

NINERTIMES

Student-driven news since 1947 | Oct. 9, 2024

WALK THE PLANK



CHARLOTTE DEFEATS RIVAL ECU 55-24 IN FRONT OF SELLOUT CROWD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Davis Cuffe
editor@ninertimes.com

MANAGERIAL BOARD

Brendan Mullen WRITING MANAGING
Jordyn Phillips MULTIMEDIA MANAGING
Clare Grealey COPY
Bryson Foster OUTREACH

EDITORIAL

Sofia DiStefano NEWS
Ruhshona Soledjonova OPINION
Guadalupe Aguilar Sosa ARTS & CULTURE
Dan Rice PHOTO
Everett Pohl VIDEO
Sunnya Hadavi LAYOUT

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Emsley Jackson ASST. OPINION
Kelli Blackburn ASST. SPORTS
Steven Xiong ASST. COPY
Clare Pollick ASST. PHOTO
Ava Weaver ASST. LAYOUT

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

Blaise Uy, Angelica Castillo
Blake Williamson, Ronnie Taylor,
Sneha Nalluri, Chris Crews,
Jesse Morris, Jaden Hartfield

LAYOUTS

Cover photo: Junior defensive back Dontae Balfour celebrates with fans in the student section after the win against ECU. | Dan Rice/Niner Times
Cover layout by Sunnya Hadavi
Interior layouts by Sunnya Hadavi, Ava Weaver, Megan Khor

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Ava Gilmore
mktdirector@charlotte.edu

NINER MEDIA STAFF

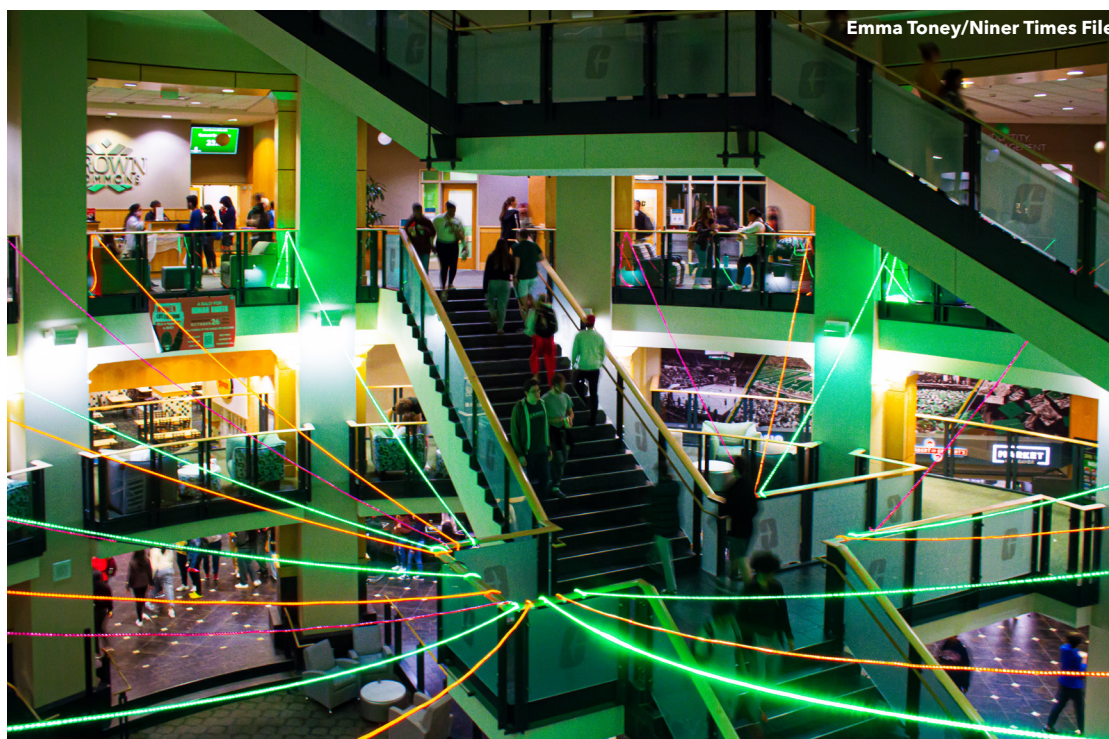
Kelly Merges MEDIA ADVISER
Justin Paprocki MEDIA ADVISER
Laurie Cuddy BUSINESS MANAGER
Bianca Fruscello MARKETING COORDINATOR

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

We cover campus happenings, news and events in the city of Charlotte and North Carolina and topics that are important to students.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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



Events to watch for on and off campus

Carolina Renaissance Festival
Oct. 5 - Nov. 24
9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Huntersville

Haunted Union
Oct. 24 - 25, 7-10 p.m.
Student Union

49ers vs. Navy Football Game
Oct. 19, 3:30 p.m.
Jerry Richardson Stadium

Student Pantry Shift,
Oct. 10, 12:30-5:15 p.m.
Jamil Niner Student Pantry

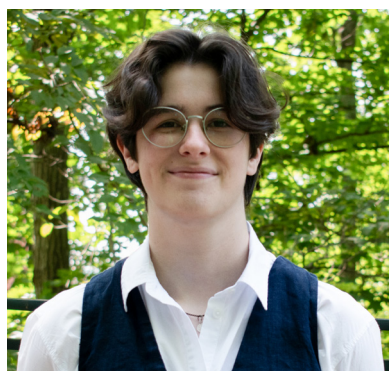
Early Voting
Oct. 17 - Nov. 2, Cone Center

Exhibit Reception: Generations:
60 Years - 21 Conversations
Oct. 10, 5 - 9 p.m.
Rowe Arts

NOTES FROM THE NEWSROOM:

'Lesbian' is not a bad word

Clare Grealey | Copy Editor



When I was growing up in the Triangle of North Carolina, the word 'lesbian' was never really used positively. It was muttered behind me in line at the General Store, used jokingly to describe my haircut and was thrown at me between classes. It was never a compliment but rather synonymous with perversion and a moral failing. There were other words, too, words that I will not say here, but 'lesbian' hurt the most. Because that is what I

was, and I did not understand why I could not be proud of it. Even when I came out to my family and friends, I did not use the word 'lesbian'; I said that I was gay. Because being gay, while still not ideal, was nowhere near as bad as being a lesbian.

As I have grown older, I have unlearned habits and become proud of being a lesbian. I have people in my life who love me because of it and others in spite of it. I have found a community at Charlotte,

I have found a community in my hometown. I have found pride in being a lesbian because no one can ever take that away from me.

I will be so proud that you cannot hurt me, and I will be so outrageous and overbearing that you cannot miss me.

During LGBTQ+ History Month, I implore you to be proud of your sexuality; there is nothing wrong with you—in fact, there is everything right with you. I am proud of you.

On campus resources during this year's LGBTQ+ History Month

Originally "Lesbian and Gay History Month," LGBTQ+ History Month was created by high-school history teacher Rodney Wilson in the mid-1990s.

At UNC Charlotte, LGBTQ+ students and allies can find support through a variety of means.

Prism

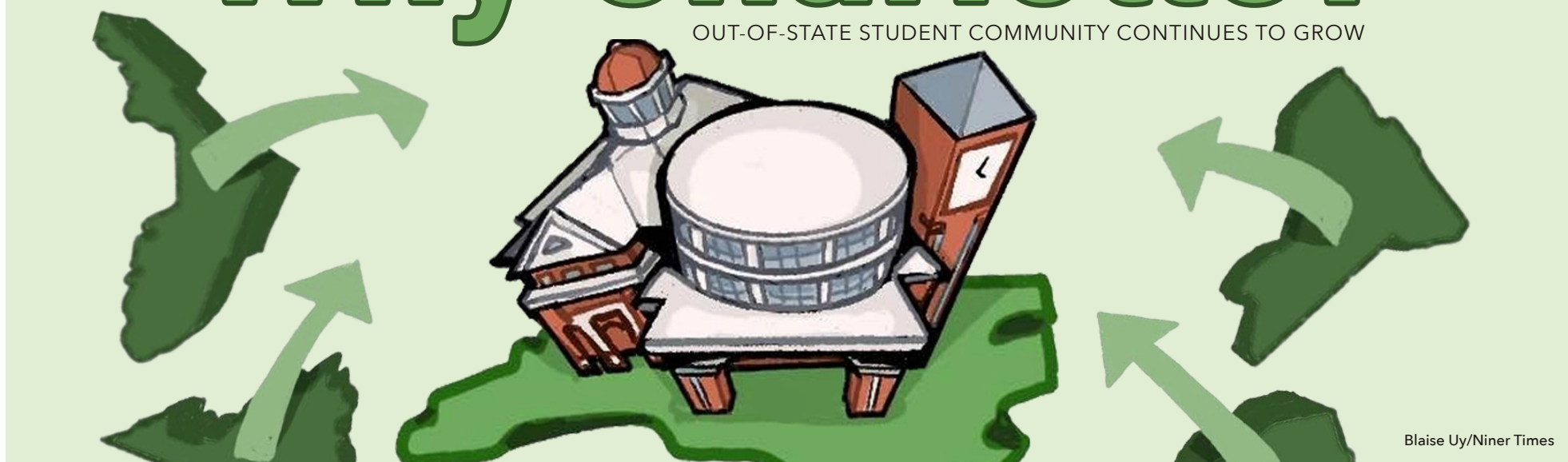
Prism is an LGBTQIA+ student organization at Charlotte that welcomes all students, committed to providing safe and inclusive spaces for LGBT+ students. They hold regular meetings, workshops and even a Pride Prom aimed at giving LGBT+ students a prom experience they may have missed out on in high school.

Gender affirming housing

Housing and Residence Life offers a limited number of spaces for students who are transgender or gender non-conforming in on-campus housing. After completing the housing application, students can fill out the form to request gender-affirming housing.

Why Charlotte?

OUT-OF-STATE STUDENT COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO GROW



Blaise Uy/Niner Times

Sofia DiStefano | News Editor

Miles away from home and learning how to navigate the college experience, UNC Charlotte's out-of-state students have grown to find a sense of community as their population increases.

As UNC Charlotte continues to climb the ranks as a university of top schools in the nation, reaching a new enrollment record this fall of 30,488 students, Charlotte has also had a 47.5% increase in out-of-state students over the last five years. However, this only makes up 12.5% of the student population as of the fall of 2024.

With a variety of student experiences shared, the message has been echoed that out-of-state students feel welcomed and accepted in the Charlotte campus environment.

Fourth-year UNC Charlotte student and New York native, Tommy Vairo, expressed how the transition into college was initially rocky, but he eventually found his footing.

"My first semester was a rough transition, considering my community and family were 500 miles away," said Vairo. "However, once I found community through friends and student organizations, I was able to feel more at home with Charlotte. Today, I feel proud to call North Carolina my new home state."

For many out-of-state students, the adjustment to college in a new state can be challenging at times. 87.3% of UNC Charlotte's population are students from North Carolina, meaning a lot of people already know each other from past time together. This makes the friend-making process intimidating for some since there is not an initial familiarity or mutual acquaintance.

Another aspect of the adjustment process is getting acclimated to the style of living or 'social norms' that may be different from back home.

These may vary from day-to-day speech to popular music, certain foods, fashion and even some sports.

Many out-of-state students have found something that reminds them of home through student organizations while simultaneously meeting new people.

New Jersey native and fourth-year student Nicholas Belfiore expressed his gratitude for his Charlotte experience so far.

"It's been great. I've met people that I normally would never have met if I had stayed in New Jersey," said Belfiore.

Other students said dining hall closures and long weekends posed a challenge.

With many of the on-campus food options closed during fall break, students struggle to find affordable and close options for food, especially if they live on campus with no means of transportation.

Another major week of closures is Thanksgiving, during which all dining halls are closed from Nov. 27 to Nov. 30. Between missing a major holiday with family and friends and having no option for food on campus, many students are left to fend for themselves.

Since many students do not have the option to travel frequently back and forth from home to campus, long weekends on a closed campus can be lonely.

Megan Reen, a fourth-year and Pennsylvania native, shed light on how long weekends, such as fall break, can be difficult for out-of-state students.

"It can be hard sometimes since so many people here are commuters or go home over the weekends," said Reen. "It's especially dead on campus during fall and spring break. The din-

ing options during these times fail to take into account the students who cannot just drive 30 minutes home."

Pennsylvania native Mia Cressman, a first-year student at UNC Charlotte, said her professors helped her acclimate during her first semester.

"All the teachers are really good with counselor help and giving students the help that they need," said Cressman.

When asked what led them to attend UNC Charlotte, out-of-state students gave various reasons. For some, it is because the tuition at Charlotte is still less expensive than at an in-state university.

For others, it was knowing about different academic programs that were offered, such as engineering, architecture, accounting and business programs.

Charlotte's campus proximity to the city is also an added advantage for many out-of-state students. Several students have noted that being in a city-like environment in the University bubble differs from what they are used to and is something they looked into when applying.

Students repeatedly cited the campus' atmosphere, sense of community and diversity as reasons for their interest in applying to Charlotte.

"The diversity on campus and in the greater Charlotte area was also a draw as it has cultivated me into a more aware and well-rounded individual with diverse interests," said Reen. "The light-rail access was also a big plus since I don't have a car. The self-contained campus was also great for that reason."

As time has passed through their collegiate years, many students have come to call North Carolina their new home; however, they still

hold on to their roots.

"I eventually became an in-state student; however, my time as an out-of-state student was very important to my first couple years of college," said Vairo.

According to the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Sarah Humphries Nazionale, there has been an increase in attraction for UNC Charlotte; this interest has peaked among out-of-state applicants.

Humphries Nazionale cited added campus prestige through awards and classifications as a top reason for the extra out-of-state applicants.

"UNC Charlotte is becoming an increasingly attractive option for out-of-state students, and that has been reflected in our enrollment over the past several years," said Humphries Nazionale. "The University's position among the nation's top 100 public universities in U.S. News & World Report, our impending designation as an R1 institution and dedicated recruitment efforts have all increased interest and applications from students across the country."

With the increase of out-of-state students nationwide, 10 states stand out as the most popular 'hometowns' of Charlotte students. They include Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Georgia and Ohio.

Through UNC Charlotte's informational research analytics factbook of admissions data from the fall of 2019, there has been a 16.46% increase in out-of-state applications. In the fall of 2019, 10,777 out-of-state students applied, and 5,537 were accepted. With the current 2024-2025 academic year for the fall of 2024, 12,551 out-of-state students applied, and 8,165 were accepted.

Dr. Evan Houston reflects on 50 years of teaching at Charlotte

Angelica Castillo | Staff Writer

The 2024-2025 academic year marks 51 years of Dr. Evan Houston teaching mathematics at UNC Charlotte to undergraduate and graduate students, marking a significant milestone in his teaching career.

Houston began teaching in 1974, shortly after completing his graduate studies. Initially drawn to the Charlotte position, Houston has dedicated his career to teaching mathematics at all levels, focusing on linear and modern algebra.

Dr. Houston has witnessed the evolution of educational methods and classroom dynamics throughout his tenure. Despite increasing class sizes, he remains committed to his traditional teaching style, favoring whiteboards and paper tests over digital tools.

Houston noted that despite the difficulty of his class, his students have excelled at times, and over the years, he has seen a growth in enthusiasm, making for a rewarding experience.

"I have been helped by the incredible improvement in the good students part of that just growth; I mean, we're 30,000 plus students now," said Houston. "The increase in quality, especially among students that are good, has been amazing. They seem to greatly appreciate your own appreciation of the subject, so that's very gratifying."

Houston also discussed some challenges he has faced with students throughout his time as a teacher, highlighting COVID-19 as an especially difficult challenge.

"The biggest challenge is students not realizing or not taking seriously enough of what they're

about," said Houston. "Don't get me wrong, we have incredibly good students. But a lot of them could be a lot better if they spent more time on their work. I think that's gotten worse since the pandemic."

During his years as a student, Houston enjoyed discussing mathematics with his peers, which influenced his decision to enter teaching.

His teachings center around a deep appreciation for the elegance of mathematics. An import-

in computer science, mathematics and French, reflects on Houston's class's lasting impact.

"He was really caring. He always made himself available for questions and encouraged us to ask questions. He really took the time for everybody to understand the material," said Sico.

Beyond academics, Dr. Houston is known for his approachable and caring demeanor. His students appreciate his willingness to make time for questions and support them through challenging

Still, Houston's job comes with many responsibilities and challenges.

"In my department, I'm amazed at how little they [faculty] need. They seem to be born teachers and just absolutely wonderful faculty members, and that's been something of a surprise," said Houston. "I think people may not realize, and maybe it's not just new teachers, may not realize how difficult the job is. The general public thinks it's easy because the number of hours we teach is relatively small in the classroom, but so much goes on behind all of that."

Reflecting on his half-century as an educator, Dr. Houston expressed gratitude for the journey and recognition from colleagues and students during his recent celebration.

With no plans to retire, Houston remains enthusiastic about teaching and will continue to inspire the next generation of mathematicians.

Houston highlighted his love for the field and how passion for the topic generates successful teaching.

"You should love your field," said Houston. "And I think in academics, that's generally true, but especially in mathematics because we are the only field that can be sure of what we do, and you have to love talking about it. You have to be able to speak to students individually, and, you hate to judge, but you have to judge where they are because you can't help them [otherwise]. You have to try to motivate students."

"The general public thinks it's easy because the number of hours we teach is relatively small in the classroom, but so much goes on behind all of that."

- Dr. Evan Houston

ant lesson he aims to teach students is the beauty and elegance of mathematics.

Houston's classes have been transformative for many, including sixth-year PhD student Hayden Pecoraro.

"He has very different approaches depending on what level the course is. I think that he tailors things fairly well to the level of the student," said Pecoraro.

Ashleigh Sico, a fourth-year student majoring

coursework.

This mentorship has guided students' studies and inspired students like Pecoraro to pursue graduate education.

"He is the reason that I am in graduate school. He suggested that I apply here, and it was great," said Pecoraro.

Houston has seen generations of teachers come into the department at Charlotte, and he is continuously impressed by his colleagues.

Air Force ROTC fosters future leadership roles for students

Ronnie Taylor | Staff Writer

By blending academic coursework with military training, the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (AFROTC) program at UNC Charlotte aims to develop well-rounded individuals prepared for leadership roles in the military.

Established in 1981, Air Force ROTC is one of three ways students can be commissioned as United States Air Force officers. Other paths are the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) and Officer Training School (OTS). As USAFA has minimal acceptances, and OTS is for those with a bachelor's degree, ROTC is the route most students take for commissioning.

"ROTC is the program for students who want to seek a commission in the U.S. Air Force and get their degree at the same time but not attend the U.S. Academy," said Lieutenant Colonel Brian Mostek, AFROTC instructor.

The AFROTC program at UNC Charlotte focuses on providing cadets with skills needed to succeed academically and militarily.

“

"Our mission is to improve, develop and vet leaders of character for the department of the Air Force capable of fighting and winning the nation's wars."

- Lieutenant Colonel Brian Mostek, AFROTC instructor

Designed to train and commission future Air Force officers, the program integrates military training into the broader academic environment.

Cadets in the AFROTC program maintain a busy schedule that balances military responsibilities with academic work. A typical week consists of twice-weekly physical training (P.T.), a general ROTC class and a leadership lab.

"Students have class at least once a week depending on their level, and that's just a typ-

ical class," said Mostek. "Then, on Thursdays, they have a leadership laboratory, which is two hours where all of the cadets in the program come together and work on their leadership skills and learn from the other students. They also do physical training on Monday and Wednesday mornings at 6 a.m."

The AFROTC program offers several types of training, including leadership, drill and public speaking, to prepare cadets for the military.

"At leadership laboratory, you do basic stuff you might think about when you think about the military, but that's not all we teach," said Mostek. "They do leadership projects where they might have to solve a problem as a group, and there is one or two people in charge, and we do more academic things to teach them about expectations."

Cadets also engage with the community as a part of their training opportunities. They participate in officer training days and coordinate events with the school.

Leadership is the main tenet of the AFROTC curriculum. During class, leadership lab and P.T., cadets have the opportunity to take the lead and excel. Several cadets in the class, or flight, are assigned a leadership role each week. The roles include flight commander and sergeant and are a way to prepare cadets for leadership roles in the military.

"You get a thousand and one opportunities to volunteer and to be a leader. You have opportunities in the lead lab and in class to be a commander. Even in the small roles, you have to be a leader and you have to exceed the expectations that are given to you," said Natalie Foster, a cadet in the program.

Students in the program also have access to scholarship opportunities. Some students come into the program with an AFROTC scholarship, but students can receive one later if they excel in the program.

"There are multiple scholarship opportunities," said Mostek. "We have the High School Scholarship Program for seniors to apply, and if they get selected, they get a full ride, but the other scholarships we have are an in-college scholarship program, which is for first-year students. For everyone else, there is an opportunity between sophomore and junior years during field training. They do have to compete for it, but if they get it, they get their last two years of college paid for."

ROTC scholarships are challenging, and there are a few special requirements to con-

tinue receiving the scholarships.

According to Mostek, cadets must maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher to be in the program; if on scholarship, students must maintain a 3.5 or higher. Cadets also have to pass a physical fitness test.

Aside from the chance for scholarships, cadets are motivated to join the military by many things, including family and career stability.

"A lot of motivation comes from family or people wanting to serve their country," said Foster. "I come from a military background, and I was given a lot of opportunities because they [parents] were in the military, and I want to give my future children the same opportunities. I want to make my family proud."

While the AFROTC program teaches students responsibility and leadership skills, it is also a place where cadets develop strong relationships.

"You are going to have a family in this program," said Foster. "So many people are with you, and they understand what you are going through. It is a great bonding experience, and they are always in your corner."



Dan Rice/Niner Times

Charlotte students grapple with devastation in hometowns in Hurricane Helene's wake

Brendan Mullen | Writing Managing Editor

In the days after Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida on Thursday, Sept. 26, high winds and heavy rains splintered buildings and ruptured roads across the Southeastern region of the United States, including Western North Carolina.

While multiple areas in North Carolina, including Charlotte, were left relatively unscathed, many residents in the mountains of Western North Carolina fled from their homes as Helene wreaked havoc on the region.

Despite the distance, many members of the Charlotte community have family, friends and places they once called home in the impacted regions.

Many Charlotte students expressed the difficulties their families have faced in Helene's wake and how that has impacted their lives despite currently living so far away.

Third-year Charlotte student Sami Ehrnsberger shared her struggles with contacting her family after the hurricane destroyed her hometown.

"My hometown is Hendersonville, N.C., which was hit pretty badly by Hurricane Helene," said Ehrnsberger. "I couldn't get in contact with my older sister and her family for three days."

Although Ehrnsberger's family did not suffer from the severe effects of the hurricane, the same could not be said about her hometown of Hendersonville.

"My family ended up being safe and have regained power after relocating, but my entire hometown is devastated by flooding, loss of power and tons of fallen trees," said Ehrnsberger. "The majority of the people in WNC are calling

“My middle school no longer exists. The job I worked at this summer was split in half by a tree. Our places are gone, and we need to mourn the reality that most are irreplaceable.”

- Madeline Andrews, third-year

it a 'biblical disaster,' and I think that's a pretty accurate description."

Like many students, first-year Tanner Hulsey shared that damaged roads and buildings have rendered his hometown of Hendersonville inaccessible.

"I was also very concerned for the fact that during the days following the storm, there was no possible way to get in or out of Hendersonville," said Hulsey. "I knew there was no way I was going to be seeing my family anytime soon."

The storm's aftermath has affected familiar buildings and landmarks in Western North Carolina to the point where they might not be there when students return home.

After Helene laid waste to her hometown of Asheville, N.C., third-year Madeline Andrews faced this harsh reality.

"My middle school no longer exists," said Andrews. "The job I worked at this summer was

split in half by a tree. Our places are gone, and we need to mourn the reality that most are irreplaceable."

Andrews also shared the heartache she and others have experienced as footage of a ruined Asheville has become available.

"I've been sitting with my hometown friends on my couch watching drone footage of our town underwater," said Andrews. "Someone will point out a building in the pictures and be able to identify the intersection. Another will see a house and cry out that it belonged to their favorite teacher, classmate, coworker or sibling."

Although schoolwork may take priority in most situations for Charlotte students, second-year master's student Rebecca De Luna emphasized the importance of prioritizing mental and physical health during these times.

De Luna shared how the School of Social Work has been very sympathetic toward her situation regarding the storm.

uation regarding the storm.

"The department and professors have been very understanding and supportive; I'm fortunate my profession values self-care and service, so when I took time off classes this week, I was met with empathy and concern," said De Luna.

In addition to expressing difficulties reaching family and friends, De Luna highlighted hobbies she associates with her hometown that have been significantly impacted.

"I also am a big backpacker, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy shared that 1/3 of the AT [Appalachian Trail] was destroyed," wrote De Luna. "A lot of trail maintenance is kept up by volunteers, so it'll be years before we get trails back."

Students have expressed that understanding and support are necessary in light of the tragedy caused by Helene.

"The biggest thing is knowing that right now there is interest and support, but it is going to take years to rebuild (even longer for towns in rural Appalachia), and places will never be the same. There is understanding and compassion now, which makes it easier to navigate the grief and this climate," said De Luna.

"Our families are living in an apocalypse only two hours away, and it's our job in Charlotte to help," said Andrews.

Resources for those affected by Hurricane Helene and ways to get involved in disaster assistance are available on the Hurricane Helene page of the North Carolina Department of Safety website.



Tradition and dance comes to life with CLT Kanaka

Sneha Nalluri | Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte's campus is known for its vibrant diversity, with student organizations representing various cultures. One of the many organizations contributing to this cultural net is CLT Kanaka, UNC Charlotte's classical Indian dance team.

This team is committed to preserving and showcasing traditional dance forms while providing a sense of community. Kanaka offers a unique space where students can honor their heritage through the art of dance.

Created to promote classical Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathak, Kanaka is open to all students, regardless of their experience level. Whether a dancer has years of formal training or is stepping into classical dance for the first time, Kanaka is a space where learning and growth happen collectively.

For many dancers, Kanaka is not only an opportunity to perform but also a way to stay connected to their cultural roots.

Krish Karri, a third-year student and co-captain of the team, specializes in Kuchipudi and wants students to keep in touch with their roots, even if they are far from home.

"A lot of people have been trained for so many years, and joining our club is a really great way for them to keep that connection with their cul-

ture," said Karri.

The team frequently performs at events hosted by other cultural organizations on campus, such as the Bollywood team, QCI (Queen City Ishaare) and the Asian American Student Association (ASA).

"It's really great to be able to expand beyond just one realm of dance, but also to interact with other cultures," said Karri.

Jahnvi Suresh, a second-year student and co-captain, specializes in Bharatanatyam. Suresh and other team members wish to unite their community, connect to their roots and grow their dancing skills.

"Kanaka is a space where we can bring all that connection back here to college and do it as a team," said Suresh. "We welcome people that have experience and people that don't have experience too. It's a learning experience for everyone."

For members like Suresh, the personal connection to Indian culture is integral to what makes Kanaka so meaningful.

"To be able to bring our cultural roots to college, to continue wearing cultural costumes and to share the meaning behind traditional dances has been super important to me," said Suresh.

Even though Suresh is a Bharatanatyam danc-

er, she has also been learning Kuchipudi and Kathak through the team and hopes people from all levels can learn together.

Although Kanaka does not just serve experienced dancers, it actively encourages students of all backgrounds and skill levels to participate. The team plans to host workshops introducing new members to dance forms.

Karri wants prospective members to know that regardless of their skill level in classical dance, their mindset is the most essential aspect of being a part of the team.

"As long as you have the time and dedication to actually try to learn, it's something you can pick up. We try to take extra time for people who need a little more help," said Karri.

Looking to the future, both Suresh and Karri focus on growing Kanaka's presence on campus and beyond.

"We definitely haven't greatly advertised in the past and we don't have as many people compared to other dance teams," said Karri. "But we've been trying to get our name out there by collaborating with other clubs and advertising more."

Their ultimate goal is to establish Kanaka as a recognized name not only at Charlotte but also in intercollegiate dance competitions. Suresh wants to showcase the importance of creating a strong

and committed team, firm in the notion that they hope Kanaka will eventually be "recognizable at competitions" and known for both its skill, dedication and ability to preserve Indian tradition.

As the club moves forward, the co-captains envision Kanaka continuing to offer a space where dancers can connect with their culture, grow as dancers and share their love for traditional Indian dance with a wide audience.

With plans to expand and evolve, the future of Kanaka is bright and the potential for growth is limitless.

"We want to take the next step and reach a wider audience on and off campus," said Karri. "The beauty of classical dance is that it can connect people from all cultures and backgrounds. We want to make sure that everyone knows that Kanaka is a space for learning, growth and creativity through culture."

Kanaka offers a space for Indian students to stay connected to their heritage, especially when so far away from home. With plans to expand and evolve, Kanaka's future is bright and full of potential.

For more information on Kanaka, follow them on Instagram @cltkanaka.



"The beauty of classical dance is that it can connect people from all cultures and backgrounds. We want to make sure that everyone knows that Kanaka is a space for learning, growth and creativity through culture."

- Krish Karri, third-year and Kanaka co-captain

Megan Bentley/Niner Times File

Register and find your polling
place at nextgenamerica.org/vote



Be like Taylor.

Be a voter.

"I've done my research, and I've made my choice. **Your research is all yours to do, and the choice is yours to make.** I also want to say, especially to first time voters: Remember that **in order to vote, you have to be registered!** I also find it's much easier to **vote early.**"

- Taylor Swift

Registration Deadline in NC:
October 11, 2024 or in-person during Early Voting

Early Voting Ends:
November 2, 2024

Election Day:
November 5, 2024

nextgen
america

Paid for by NextGen Climate Action



Charlotte 49ers crushes East Carolina University Pirates

Dan Rice & Chris Crews/Niner Times

In a 31-point victory, the Charlotte 49ers capsized the East Carolina University Pirates 55-24. The 49ers got the win in front of a sold-out home crowd of 17,102 on the back of a school-record 308 rushing yards. The Oct. 5 victory makes the 49ers 3-3 and undefeated in conference play. Charlotte took an early 14-0 lead and did not trail for a second in the game. The 49ers will take the field again when they face off against the United States Naval Academy on Oct. 19, following their bye week.



WALK THE PLANK

CHARLOTTE FOOTBALL NOW 2-0 AGAINST ECU
AFTER 55-24 WIN

Davis Cuffe | Editor-in-Chief



The anticipation for Charlotte and East Carolina University's (ECU) in-state showdown paid off in full for 49er faithfuls as Charlotte football sunk the Pirates 55-24.

Charlotte's win was fully displayed for the 17,102 fans, which made for the No. 4 largest crowd in Charlotte football history.

Charlotte set the tone early, taking a 14-0 lead in the first quarter with two early scores and maintained the lead, never trailing in this game. Charlotte's run game was strong, totaling 308 yards and six touchdowns.

After redshirt sophomore and presumed starting quarterback Max Brown was ruled out just before the game, freshman Deshawn Purdie was a star for Charlotte in his absence. Purdie finished 13-22, totaling 208 passing yards.

"It just felt amazing," said Purdie following the win. "I came to Charlotte to give the fans a reason to be excited. Get the loyal fans excited about

“
“It just felt amazing. I came to Charlotte to give the fans a reason to be excited. Get the loyal fans excited about some dubs. This was a little glance at that.”

- Deshawn Purdie, freshman quarterback

some dubs. This was a little glance at that.”
The win comes after a long buildup of excitement

ment for the Charlotte team. In the pregame press conference, redshirt freshman defensive end Lacota Dippre said the excitement made it “tough to sleep at night” for him.

After the successful outing, redshirt junior runningback Hahsaun Wilson, who ran for 168 yards and three touchdowns, described the team's energy as “lit.”

Purdie starts hot

After leading a second-half comeback in week five against Rice University, Purdie ignited the Charlotte offense early against ECU. The true freshman was nearly flawless in the first quarter, throwing just one incomplection en route to 81 first-half yards.

His ability to push the ball down the field opened up scoring opportunities in the run game, helping Charlotte to a 14-3 lead after two goal-line rushing touchdowns.

Charlotte run game takes over

After the successful start passing, Charlotte could run the ball effectively for the remainder of the game. The 49ers finished with 308 yards on the ground, a new school record.

The 49ers were somewhat ineffective on the ground until junior runningback Cartevious Norton broke off a 62-yard touchdown run. Before Norton's breakaway carry, Charlotte had rushed for less than four yards per carry.

The energy shifted after Norton's run, and the floodgates opened for the 49er rushing attack. Charlotte gashed ECU's defense with 35, 23 and 65-yard rushes in the second half of the game, with the latter two going for touchdowns.

Norton finished with 88 yards and two touchdowns, pairing well with Wilson's strong performance.

49er defense holds strong

At one point, it looked like ECU was gaining momentum for a comeback. Returning from the halftime break, the Pirates scored on a 48-yard rushing touchdown, making it just a 14-point game at 31-17.

Charlotte's defense did not let up another point for the remainder of the game, with ECU's only other score in the second half coming on a kick return.

The 49er defense forced two turnovers in the game. The first came off a leaping interception from redshirt junior Elijah Culp that resulted

in ECU benching junior quarterback Jake Garcia. ECU's second turnover resulted in a 53-yard interception return for touchdown in an athletic effort from redshirt senior linebacker Stone Handy.

Handy's touchdown sealed the deal for Charlotte, as it was the last 49er score in the 31-point victory.

Takeaways

The 49ers are good?

After an 0-2 start and a 3-9 2023 season, Char-

lotte is 3-3 and is now undefeated in conference play at 2-0. This is a team Charlotte fans can get excited about and look forward to watching.

Culture continues to grow in Jerry Richardson

All three Charlotte home games this year have been sellout crowds. Football is serious in Charlotte, and Saturdays inside Jerry Richardson Stadium are electric because of it.

The ECU-Charlotte rivalry is legit

Before most ECU fans left following the third

quarter, fans of both teams were in constant conflict throughout the game. From a student section skirmish pregame to 'EC-who' chants in the third quarter, these fanbases do not like each other and will not anytime soon.

Up next

Following this week's bye, Charlotte is on the road against the United States Naval Academy for an Oct. 19 matchup in Annapolis, Md. Kick-off is set for 3:30 p.m. with the game available to stream on CBS Sports Network.



Dan Rice & Chris Crews/NinerTimes



How NASCAR driver and engineering student Layne Riggs succeeds on the track and in the classroom

Bryson Foster | Outreach Coordinator

As Layne Riggs drove his black and yellow No. 38 Ford off Turn 4 at the historic Milwaukee Mile on Aug. 25, he was not just chasing a checkered flag but a lifelong dream. Crossing the line, the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series driver secured his first career win and a sigh of relief for breaking through the season's struggles.

Riggs pulled his race-winning truck to the start-finish line, starting his celebration. He promptly got on the truck's roof and pumped his fist into the air, dislocating his shoulder in the process. The minor setback did not stop the celebration as he popped it back into place, heading to Victory Lane in triumph.

"I dislocated my shoulder [because] I was celebrating so hard," said Riggs in his post-race interview. "It hurts like a mug, but it's worth it; it's not the first time it's happened to me. It ain't gonna slow me down."

On Sept. 19, Riggs was back behind the seat of the No. 38 at the infamous Bristol Motor

Speedway. Riding the momentum wave from the previous race in Milwaukee, he led 80 laps and took home his second straight victory, becoming the first non-NASCAR Playoffs driver to win the first two playoff races.

Riggs is not your typical NASCAR driver. When he is away from the halls of Front Row Motorsports, he is a motorsports engineering student at UNC Charlotte. Riggs is focused on preparing for his future.

"Ever since I started high school as a freshman and the racing was picking up, I was doing well, but at the same time, until you get that big break, you're never guaranteed anything," said Riggs. "I started at UNC Charlotte and was headbound to get my engineering degree. I want to get my degree and focus forward."

Time at Charlotte

After completing his final three elective courses, Riggs will earn his engineering degree

in December 2024. He said UNC Charlotte has allowed him to pursue his passions: racing and engineering.

"My professors recognize me, call me out in class and give me props for the wins that I've had," said Riggs. "It is awesome to get recognized for the accomplishments that I'm making outside of school. I can be just another student here and do the same thing as everybody around me."

Riggs has found a balance between being a full-time driver and a student.

Both commitments take up extensive time, so he has had to hone his time management skills.

"You had to dedicate yourself to it because engineering homework is not something you can quickly spit out in 30 minutes,"



Courtesy of Front Row Motorsports/Alex Minton

said Riggs. “I will be at a racetrack all day Friday or Saturday, so I put in the work the rest of the week to grind and stay focused. It just really wows people, especially fans, because only a few drivers follow through with college.”

Back to the start

Riggs, a Bahama, N.C. native, comes from a racing family. His father, Scott, was a nine-time winner in NASCAR’s top three series. Most notably, Scott drove the No. 10 Valvoline car for MB2 Motorsports and Evernham Motorsports in 10 years of NASCAR Cup Series competition.

It was not always evident to Layne that he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps.

“Going to the racetrack from when I was born, you take it for granted and think, everybody’s dad must race, right? This is a normal thing going to the Daytona 500 when you’re five years old,” said Layne. “When I turned 10, I became interested in it, and that was when he was starting to drift out of the sport. It was perfect timing.”

Layne ran his first race in a full-sized car when he was 10, winning in his second start and taking home the 2014 Pure Stock Championship. After cutting his teeth at Orange County Speedway, he jumped to the CARS Late Model Stock Tour series, debuting on his 14th birthday.

Layne racked up wins wherever he raced. He traveled around the South racing at short tracks, mimicking his father’s racing journey.

An opportune time

In 2022, Riggs was a regular on the NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series, securing 16 wins and the 2022 National Championship as a driver for the family-owned Riggs Racing. He made history as the youngest driver to earn the honor, opening the door for a unique opportunity.

At a CARS Tour event at North Wilkesboro Speedway, Layne’s holler was parked next to former NASCAR Cup Series champion Kevin Harvick. Harvick struggled in his series debut, but Layne was composed, finishing No. 4, catch-

ing the eye of the former champion to build his late model team, cars with modified engines and bodies.

“That Monday after the race, somehow, he

Front Row and beyond

While preparing for the last race of his deal with Kaulig at Martinsville, Riggs met with Front

“I hope to be someone people can admire and know he did it right. He tried hard, and he was determined. He was somebody who wouldn’t quit no matter what. Hopefully, I can be a good role model one day to people my age and younger.”

- Layne Riggs, fourth-year

[Harvick] got my number and called me,” said Riggs. “He said, ‘You come in, drive my cars and try to get the team as best as we can.’ Kevin Harvick could have picked anybody, but he picked Layne Riggs. That put a lot of eyes on me, and I am very thankful to Kevin for the opportunity he gave me.”

Riggs made the most of the opportunity, parking the No. 62 in Victory Lane at Caraway Speedway in the CARS Tour competition. The effort led to deals with Kaulig Racing in the NASCAR Xfinity Series and Halmar Friesen Racing in the Truck Series in 2023.

Row General Manager Jerry Freeze and was offered the No. 38 truck ride. After a stellar run, Riggs was given the ride he had been working for.

“He [Freeze] said, ‘It’s good to see you out here racing. Do you want to drive my 38 truck next year?’ And I said, ‘Yes, of course, I do,’” said Riggs. “We went out there to Martinsville and had a really strong performance. He called and said, ‘Alright, you’re the real deal. We want you, let’s do this thing.’”

This season has been one of growth, but Riggs said keeping his head down allowed the results to come.

“The win at Milwaukee finally just put the stamp on it. It was a relief to get your first win in your rookie season,” said Riggs. “From questioning my ability just a couple of months ago to suddenly saying we’re cham-

pionship favorites without being in the playoffs, it is a crazy turnaround.”

As the 2024 season ends, Riggs is focused on one thing going into next season: a championship.

“Next year’s a championship, and as many wins as possible during the regular season. Having that consistency and being a factor every weekend will get you toward that end goal,” said Riggs.

When his racing career ends, Riggs wants to be remembered for his dedication to his craft.

“I hope to be someone people can admire and know he did it right. He tried hard, and he was determined. He was somebody who wouldn’t quit no matter what. Hopefully, I can be a good role model one day to people my age and younger,” said Riggs.

The NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series will be back in action on Oct. 26 at Homestead-Miami Speedway, and Riggs will be looking for his third win in five races.

DO YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE IDEA?

WHETHER IT IS NEWS, OPINION, SPORTS OR ARTS & CULTURE, THE NINER TIMES IS ALWAYS ACCEPTING ARTICLE IDEAS AND TOPICS!

DM US YOUR IDEA ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR EMAIL EDITOR@NINERTIMES.COM. TIPS MAY ALSO BE SENT THROUGH OUR ANONYMOUS TIPLINE.

THE NINER TIMES RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT SUBMISSIONS.



Charlotte women's soccer Head Coach Brandi Fontaine talks about building through adversity

Kelli Blackburn | Asst. Sports Editor

Throughout the 2024 season, the Charlotte women's soccer team, led by Head Coach Brandi Fontaine, has faced several obstacles.

The 49ers currently hold a 1-6-4 overall record and are 0-1-2 in the American Athletic Conference (AAC). Fontaine, in her third year coaching at Charlotte, is striving to bounce back from the adversity they have encountered so far.

In her first season in 2022, Fontaine led Charlotte to a spot in the Conference-USA Tournament and in 2023, coached an outstanding defensive squad that allowed only 16 goals.

Fontaine sat down with the Niner Times to discuss her coaching experience and the key lessons that will guide the team through the second half of the 2024 season.

How are you feeling about the team so far this season? What expectations are in place for this group of players?

Fontaine: We're definitely going through a lot of growing pains. I would say, at this point, I think adversity makes you stronger. [We're] obviously missing some players that are injured, but to be fair, our freshmen are really stepping up. We're trying to make sure that we're preparing them for games as best we can. At this point, the expectation is that we go into every game and compete, give everything we have, and leave it all on the field.

“

My biggest thing with them is seeing them [the players] grow both on and off the field, hopefully becoming the best version of themselves.”

- Brandi Fontaine, women's soccer head coach

How do you keep your team's spirits high when you're facing adversity?

Fontaine: I think it's just the belief I have in the group. Whether it's the younger players, [or] the older group, I've been through it several times where we've just not been in a great place and [have] come out of it. What they show in train-

ing each day and the improvements that they're making just gives me belief in them and what they're capable of doing. It's hard not to have those spirits stay high.

You've already faced three ranked teams this season, so what are some takeaways that you've gotten from that or lessons you've learned?

Fontaine: I would say it's not going to get much harder than those teams, right? I think it's helped us prepare for the conference and the top of what we're going to see. That's where some of our growing pains and adversity came through. I think we were able to keep ourselves in almost every game.

What got you into coaching? What is it that drives you every day to coach?

Fontaine: My college coach was a female, and she was in coaching. I wanted to play in the pros, but at that time, the women's league was in and out. So, I knew my only way to stay in the game was through coaching. I started taking my coaching license when I was in college. Honestly, it's the players every day, just being involved with them. It's more than what's on the field; it's off the field, too, and having those relationships with them. My biggest thing with them is seeing them grow both on and off the field, hopefully becoming the best version of themselves. That's the joy that I get in coaching each of them.

You have a twin sister with whom you played soccer at Francis Marion University. What was that like?

Fontaine: [It was] so much fun. I loved it. I think my love for the game was a big part of being able to play with her and train with her. She was a goalkeeper, so I always had somebody to shoot on, and it was a lot of fun. It was some of the best times of my life.

Being in your second year in the American Athletic Conference, what has that been like? What are some takeaways or lessons you learned last season that you're trying to apply this season?

Fontaine: It's a really competitive league. We're more prepared this season. I think that the new challenge of this year is [that] now we actually get to see every team in conference play as opposed to waiting until the tournament. I think that's the thing I love about the American, is [that] there's no bottom end. You're fighting in every game. It's definitely exciting to watch.

Can you talk about your adjustments to coaching at Charlotte and filling John Cullen's shoes, the last coach and all-time winningest?

Fontaine: I think for me, I've never thought about it as 'me versus John' or trying to fill his shoes. I think I just wanted to come in and try to be myself and try to give the team what I felt they needed. Honestly, I felt like he left the program in a good place, and I wanted to try to build off of that and build something different and special [in a different way].

Do you have any favorite rivals or teams to play?

Fontaine: ECU. I think I had to fall into that [when] coming here. It was a natural rival, but it's become a thing—a pretty decent one, I would say, but I feel like right now, every game is like that within the conference. There's always something with each team that kind of gets you excited and pepped up and wanting to go.

Do you have any game-day superstitions or routines that you like?

Fontaine: For me, it's trying to keep myself busy in the morning, doing stuff with my family, because at that point, all the prep work's done. [I think at that point], it's just really staying focused.

What has been your favorite head coaching moment so far?

Fontaine: Honestly, the two back-to-back wins against ECU last year were probably one of my most exciting moments, I would say so far here at Charlotte and ones I won't forget.

What's your outlook for the end of the season? Do you have any expectations or goals?

Fontaine: Obviously, we want to get into the conference tournament and chase the championship. I think for us, the expectation is that we get ourselves in the tournament, and then we chase it from there [in a positive way].

What should Charlotte fans be excited about for the rest of the season? What should they look for?

Fontaine: New players having to step up, maybe ones they haven't seen a lot of yet. I think some of our freshmen, with some injuries and stuff, have had to step up. I think seeing what the excitement is for what's to come for this year and for the future.



Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

Column: The struggle and strategies to maintain an introverted social life

Jesse Morris | Staff Writer

Between the constant barrage of classes, homework, projects and exams, it is hard enough to find time to relax at all, let alone find time for friends. That goes twice over for an introvert who gets exhausted from socializing.

Caught between two conflicting sides, it is a struggle to strike the right balance between social life and genuine relaxation when those things are not necessarily compatible. Put simply, introverts find enjoyment and relaxation in small groups or alone rather than in a social setting.

Although it may seem challenging to find that equilibrium, there are many tools and strategies in the introvert's toolbox to utilize.

Scheduled socialization

The simple fact is that, after a long day, it can be hard to have the energy or time to fit in an impromptu event with a friend. While infrequently possible, working to schedule social engagements in advance is an easy, effective way of handling the load.

On a basic level, making a schedule helps to ensure that academic life does not interfere with socializing in a way that negatively affects either. When finding time for others with different schedules or a busy major, setting plans

in advance makes it possible to work around it and prepare for the rest of the day or week.

For introverts, having a set time for said engagements more easily guarantees time for oneself and helps maintain social relationships. Even better, it shows those on the other side your interest in having those moments in a way that simply accepting or declining does not.

Strategic socialization

As the general-in-chief of your life, the strategy you play with is the surest way to victory or defeat. Executing the wrong move can make social life all the more difficult, even operating for the right reasons.

It can be easy to go along with social situations out of obligation, not enjoyment. It is, therefore, vital to learn when to say no and to set boundaries to prevent them from adding undue burden. That being said, being prepared with other times or ideas goes a long way to showing others that you enjoy their company—but you need time for yourself.

Similarly, for those looking for others to add to their social circle, getting involved with clubs or student organizations that fit your life and include others in similar circumstances or majors can make for less hassle in conflicting schedules.

Stuffed socialization

In the end, the obligations of professional life or large-scale events will leave one with little choice but to get ready and face the crowd.

Maintaining what control is possible over your involvement goes a long way to mitigating any issues. Planning around these events and providing time to relax in their wake helps to ease the added exhaustion in life. Setting limits to your involvement also allows you to set the stakes and tailor it more to your needs.

At events like career fairs or other professional events, taking a moment to be alone can provide a needed respite from the bustle of the crowd and give the energy one needs to make that great impression.

The introvert life

Socializing can make for a great time away from the rest of school. Balancing that with time for yourself can ensure you are accounted for while pursuing many other life goals.

When life can be hard enough, make a little time for yourself. It can go a long way to helping you truly enjoy what you do, as well as the time you spend with others.

Opinion: Classes should be cancelled on Election Day

Jaden Hartfield | Staff Writer

The Nov. 5 Election Day is fast approaching, and Gen Z's influence continues to grow. With more eligible voters and the growing urgency to vote, colleges should consider not holding classes on Election Day so students have the full opportunity to go out and vote.

The election could grant former President Donald Trump's return to the Oval Office or Kamala Harris making history as the nation's first female president. This election is seen as one of the most vital in United States history, and drastic changes to the country are expected as an outcome.

To Gen Z, their involvement in this election is crucial, as it is the first election that the majority of their generation can participate in. With college life being busy enough outside of classes, canceling classes would open up student schedules and allow extra time to vote.

Students at UNC Charlotte, who are members of Gen Z themselves, have voiced their desire to be actively involved in this year's election.

"For too long, voting in the presidential election has been about voting against those who will harm our communities, not voting for a candidate who represents our generation," said Lena Ayesh, Charlotte's fourth-year member of Un-PAC. "Industries and corporations are betting that we won't show up to vote, hoping to block the progress we need. But we can't let them win."

Un-PAC is a statewide and national, nonpartisan organization that encourages students and young people to demand overdue democracy reform that can solve urgent matters in the United States.

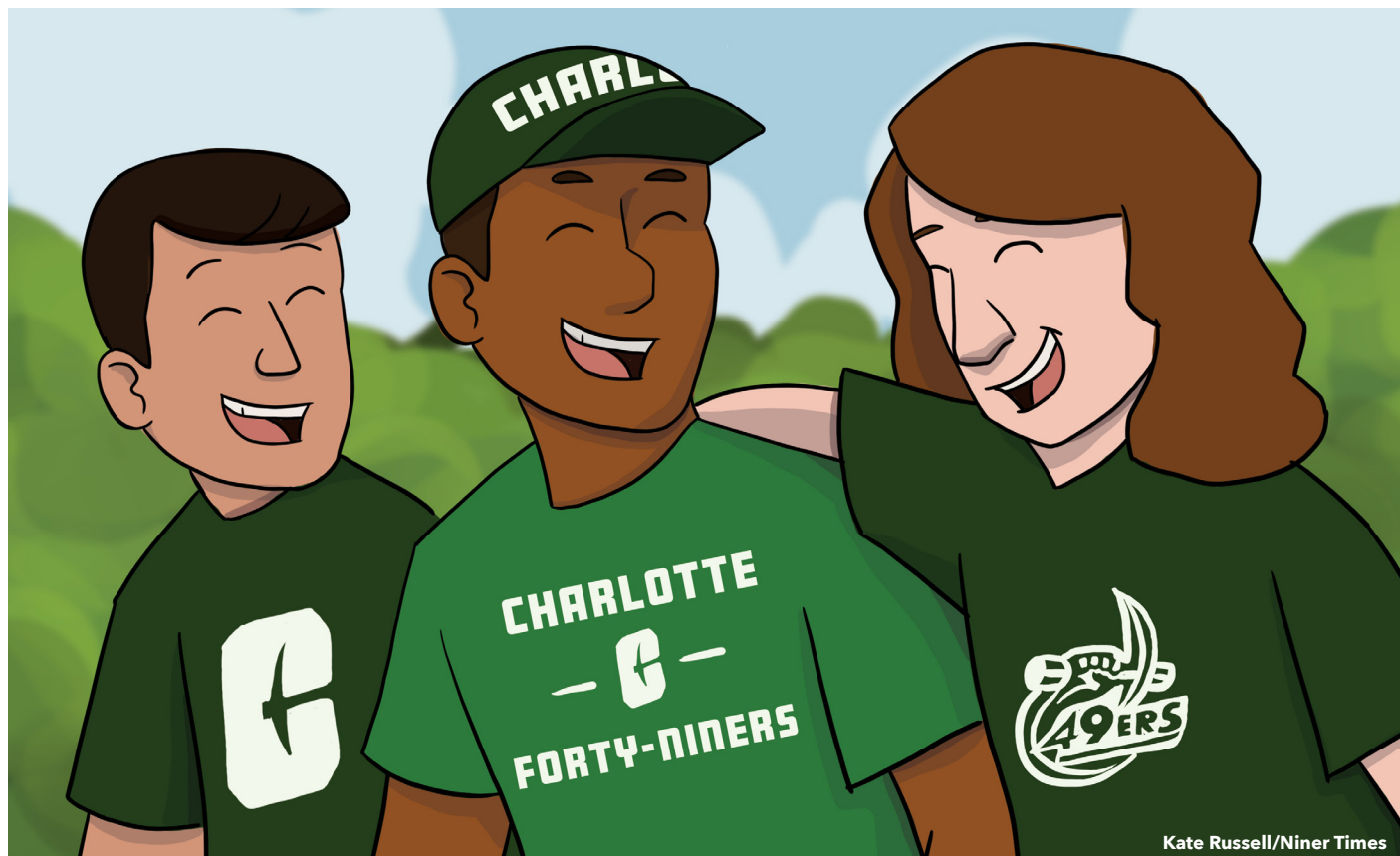
As a member of Un-PAC, Ayesh stands firm in the organization's beliefs.

"Un-PAC wants to work with UNC Charlotte administrators and officials to make sure our youth power campaign, which includes aiming to have a day off for Election Day, lobbying transparency and removing the structural barriers to voting on college campuses to help create a more representative democracy for more generations," said Ayesh.

With a new generation finally entering the territory of deciding the future of their country, it would only be beneficial to them if given the full opportunity to do so.

Classes should be canceled on Election Day to allow their young students to exercise their right to vote for their country's next leader and show their full support on both a state and national level.

Voter turnout is significant in a swing state like North Carolina. While early voting is available, universities should provide every opportunity to get their student populations involved in democracy and cancel classes on Nov. 5.



Kate Russell/Niner Times

PROTECT REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM IN NOVEMBER

***JOSH STEIN
FOR GOVERNOR***

***KAMALA HARRIS
FOR PRESIDENT***



Planned Parenthood Votes North Carolina

Paid for by Planned Parenthood Votes North Carolina

