listen to the perspectives of others.

# Gentrification must be replaced with equitable urban development

by Jessica Danesi
Opinion Editor

Gentrification is the process of a low-income area being overtaken by the renovations of wealthy businesses and properties. This process must be stopped and replaced with more equitable methods of urban development.

Urban gentrification often displaces communities of color. For example, in the Charlotte neighborhood Brooklyn, over 900 families lost their homes.

Brooklyn was a predominantly Black area, containing small businesses, homes and Charlotte's first school for African Americans. Unfortunately, the community was demolished in the 1960s due to an urban renewal project. The area is now part of the Second Ward, home to many hotels and tourist attractions.

Understanding the historical and contemporary relevance of neighborhoods that have been safe spaces for centuries is crucial to understanding gentrification's impact on communities of color.

"Gentrification is a force of capitalism, the idea of who owns property and who has the right to property," Nadia Anderson, UNC Charlotte associate professor of architecture and urban design, said. "There is heritage that is of value in the neighborhoods that become, ultimately, erased over time due to gentrification."

Moreover, Brooklyn was only the first of many Charlotte neighborhoods to be demolished to make room for corporations and governments to cultivate revenue. Another example is the Cherry neighborhood, established in 1891 as a community for working-class African Americans. Yet, despite its historical value, the area has become a target for urbanization.

The majority of the neighborhood was privatized for new houses and apartments. And those who were already residents of Cherry were either displaced or faced rising property taxes, losing access to affordable housing.

These new renovations in housing, tourism and corporate businesses are motivated solely by profit and do not consider the communities that will be razed. There is nothing inherently wrong with urban growth and modern development, but when it removes history, culture and entire families from their homes, it becomes a problem.

Cities can turn to multiple alternatives to gentrification to grow and develop. For example, tourism can be increased by amplifying local businesses and attractions. Larger company stores and factory buildings can be constructed on unoccupied land or with majority consent from residents with compensation. In addition, development changes should be made with the participation of community members.

Anderson believes that the government should play a significant role in offsetting market forces. For instance, regulations that limit the square footing of new commercial buildings could make the area more affordable for local citizens. If not constrained correctly, corporations motivated by profit may destroy entire communities.

It is essential to include democratic practices when making changes to society. The participation of various groups in an area, including those of color and low-income communities, is crucial in political spheres.

"The discussions need to be generated from the community, rather than coming in with a presentation of ideas and then trying to get feedback," said Anderson. "I think starting from more grassroots topics of discussion, then building on that, will flip where things start in a conversation."

Additionally, marginalized communities deserve the ability to hold companies, policymakers and institutions accountable for former displacement transgressions. This will lower economic and political power imbalances.

Organizations like the Surdna Foundation aim to create sustainable and equitable communities with thriving cultures and economies. They do this by supporting community voices and investing in small businesses operated by people of color. Charlotte should follow in their footsteps and empower communities.

# We must reduce stigma to improve accessibility to menstrual products

by Annie Turk
Staff Writer

Around the world, women are shamed for having a monthly visit from their uterus. There have always been taboos surrounding periods, but that does not mean that governments should deny access to menstrual products worldwide.

Reducing stigmatization about periods will improve accessibility. Periods are a basic human function, during which many people experience complications such as cramps, acne breakouts, bloating, headaches, rapid changes in mood and insomnia.

People with periods should not have to worry about the outer consequences of dealing with periods, continuously stripping them of their dignity and confidence.

Period poverty is the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual education, toilets, hand washing facilities and waste management. People who lack access to menstrual products are at a greater risk of infection due to unsanitary condition. This can be caused by insufficient cleaning during this time of the month. Many individuals worldwide resort to using various ways of dealing with their periods other than the typical pads and tampons due to the unaffordable prices.

Additionally, the Pink Tax presents an issue. It is a tax on female hygiene products, including pads, tampons and razors. While Pink Tax is a general term, it includes many discriminatory import and export taxes, regulations and sales taxes on everyday items.

A study from The Balance shows that women pay 13% more for personal care products than men. These additional taxes considerably impact the prices of items, especially in developing countries where the income level is low. In the average woman's lifetime, about 80 years, she will spend approximately $107,031 more than men due to the Pink Tax.

Across the world, many countries place restrictions on people who are on their period. For example, in India, some women are not allowed to serve food. In Nepal, some women are banished to sheds and not allowed to attend school. These imposed restrictions negatively impact women and put them at a considerable disadvantage as they fight for their education and personal rights.

Even in developed countries, many young individuals are not well educated on sex, hygiene and menstruation. These young people then make assumptions. They often try to make themselves seem more intelligent by mocking what they do not know, in this case, periods.

The underlying reasons that limit access to menstrual products are the lack of support from male figures. This can happen through teasing from boys, stigmatizing culture, inadequate sanitation and limited economic resources to purchase period products.

If female individuals were less subjected to the consequences of a taboo around periods, it could have tremendous global effects. Women could leave their shame about their periods behind and encourage others to help those who need to embrace the truth that periods are a natural human function, and they should not feel the need to hide it.

If periods did not have such a stigma around them, more people would have greater access to safe, cheap and ample feminine hygiene products. By implementing programs that encourage breaking the stigma around periods and giving women access to affordable and safe solutions to handle their periods, people can give girls back their education, freedom and confidence.

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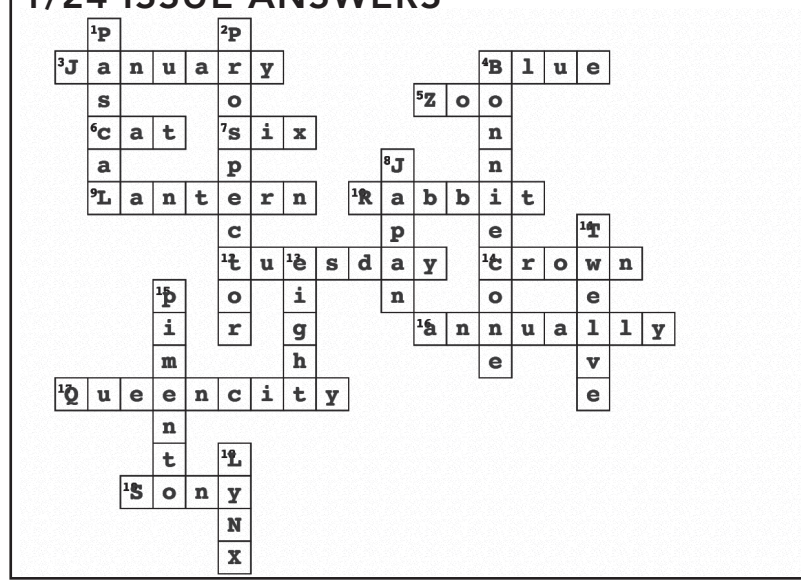
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# CHECK THE NEXT ISSUE (2/21) FOR THE ANSWERS TO THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU!

## NINER TIMES SUDOKU

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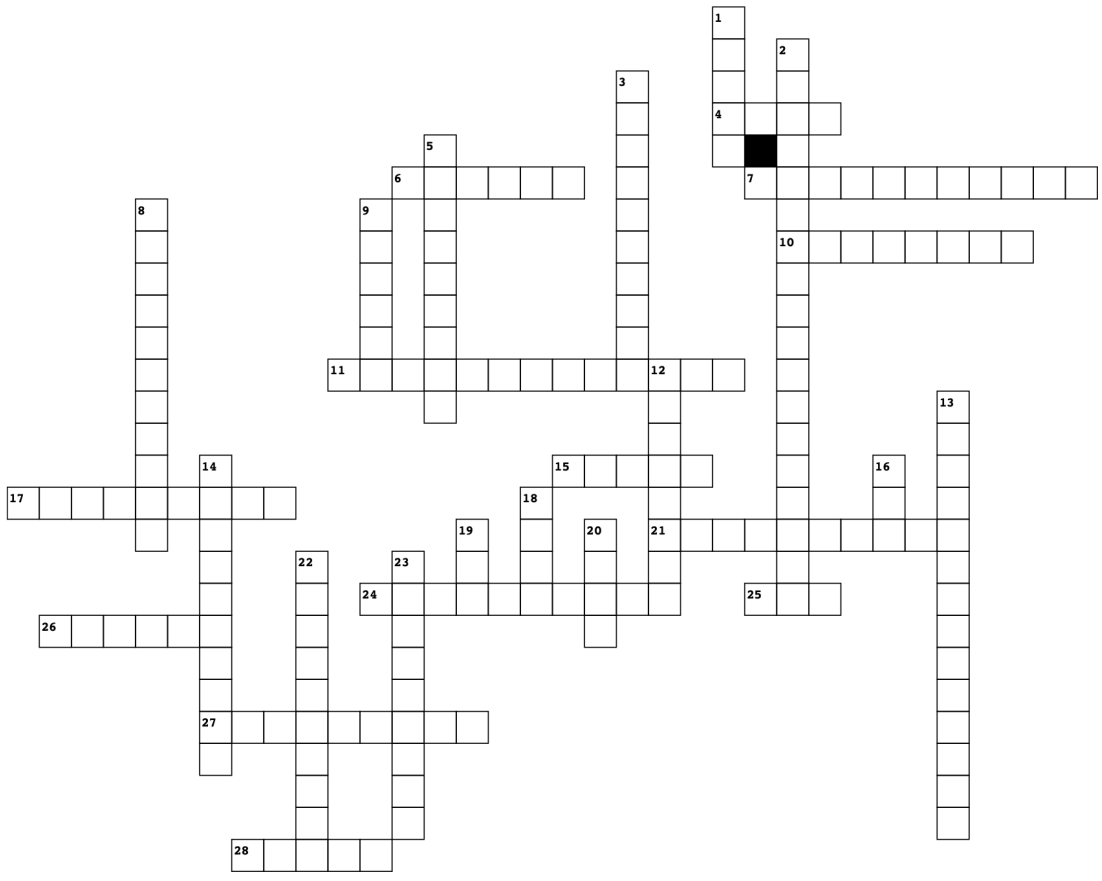
## 1/24 ISSUE ANSWERS




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## DID YOU KNOW?

DURING THE 1943 FOOTBALL SEASON, THE PITTSBURG STEELERS AND THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES BOTH LACKED PLAYERS. THEY FORMED A TEMPORARY MERGER TEAM CALLED THE "STEAGLES."



## NINER TIMES CROSSWORD

**Down**

1. First African American U.S. president
2. Common non-chocolate Valentine's Day treat
3. HBO Max drama spinoff that was canceled after two seasons
5. Indie supergroup comprised of Phoebe Bridgers, Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker
8. Where UNC Charlotte basketball is played
9. ___ and debate (club)
12. North Carolina's state bird
13. Namesake for Feb. 14 holiday
14. Student Union acai bowl vendor
16. Female deer
18. ___'s Hot Chicken (restaurant)
19. Initials of "Letter From Birmingham Jail" author
20. "___ Niner Times" (advice column)
22. What the V in AAVE stands for
23. Current Chinese leader

**Across**

4. Art museum located in Uptown
6. Type of animal stolen from Dallas Zoo in January 2023
7. County in which UNC Charlotte resides
10. Brand of food delivery robots coming to UNC Charlotte campus
11. Coffee shop located in Fretwell
15. Wear away
17. Rodent that saw his shadow on Feb. 2
21. Notification issued when an incident poses a direct threat to campus life
24. Racket sport played with wooden paddles
25. Opposite of WNW
26. Team that beat the Bengals on Jan. 29
27. North Carolina governor
28. How many Black female EGOT winners there are

# Season preview: Charlotte softball looks to find success in final season in Conference USA

by Josiah House
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Feb. 9, the Charlotte 49ers softball team welcomes the South Carolina University Gamecocks to the Sue M. Daughtridge Stadium at 6 p.m. for the Charlotte Invitational, effectively starting the 49ers last season in the Conference USA (C-USA).

Coming off a 35-23 record last year, finishing No. 4 in the East Division of the C-USA, the 49ers look to build off their successes in 2022, such as their historic 5-2 victory over No. 6 Virginia Tech.

Head Coach Ashley Chastain said she is excited to see the unique dynamic of the 2023 roster heading into the new season.

"I'm really excited about the team really coming together in the preseason practice here," said Chastain. "They've been working really hard to create that chemistry that we need defensively on the field to really get where we want to go, which is the NCAA postseason."

**Strength of schedule**

Chastain is not one to shy away from adversity, and the 2023 schedule perfectly reflects this.

"We [Charlotte] believe we play in a great competitive softball region in the country. So you're going to find that our non-conference schedule is ACC-heavy. It's challenging. We believe here that that's how we're going to grow the program and get us to the postseason," said Chastain. "I felt like this is probably the toughest schedule that we've put together since I've been here, and that was very intentional on our end."

In the 2023 C-USA Softball Preseason Poll, Charlotte was voted to finish No. 3 with 78 votes, only behind 2022 C-USA season champions the University of North Texas (99) and Western Kentucky University (82).

According to D1softball.com, the 49ers are projected to finish No. 2 in the division, right behind North Texas. Charlotte will play North Texas at Lovelace Stadium in Denton, Texas, from April 14-16.

Star catcher and Texas native Bailey Vannoy said she has confidence in facing the defending champions.

"I think, honestly, it's treated just like any other game. Heads down, eyes forward," said Vannoy. "It's in the state of Texas, which, you know, I love, but at the same time, I'm repping N.C., and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. So they're just another opponent, and they just wear another jersey."

**Preseason accolades**

Vannoy, the two-time defending C-USA Player of the Year, won the 2023 C-USA Preseason Player of the Year award and ranked No. 39 overall on D1 Softball's "Top 100 Preseason Player" list.

"It's truly an honor that through the years, the work has just kind of shown up, but what's really cool is that none of that would've happened on my own," said Vannoy. "That comes with being on a really good team that's high level, that puts me in a position to prove myself. That comes with preparation on the coaches, athletic trainer, our strength coach; everybody has to be all in for any of those things to happen."

Joining her is sophomore Ella Chancey, who was recognized for her stellar 2022 campaign by being named to C-USA Preseason All-Conference Team.

The promising infielder said she is ready to prove she has more to offer.

"I haven't tried to put too much thought into them [C-USA Accolades]," said Chancey. "I still want to put a lot of emphasis on hard work. I don't want to be like, 'oh, well, they already know I'm a good player, so I don't have to work as hard.' So, just kind of having the same process that I did last year and just doing what I've always done."

**New faces and key contributors**

Following the 2022 season, the Charlotte 49ers lost key players such as Lindsey Walljasper, Kourtney Gremillion and Hallie Webster. While replacing starters is always a daunting task in sports, Chastain is confident in what she's seen from the 2023 roster in the offseason.

"I think you'll see a lot of Savanna Nguyen on the field defensively in the middle infield," said Chastain. "You'll see Lexi Winters behind the plate a lot; she's a true freshman for us. Between her and Bailey Vannoy, they're gonna catch at about a 50% clip. And then Ari Rodi, powerful back, she'll be somebody that gets a lot of opportunities offensively. Just really excited about all those guys. They've just worked really hard and really bought into their roles."

Chastain said she wants to see some of the leadership brought by returning players.

"Just really excited about our returning players," said Chastain, "Obviously, Bailey Vannoy's fifth and final year with us, really excited about that for her, Ella Chancey, who had a stellar freshman year, and Corey Hoffler, who used to be Corey Henderson, got married in the summer; excited about just the experience that she has at this point and the leadership she's brought."

Chastain said the squad is full of confidence when looking to conference play.

"I believe we're going to win Conference USA this year," said Chastain, "It's our last year in the conference, and I think that's what this team has set out to do."

**Season opener**

The 49ers will face South Carolina on Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. at home to kick off their 2023 season and the Charlotte Invitational. Charlotte and South Carolina faced off last season, resulting in a 6-1 victory.




## CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

### RECENT GAMES
*JAN. 23 - FEB. 5*

#### MEN'S BASKETBALL

**Jan. 26:**
**Rice 65, Charlotte 63**

**Feb. 2:**
**Florida International 57, Charlotte 54**

**Feb. 4:**
**No. 19 Florida Atlantic 67, Charlotte 52**

#### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

**Jan. 26:**
**Charlotte 66, Rice 61**

**Feb. 2:**
**Florida International 50, Charlotte 44**

**Feb. 4:**
**Charlotte 73, Florida Atlantic 59**

### OVERALL STANDINGS

**Men's Basketball: 13-10, 4-8;**
**No. 9 in Conference USA**

**Women's Basketball: 10-11, 6-6;**
**No. 6 in Conference USA**

### UPCOMING GAMES

**Men's Basketball:**
**@ UTEP on Thursday, Feb. 9 at 9 p.m.**
**@ North Texas on Saturday, Feb. 11 at 6 p.m.**

**Women's Basketball:**
**Vs. UTEP on Wednesday, Feb. 8 at 6 p.m.**
**Vs. North Texas on Saturday, Feb. 11 at 4 p.m.**

# Season preview: Charlotte baseball combines transfers and returners in hopes to make College World Series

by Sam Perry
Staff Writer

The Charlotte baseball team is looking to make their final run in the Conference USA (C-USA) memorable as they fight for the C-USA championship in the 2023 season.

The 2022 season had its ups and downs for the 49ers, finishing 36-22 overall and 17-13 in C-USA play while boasting a national ranking at No. 23 early in the year.

The key this season for Charlotte is trying to control and mediate downward slumps. The combination of talented transfers and critical returning players elevate the team's goal to reach Omaha, Neb., this year.

**Expectations**

Head Coach Robert Woodard and the 49ers have their focus on not just competing for the C-USA championship but also on the College World Series in Omaha.

The C-USA Preseason Poll was released on Feb. 2 and had Charlotte finishing No. 4 in the conference while also receiving one first-place vote.

**Returning standouts**

Charlotte has a plethora of talent returning for the 2023 season. The returners are headlined by four Preseason All-Conference hitters: Jake Cunningham, Jack Dragum, Cam Fisher and Austin Knight.

Cunningham is coming off a breakout season in 2022, where he batted .304 while scoring 51 runs along with 16 home runs, 12 doubles, three triples, 52 RBI and 38 walks. Cunningham looks to build on his impressive sophomore season and be a catalyst in the outfield for Charlotte.

Dragum was named First Team All-Conference USA in 2022 after batting .352 with 11 doubles, 11 home runs, 54 RBI, 36 walks and came in to score 62 runs. Dragum will be a crucial veteran piece as he looks to lead Charlotte in his senior season.

After a successful freshman campaign, Fisher was named a Collegiate Baseball Freshman All-American, Baseball America Second Team Freshman All-American, C-USA All-Conference Second Team and C-USA All-Freshman Team.

Fisher looks to grow in his second season after hitting .288 with 17 doubles, 18 home runs, 60 RBI and 45 walks while scoring 61 runs.

Knight hit .249 with four doubles, eight home runs, 34 RBI and 34 walks while scoring 45 runs. Knight looks to return to his 2021 form that won him C-USA Player of the Year.

On the mound, Christian Lothes and Collin Kramer are pitchers primed for a stellar year.

Lothes is coming off Tommy John's Surgery in 2022. In 2021 he earned Freshman All-American honors and C-USA First team honors after pitching 40.2 innings with a 4-0 record in 21 games and a 3.10 ERA while striking out 54 batters.

Kramer should be a strong arm in the pitching staff this season. Kramer earned C-USA All-Freshman Team honors in 2022. In 25 appearances, he went 4-2 with a 4.07 ERA over 55.1 innings while striking out 62 batters.

**Impact transfers**

D1 Baseball ranked the 49ers transfer class as No. 21 in the nation, with 11 newcomers joining the squad. The class has plenty of talent spread around, with the notable standouts being Donye Evans, Aubrey Gillentine and Brandon Stahlman.

Evans was named the No. 51-ranked impact transfer. The pitcher hails from Vanderbilt University, where he made 22 appearances, pitching 18.2 innings with a 5.30 ERA and 19 strikeouts.

Gillentine made six appearances last year for the University of Southern Mississippi, but he went 2-0 with a 1.93 ERA over 9.1 innings while striking out eight batters.

Stahlman, a top 50 impact JUCO transfer, transferred in from State Fair Community College. He played in 39 games, batting .341 with seven home runs, 28 RBI, ten doubles, 29 walks and scored 44 runs.

**Marquee matchups**

Charlotte does not have an easy schedule this season, with seven opponents making the NCAA Regionals last season. Those consist of the United States Military Academy, Coastal Carolina University, Dallas Baptist University, East Carolina University, Louisiana Tech University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Virginia Tech.

ECU, UNC and Virginia Tech advanced to the NCAA Super Regionals last year.

**Continued improvements within the Hayes**

Last year Charlotte made significant improvements to their home stadium with the installation of a new turf infield, and this year Hayes Stadium is undergoing another renovation. Charlotte replaced their old digital scoreboard and is installing a new video board.

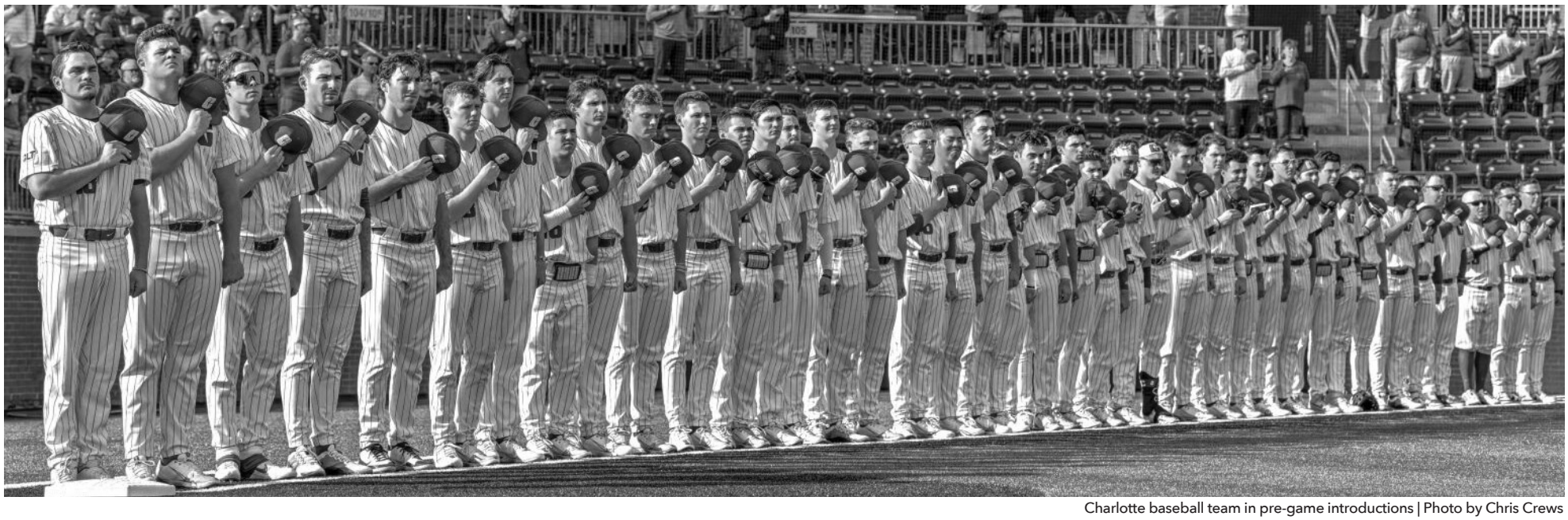
**Conference championship**

Rice University will host the final C-USA baseball championship before conference realignment at Reckling Park in Houston from May 24-28.

Charlotte will have to finish as one of the top eight C-USA teams to clinch a tournament spot.

**Looking to start of season**

Charlotte opens up their season at home against Ball State with a four-game series that begins on Friday, Feb. 17, and runs through Sunday, Feb. 19.



Charlotte baseball team in pre-game introductions | Photo by Chris Crews

# Column: Charlotte men's basketball has glaring issues that must be fixed in final stretch

by Mathis Gaglione
Staff Writer

After losing to No. 19 Florida Atlantic University (FAU) on Saturday, Feb. 4, the Charlotte men's basketball team has lost seven out of their last 10 games and has fallen to No. 9 in the Conference USA (C-USA) standings.

Despite the recent losing streak, there was hope for the 49ers this season, with key players returning, such as Jackson Threadgill and Aly Khalifa. The team also added newcomers Lu'Cye Patterson, Montre' Gipson and Igor Miličić Jr.

Charlotte started the season 9-2, including impressive wins against Boise State University and Tulsa University in the Myrtle Beach Invitational and a stunning walk-off three-pointer by Threadgill to stun Davidson College on the road.

Compared to last year's 7-5 record heading into C-USA play, the hype around the program seemed to be at its highest since Ron Sanchez became head coach in 2018.

Charlotte got off to an electric start this season, so let's recap what happened in the last month. After 12 games against C-USA opponents, the 49ers sit at 13-10 overall and 4-8 in C-USA play.

Every year basketball programs across the country begin the season with non-conference opponents allowing teams to get their footing before heading into conference play in December.

The 49ers had a favorable non-conference schedule going 9-2 in the team's first 11 games, with five of Charlotte's wins coming against teams considered in the low-major tier of college basketball.

Combining the records of all the team's the 49ers played in the season's first 11 games amounts to 109-152, a 29% winning percentage. Compared to the last 12 games for Charlotte, the opponents' combined record jumps to 172-110, a 64% winning percentage.

Not a lot has changed for Charlotte this last month regarding how the team plays. The 49ers are an excellent three-point shooting team, and they have stayed committed to living or dying from beyond the arc all season.

In the first 13 games of the year, where the 49ers boasted a 10-3 record, they attempted 273 three-point shots for an average of 21 per game. In the last month, where the team's record is 3-7, they have attempted 207, which sits at 20.7 per game.

The volume in which Charlotte attempts three-point shots has not changed, but the number of makes has.

During the 49ers' better part of the season against lesser opponents, they shot an astounding 38.2% from deep, placing No. 20 in the country. However, that three-point percentage is down to 35.1% in the latter part of the season, ranking No. 134.

Three-point shooting has not been the only reason for the 49ers' rough patch, as another red flag is scoring droughts.

Every game, there is a stint in which the 49ers cannot score a point for five-plus minutes, and against formidable opponents, the team cannot afford to do this.

This scoring drought issue reared its ugly head against conference leader FAU. The 49ers closed a deficit late in the first half, giving the team a narrow 31-30 lead at the break.

Coming out of the intermission, Charlotte failed to score for over five minutes of game time, falling behind 38-31 before Brice Williams got the team on the board at the free-throw line.

Charlotte went from a slight lead at the half to down seven because the team could not score. It took the 49ers until the 8:41 mark to reach double-digit points in the half, trailing 50-41. After that, the 49ers took another 5:45 to score again.

This issue has occurred too often for the 49ers this season, and the reason for these droughts is the strategic approach to offense.

Too many times, players stand still, watching another dribble at the top of the key. On Saturday, countless times, two Charlotte players passed the ball back and forth for 25 seconds before chucking up a contested three-point shot.

When watching FAU, it seemed like every time they had the ball; there would be five to six passes made to different players until the ball hit a wide-open shooter. The Owls had movement, quick precision passing and an offensive plan. Charlotte lacks these intangibles on offense, and this is the main reason for their scoring droughts.

Even with the team's struggles, they have a plethora of talent. With eight games left, Charlotte must figure out their offensive struggles to get back on track. The first opportunity to do so will be on the road against the University of Texas at El Paso on Thursday, Feb. 9, as Charlotte looks to split the season series.



Charlotte men's basketball team in the huddle | Photo by Jacob Scannell

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