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Sept. 25, 2024

CELEBRATING

Hispanic Heritage Month



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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



Destiny Bridgers/Niner Times File

Events hosted by Latin student orgs

Omega Phi Beta Latin Sorority
Escape Room Experience:
Breaking the Cycle
Sept. 25, 6:30 P.M., CHHS 295

Dancing Association for Latine
Expression
Cumbia Night
Oct. 7, info on @dale_uncc

Association for Latino
Professionals in America
Color Run
Sept. 28, 11 A.M. - 2 P.M., 49th Acre

CEPA Spanish Club
Hispanic Heritage Month Outing
Sept. 25, 6 P.M., Tequilas Tacos and Bar

Association for Latino
Professionals in America
Student Symposium
Sept. 27, 4 P.M., McKnight Hall

Lambda Theta Alpha Latin
Sorority Game Night
Sept. 26, 6-8 P.M., Mebane 281

NOTES FROM THE NEWSROOM:

You are Hispanic enough

Guadalupe Aguilar Sosa | Arts & Culture Editor



Being part of the Latino community, I am often asked why I do not sound, dress or look Hispanic enough.

My typical style and hobbies do not consist of a typical 'Latina.' I do not wear skinny jeans or heavy makeup, listen to mainstream artists or go to many outings, often keeping to myself. Seeing my Latino counterparts fit the box of liking Hispanic things often made me start doubting myself and my

'Hispanicness.'

From wearing lots of accessories, listening to alternative music and having hobbies no one else had, I started forcing myself to indulge a bit more in my culture.

But what is my culture? That was dependent on what I made it. It is speaking Spanish and learning more about my family's culture, traditions, language and country. Being different did not make me any less. We come from different cities,

backgrounds, friends groups and things we were taught in our family.

Obviously, we will not all be the same. Being Hispanic comes in all shapes and sizes. At the end of the day, I realized I do not have to prove myself to anyone just because my interests and looks are not what most would call 'Hispanic.'

So, whether you have piercings, tattoos, colored hair or basic hobbies, you are Hispanic enough.

What is Hispanic Heritage Month?

Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 marks a significant time period for the Latin American community as Hispanic Heritage Month. This month recognizes the many cultures and traditions of 19 Hispanic countries and territories, their achievements and contributions in the United States.

The theme for the 2024 Hispanic Heritage month is "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together." This theme was selected to recognize the past and present Hispanic pioneers who strived for change for the Hispanic community.

The theme was chosen as a symbol of encouragement for the future Hispanic generations to continue pushing toward an inclusive environment for all. This broad theme aims to inspire in a plethora of fields such as education, science, business, the arts and social justice.

UNC Charlotte implements revisions and updates to security

Clare Grealey & Brendan Mullen | Copy Editor & Writing Managing Editor

In spring of 2024, the Niner Times published an article detailing assessments of security oversights and updates, as well as insight from members of safety and security and emergency management. In light of developments and internal changes on campus, the Niner Times saw fit to publish an updated story highlighting new personnel and refinements.

Following the retirement of former Associate Vice Chancellor for Safety and Security, John Bogdan, Christopher Gonyar has stepped into the position, with Kevin Martin filling the role of interim director of emergency management.

Active Assailant Training

On Aug. 16, Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber emailed all members of the campus community to notify them of the new mandatory active assailant training. According to Gaber's email, the training was "a result of an assessment conducted by [the] Safety and Security team during the spring semester." Prior to this academic year, the active assailant training was not a required training module for students, something that Gonyar and Police Chief Jeffrey Baker pushed for.

According to Martin, the new training has received a promising response as of Sept. 19.

"[The response has been] overwhelmingly positive. I think that we're currently, for the campus community, a little over 25% [completed], for the student body, right about 20% [completed]," said Martin.

Members of the Charlotte community have until Oct. 19, 2024, to complete the training.

Niner Alerts

Niner Alerts are sent to students in event of a threat to campus safety or operations via text message, email, digital screen takeover or a variety of other ways.

According to Martin, improvements have been made to the Niner Alerts system since the false active shooter threat in February.

"From the feedback that we received on Feb. 1, we added a few new alerts," said Martin. "We did add a few to cover that in-between space of 'we know nothing is happening,' or 'we definitely know something is happening.' We have a couple [of] different templates for different scenarios in that realm."

Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of Niner Alerts after one was sent out on Aug. 16 detailing an armed robbery in Mebane Hall. Approximately 10 minutes later, a subsequent alert was sent out correcting the location of the robbery to CHHS.

The mix-up occurred as a result of what Gonyar described as a "miscommunication" between the reporting party and dispatch.

Electronic door locks

Following the shooting on Charlotte's campus in April 2019, University Security began conducting assessments and upgrades of its security systems. One significant oversight of the network was doors that could be locked by an individual inside. It was found that during the 2019 shooting, there were approximately 700 interior doors that could not be locked from the inside, creating a massive safety risk.

As a result, the University undertook a project to install electronic locks on all the doors on campus, both interior and exterior. As of Sept. 19, approximately 55% of classroom and academic spaces at Charlotte have electronic locks that can be locked by an individual inside the room and locked remotely from the University's emergency operations center. According to Gonyar, Charlotte is on track to complete the third and final phase of electronic lock upgrades by the end of the calendar year.

Phase three of the project cost an estimated \$1.2 million, funded after a one-time request from business affairs. A portion of this cost is due to the implementation of access control software after Charlotte learned that the current software used would be phased out by the company that owns it.

"As a proactive measure, we rolled out the software conversion into phase three, which will allow us to do phase three with the new software, so we won't have to go back and reengineer that when they close," said Gonyar.

Gonyar also underlined that these upgrades require a new approach to door-locking and that caution must be exercised when students and faculty begin classes in these rooms.

"[We have to] let folks know, don't push those buttons unless you need to push those buttons. We can't have people accidentally locking classrooms, and then the next class that needs to come in, the door's locked," said Gonyar.

Lockdown kit assessments

Following the Feb. 1 falsely reported active shooter threat, a primary concern that was brought to the attention of Gonyar and Martin was that of lockdown kits in classrooms. In a previous article, the Niner Times conducted an investigation of lockdown kits in Woodward, Mebane and CHHS, finding a variety of inconsistencies across kits and instances of missing kits.

Since then, assessments of lockdown kits and their completeness have been completed, with the most recent survey conducted over the summer, updating and replacing kits.

"I can say with certainty that we've been in every classroom, lab, and space that we know of, and we even updated the kits because the old kit had a crown on it," said Martin. "But I can't say with any certainty that there aren't some old kits out there because there were multiple rooms where the kit was missing, so maybe it's been moved to a different room."

One complication that Martin and Gonyar have been having with the lockdown kits is that they will frequently be moved from their original location over the course of the academic year or even overnight. Gonyar recalls an incident from the days following the Feb. 1 falsely reported active shooter threat.

"There was one night in particular that I was

over there until 10 o'clock [p.m.]. Because we were doing it [assessment] when folks weren't in there, and I changed out a bag and came back the next morning, less than 12 hours later, and the bag was moved already. You know, in 12 hours, these things get legs and move around," said Gonyar.

Demonstration Activity Resource Team

Following an uptick in student protests and demonstrations during the spring of 2024, the University has made slight changes to the Demonstration Activity Resource Team (DART) staff and protocol. According to their website, DART is "available as a resource to provide guidance and policy direction to comply with University policy relating to free speech."

Regarding policy changes, the University has adopted measures from the North Carolina General Statutes, as outlined in University Policy 721, enacted on Aug. 8, 2024. The policy adheres to N.C. General Statute 14-12.11(a)(6) and N.C. General Statute 14-12.11(c). These laws require those wearing masks in public to temporarily remove them for identity verification when asked by law enforcement and property owners, as well as increase the severity of punishment for those charged with committing a crime while wearing a mask.

Similarly, revisions were made to University Policy 601.9 to clarify the University's definition of 'camping' and outline terms and restrictions.

In order to better support the student body, Charlotte created a new full-time, funded position for the head of DART, which was filled over the summer by NiCole Lynch. Lynch, former director of University Initiative Planning, is versed in working with members of the Charlotte community and previously served as a DART deputy with the program.

Looking forward

In the future, Gonyar believes there is room to build Safety and Security's connection with the academic side of campus.

"There are some areas on campus where building out and strengthening our relationships is necessary," said Gonyar. "One of those is with the academic side of the house, so really making sure that we have tight connection points with Academic Affairs, faculty council and the deans."

As a result of Charlotte's rapid growth in the early 2010s, a lot of temporary fixes were made to the University's security measures. Moving forward, Gonyar would like to improve these areas and bring them up to a current standard.

"Institutionally, we grew so quickly that we just plugged holes with needs," said Gonyar. "We are now entering an era of circling back and tightening up some of those things."



Jordyn Phillips/Niner Times



EmpowerHER provides opportunity and community to Black women at UNC Charlotte

Brendan Mullen | Writing Managing Editor

Since fall of 2023, EmpowerHER: Black Women in Business has worked to inspire and empower women in various aspects of the field of business.

According to third-year student and marketing and communications officer of EmpowerHER, Eunice Okyere, the club came to be because of a lack of support for Black women involved in the business field.

“Ava Gilmore founded EmpowerHER, because she was looking at other organizations, seeing a lot of the business organizations on campus [and] seeing how there was no organization centered around Black women in business,” said Okyere. “So she decided to create the organization to amplify Black women and their voices in the sector, and also motivate them to do the best they can in their respective fields.”

Despite being so new, the club has grown rapidly since its inception.

“It was quick to grow. [At] our first general interest meeting, a good amount of people came,” said Okyere. “I know a lot of organizations have to build up those blocks, and [it] might take years for them to establish themselves, but this is our second year and [we already have] 500 plus

followers on Instagram. Our engagement has hit 90,000 accounts on Instagram as well. So I think we’re really building up fast.”

Despite being oriented towards business-related subjects, a business major is not required to be in EmpowerHER.

“You don’t have to be a business major in order to join,” said Okyere. “We’ve realized that no matter what sector you’re in, business principles are always applied. So we amplify anyone, no matter the major or course study.”

Third-year student and outreach coordinator of EmpowerHER, Mariah Randolph, says that despite switching to a psychology major from accounting, she has still found the club to be valuable.

“I was [in] accounting,” said Randolph. “Now that I’ve changed my major psychology, I’ve realized that maybe I could still apply those business principles into starting a psychology practice. You can always use [EmpowerHER] whatever career you decide to participate in.”

EmpowerHER educates and supports women in business related subjects by hosting a variety of different workshops and events.

“We got a lot of engagement through fun and

interactive events, but we still want to keep our head on why this organization is here. So we mix up those things, such as professional development, like our LinkedIn workshop. We did [a workshop] where we did free headshots as well. We’re about to run that back this year,” said Okyere.

While fun events help to increase engagement on campus, they are also an enjoyable way to build skills that prepare people professionally before entering into their chosen field.

“What’s important is to really build yourself professionally before you graduate so you enter the business field, or any other field well equipped,” said Okyere. “But also try to enjoy the process as well, because this is going to be your career for the rest of your life, hopefully. So try to find enjoyment in what you do as well. That’s what we’re trying to really focus on.”

According to both Randolph and Okyere, the tight bond EmpowerHER formed has assisted in its success and is essential for further growth in the organization.

“When it comes down to building the sisterhood, we all have our own positions, we all have our own things that we have to get done,

but we all come up with different ideas for each other,” said Randolph. “I think what helps build us up. We all collectively come together and help each other. The general body sees the [Executive Board] mingling and having a relationship [and says], ‘I want to be a part of [that].’ So I think that helps us keep the retention.”

“It’s not just a fun little group that we can have for now and then put on a resume and leave,” added Okyere. “We want people to engage in sisterhood [and] build a sisterhood up to the point that it’s a large organization.”

Beyond all of the fun activities and professional workshops, EmpowerHER is about helping others and making meaningful, long-lasting connections.

“We’re not only an organization that’s here to fill in that resume,” said Okyere. “It’s more than just showing our face out there, wearing pink and saying, ‘Okay, we’re Black women in business.’ It’s providing service, and mentorship, and connections, and relationships and sisterhood. It’s more than just taking, but it’s also giving.”

Learn more about EmpowerHER on their Instagram @empowerherunc.



The growing Hispanic population and challenges for resources

Sunnyia Hadavi & Davis Cuffe | Layout Editor & Editor-in-Chief

As Charlotte's enrollment continues to grow, so does the Hispanic and Latin population on campus.

In the fall of 2014, Charlotte welcomed 2,000 Hispanic students; now, in 2024, Charlotte is home to 4,312 Hispanic students, a 115.6% increase over 10 years.

As a result of this increase in Hispanic students, Charlotte has been recognized as an emerging Hispanic-serving institution by Excelencia in Higher Education, as 15.6% of its undergraduate students identify as Hispanic.

According to a 2023 Excelencia in Higher Education report, UNC Charlotte is the only other UNC System school to earn this title outside of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. With this title, UNC Charlotte is now eligible for new opportunities to accelerate and improve higher education for Hispanic students on campus.

In conjunction with the large population of Hispanic students on campus is over a dozen student organizations made to support the population.

Among that group of student organizations is the LatinX Student Union, which has over 400 Charlotte students registered on Niner Engage.

"LXSU serves as an organization that strives to provide that sense of community, but also empowerment to serve various communities in need, specifically the Latino communities here in the University, but also the Charlotte area as well," said Yesenia Garcia, third-year student. "Community service that is something that makes us different from the other Latino organizations here on campus because LXSU was founded to be a community service organization."

One example of community service from LXSU was a previous collaboration with Project Downtown. Members of LXSU aided the organization in providing hot meals to those who are food insecure in the city.

While they hope to impact the larger Latin community in Charlotte, LXSU has found themselves providing more resources to the campus population as well, especially after the changes to diversity, equity and inclusion policies at all UNC System universities.

These resources and the growth in the Hispanic population on campus come in the face of changes to DEI policy within UNC System institutions, including UNC Charlotte.

In response to the policy passed in May by the UNC System Board of Governors, on Sept. 1, Charlotte finalized changes to campus DEI programs, closing offices and reallocating resources used in those offices or programs. These changes effectively shut down all DEI programming at UNC Charlotte.

"Because of a lot of these new policies, a lot has fallen more on the organizations. We're the ones that are now having to create a lot of these cultural events and a lot of these resources because we are very limited on different things that we can provide," said Garcia. "It's definitely put a lot of stress on us as student leaders because we are having to host these events, we are having to be advocates for students while also being full-time students."

Other organizations like the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) also feel the impact from the lack of DEI resources from the University. LASO is another large organization on campus with around 400 students signed up

on Niner Engage.

LASO co-presidents Aaliyah Rosales and Ivana Rivadeneira want their organization to be an environment where Latin students can support each other.

"I think [resources] could be better, especially since we don't have the support of DEI anymore," said Rosales, a third-year student. "It also gives us an opportunity to show that we can still make it without having a support system. We can find our [own] support system."

Even without a diversity-specific office at UNC Charlotte, any support from University faculty and staff is appreciated.

Members of the Latinx/Hispanic Faculty and Staff Caucus are seen at some student organization events, such as LXSU's Latinos Unidos event in early September, which featured LASO and 11 other Latin organizations.

"[The policy change] also allows us to hold on to the faculty and staff who do support us," said Rivadeneira, a fourth-year student. "We're able to have those connections to certain faculty that come out to our events, [and] we're so grateful for them because they don't have to do that. They don't have to come to our events."

According to Garcia, the main struggles Latin and Hispanic students face at Charlotte are finding and utilizing financial resources.

Many of these students are first-generation and have to navigate through the application and tuition process alone, as they are the first in their families to pursue higher education.

"One of the biggest, scariest things is also getting access to financial resources [and] scholarships. Scholarships are one of the biggest ones [because] they're not talked about," said Garcia.

"A lot of our students don't even know what scholarships are or that they exist."

Even though organizations like LXSU and LASO have a large number of members, majority of Latin and Hispanic students are not involved in these organizations.

"We have around 4,000 Latinos on campus, but only 400 of them are involved with LXSU. So there's that big gap. Students don't tend to have that time to start getting involved with organizations and learning about different opportunities because they're going to work," said Garcia. "They're coming to school and having to go to work to pay for their tuition, to pay for those books, to pay for all those materials that we need here."

Regardless of the challenges with resources available for Latin students, the growing community on campus brings other Latin students pride.

"Seeing that number of students coming into UNC Charlotte that identify as Latinos brings me such pride," said Garcia. "Our parents came here with nothing to give us everything. There're so many challenges specifically for the Latino community, so it means that every single one of those students continues to persevere."

"It was really hard for me growing up to be able to relate to my classmates, and just seeing how the Latinx population is growing on campus right now, it's so liberating and feels great to see people who look like me," said Rivadeneira. "Even if it's in my classes, just being able to have that representation on campus is awesome to me, and I'm loving it."

First Gen Latin Experiences

A GLIMPSE AT LIFE FOR FIRST-GENERATION LATIN STUDENTS THROUGH FOUR UNC CHARLOTTE STUDENTS

Davis Cuffe | Editor-in-Chief

At UNC Charlotte, 32.8% of students are first-generation college students, with a significant portion identifying as Hispanic/Latin. These students face a unique set of challenges and opportunities as they navigate their academic journey.

Being the first in their family to attend college, these students commonly go without that passed-down knowledge of navigating college life that others have.

Similarly, first-generation students often have added pressure to succeed or even overachieve in college.

For many first-generation students, the college application process is where challenges first arise.

“What drew me to Charlotte was the diversity. My sister went to Chapel Hill, a very stereotypical PWI, and knew that wasn’t for me. While Charlotte is a PWI, I’ve always felt like it’s the most diverse out of all of them.”

- Fernando Peral, fourth-year

“My senior year of high school was full of anxiety and dread about the application process since I was the first in my family to attend a university in the United States,” wrote Hannah Alvarado, a fourth-year Charlotte student.

Fortunately for Alvarado, she could rely on her high school teachers for support during the process. Similarly, first-year Charlotte student

Leilany Garcia Bailon had help from family in applying to UNC Charlotte.

“I have an uncle that graduated from here as a transfer student,” wrote Garcia Bailon. “He gave me the confidence to apply here and to make the decision on attending.”

One student said Charlotte’s diversity, especially in regards to the amount of Latin/Hispanic students attracted him to the school during the application process.

“What drew me to Charlotte was the diversity,” wrote fourth-year student Fernando Peral. “My sister went to [The University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill, a very stereotypical PWI [Predominantly White Institution], and knew that wasn’t for me. While Charlotte is a PWI, I’ve always felt like it’s the most diverse out of all of them. When I went to the portal to apply, I saw it was the number one public institution for Latinx graduates and knew this was what I needed.”

For fourth-year UNC Charlotte student Nidia Rosa, Charlotte’s admissions support was key in providing what she called a ‘pretty smooth’ application process.

“I remember I came to campus without knowing how to apply, so I went to the admissions building, and they assigned me a person,” wrote Rosa. “She helped me with the entire process, making it very smooth and comfortable.”

Along with admissions help, UNC Charlotte also has a 49er First program that aids first-generation students through collaboration with on-campus departments like the Niner Finances Division of Student Affairs and the I Am First Gen program.

While these resources are provided through the University, for some, their value is lost in the face of college life.

“In my experience here in Charlotte, there hasn’t been much great support. They technically offer a wide variety of resources, but it’s just so easy to get lost in the rush of college life and forget those resources are there and usable,” wrote Peral. “I would love if it was more stressed that anybody graduating next year, ‘This is the time



Hannah Alvarado (top) and Nidia Rosa (bottom) | Courtesy of Alvarado & Rosa



Leilany Garcia Bailon (left) and Fernando Peral (right) | Courtesy of Garcia Bailon & Peral

you need to look for internships, and we have X, Y and Z to help you with this.”

For Alvarado, these resources have been a great help to her in her time at UNC Charlotte. She highlighted multiple on-campus programs as things that helped open doors for her that would have been shut without using them.

“My internship through UPIP [University Professional Internship Program] at the Career Center really equipped me to learn about networking and office culture, two things I never grew up hearing about in my blue-collar family,” wrote Alvarado.

Alvarado also spent a semester abroad in Italy, taking advantage of the resources available to her.

“The Office of Education Abroad and Financial Aid supported me in exploring my options and financing the summer semester [in Italy],” wrote Alvarado. “It was something I thought was out of the question as a high-need student.”

Even with support from family or the University, first-generation students still have experiences that differ from those of others who had relatives attend college.

Garcia Bailon pointed to the lack of guidance or blueprint as something that she faced due to her first-generation status.

“A lot of the process was on my own because my parents had no idea how to help me in terms of researching and looking into academic opportunities,” wrote Garcia Bailon. “From looking at different universities or understanding certain things to look into, it was up to me to find out and to create my own pathway.”

Paired with the unknowns of being a first-generation student, specific processes and policies can also pose challenges to this group. These processes can be even more difficult, considering some parents of first-generation students are immigrants, often adding to the challenge of qualifying for aid or education.

“The 2024-25 FAFA Simplification Act has greatly affected students of immigrant households,” wrote Alvarado. “FAFSA, in general, was a mess to navigate for all students, but many His-

panic/Latino students in our community had to wait for months after the priority deadline to file their FAFSA forms online. Many of which had to submit paper forms that have still not been processed, putting their education at risk. This mainly targeted students with undocumented parents.”

Even with these extra challenges, the three students wrote they felt supported at UNC Charlotte. Students highlighted First-Generation Newsletters and guidance from Charlotte’s advisors as critical support points.

“This school has supported me in helping me feel welcomed and like I do belong here,” wrote Rosa. “This school has supported me in finding connections, networking and creating many opportunities for my future once I am done with my school time.”

Feeling welcomed as a Hispanic student may

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“My parents had no idea how to help me in terms of researching and looking into academic opportunities. From looking at different universities or understanding certain things to look into, it was up to me to find out and to create my own pathway.”

- Leilany Garcia Bailon, first-year

come easier at UNC Charlotte than it might at other universities. According to a new report by Excelencia in Higher Education, UNC Charlotte now stands as an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution, with 15.6% of students identifying as Hispanic. Charlotte also offers over 20 Hispanic or Latin student organizations, such as the Latin American Student Organization and Hispanic College Awareness Program.

With this community comes another layer of support for first-generation and Hispanic/Latino students.

“I have found amazing people in my com-

munity through clubs and organizations, which has helped me grow and learn a lot,” wrote Rosa. “I have been able to get any help I could need through them.”

According to Garcia Bailon, seeing this group find success at UNC Charlotte is inspiring.

“It is so cool to see so many people like me working hard to get their degrees,” wrote Garcia Bailon.

While the success of familiar faces provides inspiration for Garcia Bailon, it acts as an indicator of positive change.

“College is just the first step in changing the image and stereotypes given to many groups that cause these implicit biases we see in our society,” wrote Peral. “As more people get degrees and pursue fields that people like them wouldn’t normally be in, [they] change the image of what does a doctor look like or what does a lawyer

we were already given.”

Coming into a new University can be daunting, especially for first-generation students. Finding classes and friends can be scary, but finding belonging can be even more difficult. In spite of the University’s perceived inadequacies in promoting the Latin/Hispanic community, for first-year student Garcia Bailon, finding belonging was easy and rewarding in her early days at Charlotte.

“So far, my experience here at UNC Charlotte has been great,” wrote Garcia Bailon. “To be honest, I had so much anxiety over the fact that I would be leaving my hometown and that I wouldn’t ‘find my crowd.’ But after being here for the past few weeks since classes have started, I am constantly meeting new people and making the effort to get involved in events on campus. It is very diverse here, and I have met many other Hispanics like me, and who can relate to me, which I am really grateful for.”

Upperclassmen Rosa and Alvarado shared similar sentiments, expressing that their overall experience at Charlotte has been positive.

“My experience at UNC Charlotte as a first-generation Hispanic student has been amazing,” wrote Rosa. “UNC Charlotte has been very welcoming, has provided resources for me, provided any help I needed, and I have met other amazing Latino people that have become very close personal friends of mine.”

Moving forward, Alvarado hopes her experience at UNC Charlotte and the support she receives will serve as inspiration for others and highlight the importance of supporting first-generation students.

“I believe the school/community supporting first-gen students is important in establishing a new tradition of higher education within our families,” wrote Alvarado. “I highly recommended my sister to apply to the school, and now that we both attend, I can say she is far more equipped to know where to find resources than I was when I was a freshman. My experience at UNC Charlotte will be something I hope to pass down to the next generation.”

Nations display their culture at Charlotte's 49th annual International Festival

Megan Bentley, Emmanuel Perkins & Dan Rice/Niner Times

On Sept. 21, UNC Charlotte hosted its annual International Festival, representing the cultures and traditions of over 35 nations.

Many events took place over the course of the eight-hour festival. Events included the "Festival of Music and Dance," "Parade of Nations" and "The Birdmen" (larger-than-life Dutch puppets) among others. Founded in 1975, this was the festival's 49th year.



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Fall 2024 Events

Study Abroad Fair

Wednesday, October 2, 10 am
edabroad.charlotte.edu

International Education Week

Monday, November 18 to Friday, November 22
oip.charlotte.edu/IEW

International Festival

Saturday, September 21, 10 am - 6 pm

Please visit <https://oip.charlotte.edu/student-resources/> for more details on a number of cross-cultural and educational events the Office of International Programs hosts each semester. We welcome your participation.

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Intern with **Education Abroad** as a Student

Join the **Phi Beta Delta International Honor Society**

Participate in **International Coffee Hour**

Study Abroad 101

Explore opportunities to study abroad! All UNC Charlotte students interested in studying overseas are required to complete Study Abroad 101 before meeting with an Education Abroad advisor or beginning an application.

edabroad.charlotte.edu/getstarted

Global Engagement Scholars Program (GESP)

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Earn a microcredential and gain global and intercultural competency skills. Join the GESP! Visit us online for the application process at <https://go.charlotte.edu/ldms28>

Latinos Unidos

HOW LATIN AND HISPANIC STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTE COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Sunnya Hadavi | Layout Editor

With a growing Hispanic population of over 4,000 students, student organizations have become an epicenter for culture, appreciation and support for their community.

The LatinX Student Union's (LXSU) annual Latinos Unidos event exemplifies how the Latin and Hispanic communities come together both during and after the event.

Over a dozen Latin/Hispanic organizations were in attendance on Sept. 2, ready to present their organizations to new and returning students who want to learn about all the Latin/Hispanic organizations available at Charlotte.

With more than 300 attendees, LXSU President Yesenia Garcia said Latinos Unidos was a success.

"It was an amazing event. And I'm thankful for all the organizations that are more than open to coming out to these events. They say 'yes' to coming because they want to see an impact on students," said Garcia. "It's really amazing to see all these students and alumni come out."

Garcia is Mexican and a third-year marketing major

from the small town of Rockingham, N.C.

Being from a small town, Garcia did not know many other Latinos, but being active in Charlotte's student organizations has provided her with the community she needed.

"I'm coming from rural North Carolina, where I didn't grow up with many people that look like me, talk like me or share similar beliefs," said Garcia. "LXSU provided a group of people who were like-minded and also went through similar journeys that I did."

Garcia learned about all the available Latin student organizations by attending last year's Latinos Unidos.

"As a first-year student, it was very scary going into an area where you don't know anyone. You don't know anything about any organizations on campus. In high school, I was really involved, and I wanted to continue that involvement here at the collegiate level," said Garcia. "Because of Latinos Unidos, I got that exposure to all the different organizations here on campus that are specifically here to serve a lot of the Latino community. I just remember that impact that Latinos Unidos left on me, and I know that I wanted to continue that."

This year's Latinos Unidos was the third time LXSU had hosted this event since it was founded in 2020 during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"Another reason why Latinos Unidos came to be was because, before it, there wasn't really a place for all organizations to come together and talk about what they specifically offered for students," said Garcia. "So we wanted to make sure that we bring awareness to all these other organizations, as well as other opportunities."

The Dancing Association for Latine Expression



YESENIA GARCIA,
LXSU PRESIDENT

Latinos Unidos 2024 | Courtesy of LXSU

(DALE) was one of the other organizations at Latinos Unidos.

As a newer student organization in its second year, DALE benefits from being at events like Latinos Unidos and collaborating with other student organizations.

"It was very beneficial because you saw the whole Latino community come together, and everyone was socializing. For some people, I know it's their first time seeing all these orgs," said Sarai Viera, vice president of DALE. "So I think that event was really good for exposure for us, and it was good for getting to know more people, but also getting them to come to our club."

Viera is Salvadorian-Mexican and is a fourth-year student majoring in management information systems. She has been a member since last year and has seen the organization grow.

"It was really hard planning last year because we didn't really have a lot of dance connections," said Viera. "But now, I feel like we've created a community. We see a lot of people that come frequently to our meetings from last year, and I've seen us get better at promoting things and organizing ourselves."

Since its creation, DALE has created an environment for Latin and non-Latin students to learn about Latin America through dance and expression.

Currently, DALE has around 40 active members who attend dance events regularly.

"We're just trying to create a safe space for

students to express themselves through dance and also get more comfortable dancing while also getting in touch with their community," said Viera. "We bring in instructors from different backgrounds and get them to teach students. We try to do mainstream Latino dances, like bachata, cumbia, salsa, but we also try to target the underrepresented Latino communities."

The growth in their organization coincides with the increasing population of Hispanic students at UNC Charlotte's campus.

15.6% of undergraduate students at Charlotte identify as Hispanic, and the University is recognized by Excelencia in Higher Education as an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution.

"The growing community makes it feel a lot more comfortable, to be honest," said Jonathan Hatta, a Venezuelan third-year civil engineering student who also serves as DALE's social media coordinator. "It's nice knowing you're not in there alone."

As the Hispanic community grows, organizations such as the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) want to be a 'home away from home' for students.

"Within the years that I've been with LASO, they taught me that having your circle of people makes your college experience even a little bit better, especially if you're first gen," said Aaliyah Rosales, co-president of LASO. "I believe our role is being that home away from home and support system for the Latinx community."

Rosales is Mexican and a third-year student

at Charlotte. She is co-president with Ivana Rivadeneira, a fourth-year triple majoring in international business, finance and accounting. Rivadeneira is Ecuadorian-Colombian.

Together with the rest of the LASO Executive Board, they have shifted their organization's focus to new students and providing support.

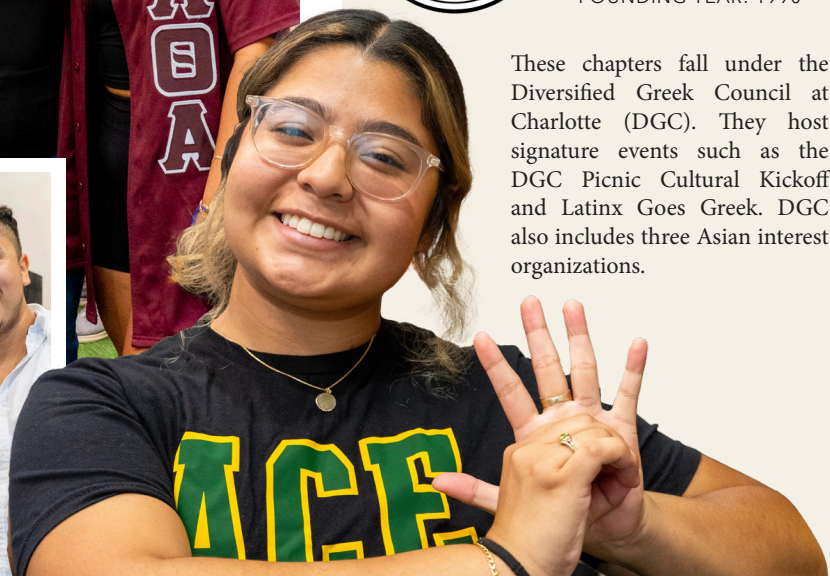
"Instead of just being a social org, this year we're implementing our new purpose, which is specifically for first-year students," said Rivadeneira. "So we've definitely changed directions this year and are making sure that we're for everyone, but also that home away from home."

In addition to hosting its own events, LASO collaborates with other student organizations in hopes of increasing cultural awareness and further supporting its members.

LASO also attended LXSU's Latinos Unidos event. The connections among the Latin student organizations are valuable even outside of that event.

"I would like to highlight the community that the Latinx community has on campus. I think all of the orgs are very close, and I appreciate that," said Rivadeneira. "LASO is very grateful for the connections that we have in our community, and we're also grateful for all the other orgs on campus."

"Collaborating with other Hispanic organizations builds a bridge between two orgs," said Rosales. "It shows that Latinos always stick together and always support each other. Whether you're struggling mentally or emotionally, you will always have that community to help you."



Historically Latin Greek Life



ALPHA LAMBDA CHAPTER OF CHI UPSILON SIGMA LATIN SORORITY, INC.

@CUS_ALPHALAMBDA
FOUNDING YEAR: 2004
NICKNAME: CUS, CUSSIE



EPSILON PHI CHAPTER OF LAMBDA THETA ALPHA LATIN SORORITY, INC.

@LTA_EPSILONPHI
FOUNDING YEAR: 2012
NICKNAME: LTA, LAMBDA LADY



GAMMA IOTA CHAPTER OF LAMBDA THETA PHI LATIN FRATERNITY, INC.

@CLT_LAMBDAS
FOUNDING YEAR: 2007
NICKNAME: LAMBDAS



BETA PHI CHAPTER OF LA UNIDAD LATINA, LAMBDA UPSILON LAMBDA FRATERNITY, INC.

@LUL_UNCC
FOUNDING YEAR: 2017
NICKNAME: ELITE LAMBDAS, LUL



BETA CHI CHAPTER OF OMEGA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC.

@UNCC_OPB
FOUNDING YEAR: 2014
NICKNAME: BETA



VALIANT MU PROVISIONAL CHAPTER OF PSI SIGMA PHI MULTICULTURAL FRATERNITY, INC.

@PSP_VALIANTMU
FOUNDING YEAR: 1990

These chapters fall under the Diversified Greek Council at Charlotte (DGC). They host signature events such as the DGC Picnic Cultural Kickoff and Latinx Goes Greek. DGC also includes three Asian interest organizations.

Food, fashion, music

THE GLUE OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Sofia DiStefano | News Editor

As Hispanic Heritage Month begins, the Charlotte Latin community celebrates in various ways; however, what uniquely connects the community is its representation of their countries through food, music and fashion.

Marking the end of the first week of Hispanic Heritage Month, Charlotte hosted the International Festival on Sept. 21, providing various community members the opportunity to showcase their culture, popular practices and history.

Representatives from different countries discussed how both music and fashion influence their culture.

Jerry Garcia, who represented Honduras at the festival, expressed the key role of music in social, familial and cultural settings.

“Our country, our culture, is heavily involved with music and dancing. So, you know, growing up, usually for our social host or family gatherings, we always get together, and afterward, we always dance a few songs [and] enjoy the company. It’s always a good time,” said Garcia.

Garcias also explained the specifics of his culture’s fashion staples and how they create a strong atmosphere.

“We know our country is very coastal, so we usually wear, like, lighter colors

and also, like short sleeve things like that for men, for women, in the same thing, a lot of their clothing is handcrafted, so it has a more rich culture,” said Garcia.

During the festival, the Trabucos Latin Band, an Afro-Cuban/Caribbean music group, performed at 5 p.m.

Manuel Esquivel, a Cuban native and member of the music group, explained how music brings people from all walks of life together.

“It’s a blessing because I believe that it brings people together and it, you know, there’s some kind of bonding where people from other nations, not just the United States, but all over, you know, somehow they converge and enjoy the music, just like we as Latin American folks enjoy the other types of music,” said Esquivel.

Throughout all the booths at the festival, the country representatives were selling food, drink and staple fashion pieces from each culture.

At the Ecuadorian booth, handwoven jackets, backpacks, glass covers and painted maracas were available for sale.

Other countries, such as Mexico and Honduras, sold numerous food and drink options so attendees could experience their country’s traditional food.

Many Charlotte Latin community members also emphasized their appreciation for introducing

their culture and educating people outside of the Latin community.

“Just bringing a different perspective to like UNC Charlotte, and then also seeing like all the different perspectives and how they kind of connect with each other,” said second-year student and Mexico representative at the International Festival, Brittany Vaide. “That’s definitely something that I’ve seen, and like a big change that I’ve seen, and I think that we’ve all seen it as well and that we also like to represent our side and bring it to the campus.”

Vaide highlighted the importance of breaking the mold that many Latin American people are put into through stereotypes.

“I think that definitely, some people try to group a specific group of people together and separate them from the rest of like us, at least talking like about Hispanics,” said Vaide. “But I think that we kind of really break that, especially whenever we’re all together, like at organizations or meetings. We’ve learned how to learn each other, learn what we’re all about and how although we’re very different, we’re also very alike.”

The festival aimed to be a learning experience for all who attended.

An array of Latin country representatives also pointed out how events such as the festival and celebratory months like Hispanic Heritage Month allow individuals to embrace various cul-

tures and learn past misconceptions about Latin American cultures, regardless of their background.

“I feel like a misconception about Latin American countries is that we all have the same culture just because they all speak Spanish,” said Garcia.

“There’s always that stereotype of generalization of, ‘Oh, just because they speak Spanish, I’m probably from Mexico, you know.’ There are different cultures that have different histories, in different ways and traditions, as far as to even speak Spanish itself. But also, everybody has their own music, so the small things like that.”

As the Latin community continues to grow at Charlotte, a close-knit bond has grown between the students and people from Latin American countries, providing many with a source of comfort and acceptance.

“When I go through childhood memories, I’m always reminded of sitting around the table with my family, just playing board games, or just being with each other,” said Vaide. “Getting to know each other [at the festival], getting to know what we like, what we don’t like, and just having fun conversations that you don’t find everywhere. I guess you could say, and corny as it sounds like, we really are a family.”



Megan Bentley/Niner Times



Opinion: Transfer students overcompensate on school spirit to fit in

Noah Hughey | Staff Writer

All college students are challenged to find a 'spot' within their community. However, transfer students often have to overexcitedly embrace the stereotypes of their new campus to fit in.

Students transfer to universities for a wide variety of reasons. For some, it is a matter of financial constraint. For others, it is about social connection and well-being. For many, it is an intentional step in a larger plan to achieve their desired degree.

But the transfer experience can often feel like a whirlwind. Picking up one's life, leaving behind friends and family and showing up to a community that has more or less already acclimated is a daunting task.

Depending on the circumstances of why someone transferred, the shift in community identity can also be an uphill battle. Whether a transfer student was comfortable at their old school or did not feel like they fit in, the shift to a new school's traditions can be a culture shock.

This culture shock can materialize as social isolation for the transfer student, overwhelmed by the expectations of a new set of classmates, a new set of professors and the general landscape of their university.

As a result, the transfer student may turn to

the more superficial aspects of a new university's community. They may buy every piece of highly overpriced merch in the bookstore. They may attend every single football game, despite not knowing or caring about football all that much. They may go to homecoming, touch a particular statue before an exam or sit in some sacred spot in the library.

None of these checkboxes will fulfill the void the transfer student feels. These traditions will not mean much if a university does not foster a social environment that makes transfer students feel like they have found 'their place' without having to check off a list.

"The University makes sure it's very clear that all students are encouraged to go to events," said UNC Charlotte transfer second-year Katie Lucas. "One in particular I was nervous about was the Student Org Showcase, but every person I talked to made me feel welcome whether they knew if I was a transfer student or not."

A rich diversity in social and professional opportunities for students is one way universities like Charlotte create an environment where transfer students can more easily and comfortably find their spot.

"Being encouraged to join different student organizations has helped make me feel like I

am a part of the Charlotte community," said Lucas.

One-third of Charlotte's student population is composed of transfer students. This is a sign of the ability to foster a smooth transition for students trying to find their spot by creating a community defined by those kinds of students, not in spite of them.

But building a transfer-friendly community is only half the challenge. The transfer student must as well build up a particular kind of courage to strike a balance between the identity their previous school may have given them and the one they will build at their new school.

"I would encourage them [transfer students] to pick at least one club or organization that they would like to join and to stick to it," said Lucas. "If you pick something you enjoy, you're guaranteed to find people with the same interests who will value you and become your lifelong friends."

Adjusting to college is an exciting and terrifying process for students of every background. However, when schools foster an environment for students searching for their spot on their academic journey, and those students jump at the opportunities provided for them, that adjustment becomes not just bearable, but fun.

Opinion: Trump's anti-immigrant speech leaves vulnerable communities at risk

Ruhshona Soledjonova | Opinion Editor

For years now, former President Donald Trump has boastfully expressed his anti-immigrant agenda, which has left many immigrant Americans fearful of their future. It is important to recognize the damage that anti-immigrant rhetoric has on communities and the nation overall.

More recently, the 2024 presidential debate featured Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Trump and their responses to questions revolving around immigration, abortion, healthcare and more. Unfortunately, many viewers, even non-viewers, had one main takeaway from the nationally televised debate: "In Springfield [Ohio], they're [Haitian immigrants] eating dogs."

These comments about Haitian immigrants further harm how Americans view and perceive immigrants. It creates a false narrative surrounding non-citizens and categorizes them as criminals, creating a greater division between different groups of people.

It is no surprise that politicians will say anything they can to win votes from their designated parties. Trump knows the ideals that his conservative followers value and uses borderline hate speech to get a reaction. However, many Republicans fail to recognize the economic, social and political contributions of immigrants in America.

Let's get one thing straight, politician or not, framing a group of people as a threat is never excusable. The Haitian community that Trump references as 'thieves' and 'pet-eaters' makes up a layer of growth and culture. Springfield government officials have denied the rumors, and due to distressing conditions in Haiti, the majority of Haitian immigrants are in the U.S. legally.

For someone who wants to represent the entirety of the U.S., Trump's aggressive speech on immigrants questions his value of inclusivity of the American population and adds to the rise of xenophobia and racism. It is concerning to see someone with such a massive platform make dehumanizing claims about minority communities on national television and put vulnerable populations at risk.

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Trexler Ivey is Charlotte football's comeback kid

Davis Cuffe | Editor-in-Chief

Quarterbacking the home team to a comeback win in front of a sold-out crowd is a dream to many, but it was a reality for Charlotte quarterback Trexler Ivey.

Ivey was the catalyst for Charlotte's Sept. 14 win against Gardner-Webb University (GW). Ivey led the comeback in less than a quarter's play, coming in with 12:58 left on the clock to bring his 49ers back from a 20-6 deficit.

The redshirt junior played as well as one could in those 12 minutes, throwing 11 completions on 12 attempts for 142 yards and two touchdowns.

"That was one of the coolest moments of my career, to be able to lead these guys and this team," said Ivey regarding the win. "I was happy for everyone that we could all get the win."

Charlotte football Head Coach Biff Poggi recounted when he sent Ivey in against GW in the post-game press conference.

"I came over to him and said, 'Here we are again, you're the fireman, put this thing out,'" said Poggi. "He [Ivey] looked at me, and he said, 'I got you, coach.'"

The scene was reminiscent of Charlotte's comeback win against the University of Tulsa in the 2023 season. In that game, the 49ers found themselves down 17 points but came back and won on the back of Ivey's nearly 300-yard passing performance.

For Ivey, it is all about the hours before the game practicing, working out and spending time in meetings that help him complete these comebacks.

A film addict, Ivey is prepared as they come; he spends 10 to 20 hours a week watching films in preparation for every week.

"At the end of the day, I think it all comes down to your preparation," said Ivey. "I think the more time you spend in the building each week, the more time you spend watching film. You go out there, you're prepared, you're confident and you know exactly what to do."

As a veteran player and leader on Charlotte's roster, Ivey has been in the building more than most. He has been on the roster since 2020, far longer than any other player in the quarterback room. Unfortunately for Ivey, time on the roster has not always

equated to playing time. Ivey did not see the field as a starter until his fourth year with the team, the 2023 season.

But unlike other players in the transfer portal era, Ivey has stuck around and built experience.

"At the end of the day, I came here to build a program," said Ivey. "I feel like I'm kind of old school. With college football nowadays, when things get hard, a lot of people just leave. That's not how I was raised. Chris Reynolds [former Charlotte quarterback] right in front of me was a walk-on and worked his butt off for three or four years to become a starter and had a lot of success here."

This loyalty has earned Ivey the respect of the players around him and valuable reps for the games ahead of him.

"I think with his experience from last year—all the things he did well and all the things he didn't do well—for that to carry over into games like this against Indiana, that's huge for us," said redshirt junior tight end Colin Weber.

"Experience in the college world gets you a long way."

With all this time under his belt at Charlotte, there have been a lot of ups and downs. The reason Ivey was not in the game to start against Gardner-Webb was because he entered the season as the third-string quarterback. Injuries to both the starter and backup allowed Ivey to step in and step up.

Pairing with his strong performances, there have been some that Ivey may want to forget. In 2023's homecoming game, Ivey started and threw two interceptions, leaving the 49ers to get shut out, scoring zero points and taking a loss.

To stay steady through those ups and downs, Ivey has leaned on his work and character to brave the storm.

"You got a guy who's gonna come in and work as hard as he can every single day, no matter the outcome," said Ivey. "If it's a bad outcome, I'm showing up the very next day, and I'm going to do it again. Going to do it harder. Going to do it better."

Someone who could take a page from Ivey's book is freshman Charlotte quarterback Deshawn Purdie. Purdie's time playing for Charlotte has nearly mirrored Ivey's through four weeks.

Coming into the season as the second-string quarterback, Purdie was thrown in against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) in week two following an injury to starting quarterback, redshirt sophomore Max Brown.

Purdie played well against UNC, becoming the first true freshman Charlotte quarterback to throw a touchdown. Against GW, Purdie did not play so well, throwing an interception and fumbling multiple times before leaving the game with an injury.

Ivey's relatability and experience have allowed him to create a tight bond with the other quarterbacks as a mentor and teammate.

"I love those guys [Charlotte quarterback room]. Purdie's a young pup, and he's got a really high ceiling. He's crazy talented. I wish I was as talented as him when I was 19," said Ivey. "Anything I can [do] to help, any of the guys who haven't played as much football as I have, I just try to pass it down because, at one point, I was in that spot where I had no idea what I was doing."

With still no timeline for Brown's return from injury and Purdie missing Charlotte's Sept. 21 game against Indiana University, Ivey may be Charlotte's quarterback for the foreseeable future.

As his time grows under center for Charlotte, 49er faithfuls will have to get familiar with Charlotte's comeback kid.



Column: Mike Hill's contract renewal is a vital win for Charlotte Athletics

Kelli Blackburn | Asst. Sports Editor

Charlotte Director of Athletics Mike Hill has been a strong leader for the 49ers sports teams and most recently signed a four-year contract extension on Sept. 15, 2024. Hill has been in charge of athletics since 2018 and has driven multiple achievements across the board, including a transition from Conference USA to the American Athletic Conference (AAC). Hill's impact on team success and brand exposure has built a firm foundation for solid athletic programs that are proven to bring even bigger opportunities in the future for the 49ers.

The journey

Before Hill came to Charlotte, he graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and served as assistant to the athletics director at Ball State University from 1990 to 1992. Later, he gained a 25-year tenure at the University of Florida, where he held various roles. Hill's experience in the sports world included six years as Florida's executive associate athletics director for external affairs, where he helped with searches for head coaching hires. Notable hires from his prior experience include Urban Meyer, Dan Mullen, Mike White and Amanda Butler—all successful coaches in their respective sports.

On Feb. 26, 2018, Hill brought the pen to paper to begin a new chapter at Charlotte. As the seventh Director of Athletics in 49ers' history, he helped navigate Charlotte through their first year in the AAC and brought a league-high six conference championships across five programs from the 2023-2024 season.

Hill is now planning to stick with the 49ers through 2028, hoping for many more achievements that will continue to put Charlotte on the map.

A look into the statistics

Softball, men's soccer, cross country and track & field are teams that come to mind when discussing Hill's success in the Queen City. Their multiple trips to the NCAA men's and women's tournaments, in addition to multiple conference titles and top NCAA finishers, highlight some key impacts Hill has made over the years. From my perspective, a young university like Charlotte needs an athletic director like him who will bring programs like these to the forefront.

Hill is also penning new pages with softball and women's basketball as two new hires make their debut for the 49ers this season. Head Coach Courtney Breault from Clemson University will lead Charlotte softball, whereas Head Coach Tomekia Reed will take the stage for Charlotte women's basketball.

Reed, a three-time HBCU National Coach of

the Year, currently holds a head coaching record of 125-54.

On Sept. 17, Charlotte football announced that it ranked No. 3 in percentage occupancy nationwide, with a 105.55% rating, just under the University of Oregon and Purdue University.

Hill's efforts in football include bringing in Head Coach Biff Poggi in 2023 and lending efforts to the expansion of Jerry Richardson Stadium.

Amid the current uncertainty surrounding Charlotte football and men's basketball, there is understandable concern regarding two of the most popular sports on campus. Charlotte finished the 2023 season 3-9 and is currently 1-3 this year. For men's basketball, they lost a significant portion of their 2023-2024 roster, including key players like Lu'Cye Patterson, Igor Miličić Jr., Dishon Jackson and Jackson Threadgill. Fans need to realize, however, that success will come in due time. We must trust in Hill and his achievements to pave the way for future success.

Brand deals

Hill's work extends beyond the field or court, as he also has a deep commitment to NIL opportunities for student-athletes and funding for athletics.

Hill is the co-chair of the LEAD1 Working Group on Name, Image and Likeness, where he works with over 100 other AD colleagues. The Lead1 Association tackles issues and ideas through collaboration with NIL, DEI and the NCAA board.

At Florida, he chaired the 100 Years of Florida Football fundraiser, which worked with 21 sports to align marketing and promotional campaigns hand-in-hand with corporate partner relationships. The most notable relationships included Nike, Pepsi and Gatorade.

In his 'Open Mike: August 2024 Edition,' Hill noted that the 49er Club set an all-time record for Charlotte, raising nearly \$3.5 million from over 2,800 members of the community and Niner Nation.

An AD with a staff capable of staying on task and bringing in the funds needed to keep these successful athletic programs running is one who clearly knows what he is doing.

Staying the course

Some of the backlash towards Hill's extension to Charlotte seems shortsighted, as people must realize that building successful programs from the ground up requires patience and collaboration. Hill has brought his talents to the 49ers that have already put them in a great position to be ahead of the curve.



Mike Hill began as director of athletics at Charlotte in 2018 and is the seventh person to hold the role in the University's history. | Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

"We're not in it to be ordinary. We're in it to be extraordinary," Hill told Charlotte Athletics. "Gold is the standard."

He is a great ambassador for both Charlotte Athletics and the University itself, and finding a leader like him from a Power-5 school was

akin to finding a diamond in the rough. There is much more to come from Hill and Charlotte Athletics—whether it is the NCAA Tournament, a bowl game or banners to be hung—all in due time.

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