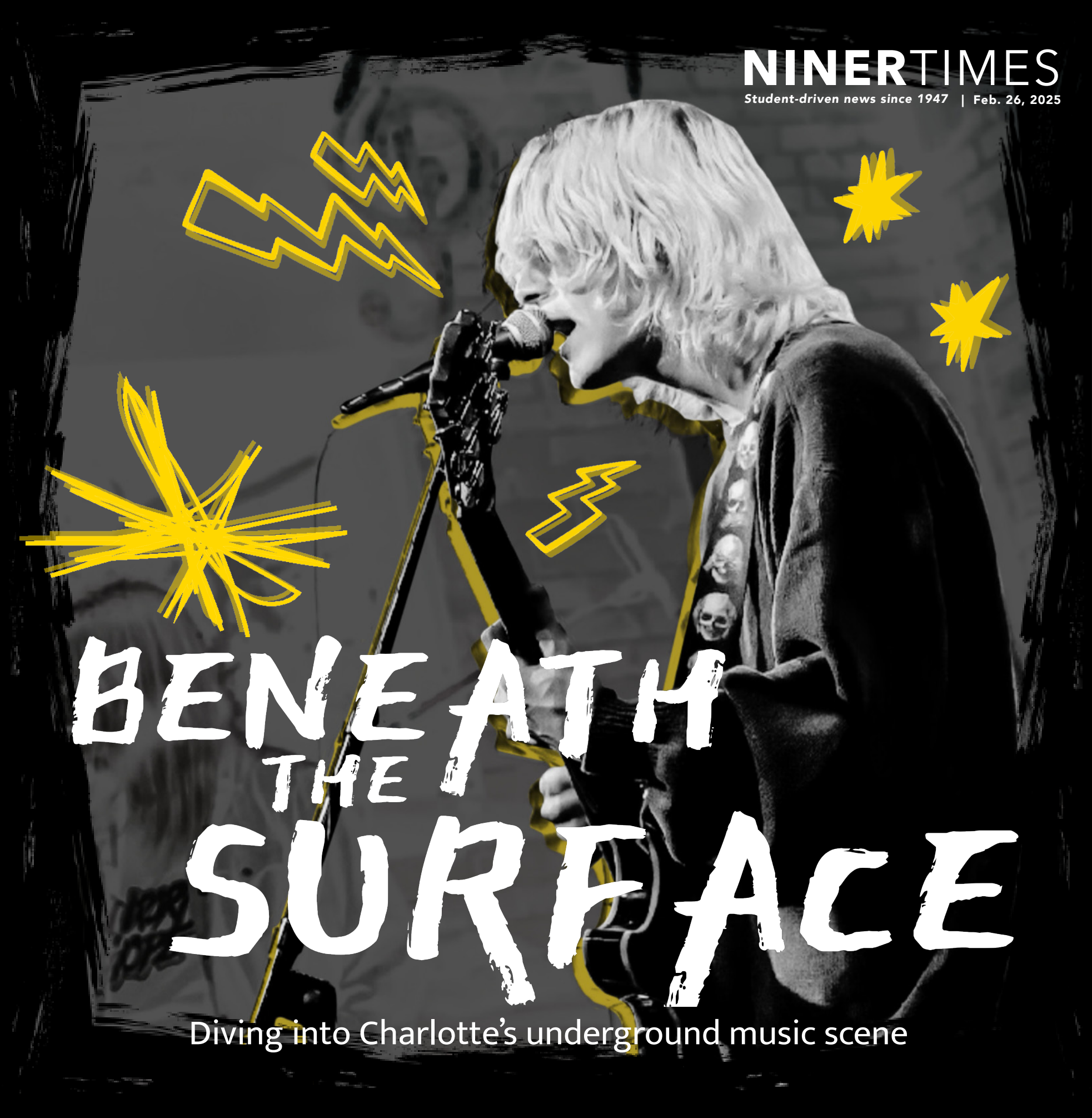


NINERTIMES

Student-driven news since 1947 | Feb. 26, 2025



BENEATH THE SURFACE

Diving into Charlotte's underground music scene

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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.

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Chris Crews/Niner Times File

Events to watch for on campus

Adjusting to American Culture:
Storytelling + Show and Tell
Feb. 26, 3 - 4 P.M.
Atkins Library 146

Student Niner Media: Digital vs.
Print Journalism Workshop
Feb. 27, 6 - 7 P.M.,
Student Union 261

Global Cooking Competition
March 4, 6 - 7 P.M.,
UREC Demo Kitchen

Rube Goldberg Competition
Feb. 27, 5:30 - 7 P.M.,
EPIC 3222

Healthy Dating Panel
Feb. 28, 6 - 7 P.M.,
CHHS 124

Care for All: Wellness &
Empowerment Night
March 11, 6 - 7 P.M.,
Cone 210B

Our trip to the NCCMA Conference

Niner Times representatives spent Saturday, Feb. 22, at Appalachian State University for the annual North Carolina College Media Association (NCCMA) Conference. The conference allowed us to connect with other members of North Carolina's student media and learn from professionals who led workshops at the conference.

The Niner Times Newspaper earned 10 awards at the event's award ceremony, including Best of Show for the Newspaper and Online News categories. Our 10 awards were the third most in the state for our school's classification, trailing only North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

While our success at the conference is a shining testament to our hard work and dedication over the past year at the Niner Times, more importantly, the ceremony's results allow us to recognize where we can improve and improve our coverage of UNC Charlotte's campus.

Stay tuned in the coming year as we continue to strive for excellence in serving the UNC Charlotte community.

Niner's Comics: An Alarming Awakening

Blaise Uy | Staff Illustrator





Charlotte's Black Student Organization Alliance Board fosters growth, unity and resilience for Black students

Emily Schenkel | Contributor

The Black Student Organization Alliance Board (BOAB) is a student-led organization supporting Black students professionally and socially, aiming to create a comfortable space for all Black and African American students to learn, grow and have fun at UNC Charlotte.

Established in January 2022 by former Golden Niner Kenan Moore, BOAB has seen immense growth in just three years. The organization has seen an increase in numbers and more engagement from its members in events and activities.

Community service coordinator and fourth-year student Ariona Gore explains that having a large, thriving community for African American students at UNC Charlotte is essential, and BOAB can help foster that.

"I think one of the most important things in the African American community is community," said Gore. "It takes a village to do anything, and as we have gone through things for years and years, it will be important for BOAB to show up and have your back if you need anything."

One of the main aspects of BOAB that members and the executive board take pride in is being an organization that caters to all Black students rather than just one specific group.

"BOAB is one of those situations where everyone can join. You don't have to be a certain major, you don't have to be a certain year," said Gore. "I think we were able to establish community based on that."

Shameer Garrett, BOAB's at-large assistant and second-year student, agreed that organization is the best place for African American students to find their community on campus.

"I feel like it has given them a community to not just be themselves but to learn more. Whether it is professional events, social gatherings or even community service," said Garrett. "I feel like BOAB has given them somewhere they can be themselves and improve on themselves."

BOAB holds many events for members multiple times a month, ranging from general body meetings to parties, fundraisers or community service events. Their general body meetings often consist of food, icebreakers, learning and group activities.

One of their most popular events is Bid-a-Date, which will be held on Feb. 21.

This Valentine's Day-themed fundraiser allows a group of men and women to pitch themselves and bid money for a date. All the money raised from this event goes back to BOAB to fund future member events.

"People bid maybe \$25, or we've had people bid over \$100 for a date," said Gore. "Then they have a little cocktail hour date set up, and they get to mingle and talk. It is a really fun event."

Despite the organization's many positive aspects, BOAB and its members, like many others, are facing struggles with the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) rollback.

Gore explained how the DEI rollback had be-

come a number one issue for the organization, simultaneously affecting the mental health of members as well.

"A real problem that everyone's facing in our community is the impacts of politics, DEI and the financial inhibitors that are impacting people's personal lives," said Gore. "Obviously, we know politics, but a personal thing for me is how that is impacting everyone's mental health."

In efforts to combat the struggles, BOAB has set up collaboration events with UNC Charlotte's Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) on ways to prevent stress and burnout for students involved.

Although the club also struggled in the past with gaining grant approval, receiving campus recognition and getting people to their events, BOAB has made substantial progress since then, with successful events and increasing member numbers.

"I have definitely seen the students be more engaged from my experience," said Garrett. "I have seen it go from something that seemed required to something that seemed fun for the students to do."

Gore also spoke about how she has seen an increase in attendance at all of their events.

"Seeing the growth that we had getting more people at our general body meetings, with more interactive and fun topics being discussed," said Gore. "We have at least 50 people come to general body meetings each time, which is way more

than we were seeing back in 2023."

BOAB's executive board is seen as role models both within and outside of the organization. Due to their history with the club, they expressed their pride in seeing first-year or newer BOAB members get involved and spread excitement about events.

BOAB treasurer and third-year student Betiel Berhe discusses the passion she has for seeing new members excited about the organization.

"What keeps me going is hearing from the freshman about how they would want to join our executive board," said Berhe. "Knowing that the future of BOAB would be in good hands with current freshmen who are active on campus and that they are interested in joining BOAB and are going to be the new people taking over."

In hopes of continuing a strong presence on campus and for a brighter future with the community, Gore emphasized the importance of students encouraging each other and staying positive throughout hardship.

"To the students at Charlotte, my advice would be even if things do not look like how you think they are or how you think they should be going," said Gore. "Keep your head up: just because things are cloudy doesn't mean the sun isn't on the other side."

Wild 'Goose' chase takes UNC Charlotte campus by storm

CAMPUS-WIDE SEARCH BRINGS GOOSE THE CAT HOME

Tairen Fenhoff | Contributor

The absence of a UNC Charlotte student's beloved housecat, Goose, threw the Charlotte community into a feline frenzy, as students searched high and low before his return.

Charlotte's feline fugitive made his escape on Feb. 9 and was on the run until the evening of Feb. 23. During the time of his disappearance, he left hints for those involved in the search.

After two weeks of tireless efforts from the campus community, Goose finally returned home after a concerned citizen identified the cat, and reached out, ending the kitty conundrum.

The UNC Charlotte community was integral in finding Goose as students banded together to organize search parties and spread awareness online.

UNC Charlotte students used social media platforms like Yik Yak and Instagram to spread the word and aid in the search. Photos and security camera footage of Goose near Arcadia Student Living circulated via social media, resulting in more members of the community getting involved with the investigation.

Following a Yik Yak post by Goose's owner on Feb. 9, a service dog named Peachy stepped in to help with the search. The golden retriever, who helped with search and rescue efforts after Hurricane Helene, is a certified search and rescue dog whose owner volunteered to help with the

pursuit of Goose.

After two organized search efforts on Feb. 12 and Feb. 14, those involved in the hunt believed that Goose had been keeping close to Arcadia Student Living, where his owner, Ryley Lawson, lives. Lawson, a fourth-year student at UNC Charlotte, believed Goose was still nearby.

In response to Goose's prolonged plight, Lawson organized a search with a few volunteers from Yik Yak, a popular social media platform with students at UNC Charlotte.

During the search party on Friday, Feb. 14, Lawson and her team found hints but no answer. The party scouted much of Arcadia's property, looking under cars and around apartments, but could not find the treasured tabby.

Those involved with the party indicated they would be willing to help again to find more answers later. One Yik Yak post from Feb. 18 called for another investigation, asking, "When's the next Goose lookout?"

As efforts continued to bring the beloved pet home, concern for Goose and Lawson grew online.

When asked about the search, one anonymous Yik Yak user who had posted about Goose said, "I'm just genuinely worried for this cat; I can't imagine what it's like seeing all of these videos of your cat but not being able to bring him home."

Not only did members of the UNC Charlotte community use social media to share concerns for Goose, but they also used their platforms to spread the word about the feline's predicament and piece together the mystery of where he could be.

Yik Yak has been ubiquitous with posts about Goose after Lawson's initial post on Feb. 9. Some posts even proposed a celebration once the cat is found.

With cold conditions prevailing as winter continues, Goose's well-being became a community concern. After the University announced on Feb. 18 that it was moving to



Courtesy of Ryley Lawson

Condition 1 for inclement weather, one Yik Yak poster wrote, “We need to lock in and find Goose; it’s about to snow.”

Alexa Abbott, the Yik Yak Campus Ambassador for UNC Charlotte and a fourth-year student used her role on the app and through the “uncc.yikyak” Instagram page to spread the word about Goose.

“Every single [Instagram] post as of recently, I make sure there’s at least one thing about Goose.”

Abbott’s connection with her pet motivated her to take action in support of Lawson and Goose.

“It’s a really good opportunity for me to be able to help out,” said Abbott. “I have a cat myself, which is a big part of it.”

Abbott expressed the importance of returning Goose to his owner as soon as possible.

“There’s a member of [Lawson’s] family missing,” said Abbott. “He needs to be found.”

Lawson said her connections with people on campus have grown through the situation. People on campus have grown fond of Goose throughout the search, with messages such as, “GOOSE GO HOME...[WE’RE] ALL WORRIED SICK” trending almost daily on Yik Yak.

Students have grown a deep connection with the story, especially because of their affection for their pets.

Animals serve an important role in their owners’ mental and emotional well-being. This connection between college students and their pets has been on full display in the response within the UNC Charlotte community to help find Goose.

Goose has not just impacted people, though. Goose’s brother, a tuxedo cat named Tommy, anxiously awaited his return home as Goose’s absence was felt in the Charlotte community and at his Arcadia home.

As Goose is reunited with his family at long last, celebrations are certainly in order for the now-famed feline.



CAT CRAZE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

After Goose’s Feb. 9 escape, UNC Charlotte’s Yik Yak page was flooded with posts about Goose, as many student posters express worry about his absence and work to connect the dots on where he may be.

Posts regarding Goose ranged from suggestions of a rave celebration when Goose is found to camera footage of the cat pawing around the Arcadia Student Living property. Posts spread to Instagram as Alexa Abbott, the Yik Yak campus ambassador for the Charlotte community and a fourth-year student at UNC Charlotte, posted Goose content on the “uncc.yikyak” Instagram account.

C

Charlotte 1d

SOMEONE GET THAT CAT HOME!!!!

D 3

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C

Charlotte 4d

I hope goose stays warm in the snow :(

D 3

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Charlotte 1d

luckycharm

GOOSE GO HOME ALREADY BRO WERE ALL WORRIED SICK.

D 1

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↑ 125

C

Charlotte 1d

really hoping Goose is back home soon. i can't even imagine the stress his owner is going through right now, im really hoping for the best

D

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↻

↷

↑ 74

↓

C

Charlotte 1d

findgoose

GOOSE UPDATE! We just had a search and rescue dog out. She picked up on his scent in the circled area within the last hour. If you live here, Please keep your eyes peeled! We are gonna search in about 15 minutes when the dogs scent has gone away a bit.



Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

UNC Charlotte achieves long-awaited R1 research status, paving the way for growth and innovation

Praghna Hemadri | Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte was awarded the status of Research 1, or R1, in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education on Feb. 13, marking a major milestone as this is the highest honor a graduate doctoral institution can receive in the U.S.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a system in which degree-granting institutions in the U.S. are given rankings to classify their research programs.

The criteria for achieving R1 status in 2025 is spending \$50 million annually on research and development and awarding at least 70 research doctorates annually. Charlotte exceeded the criteria by spending \$92 million during the 2023 fiscal year and awarding an average of 160 doctorates yearly.

This new institutional status will impact all students. The R1 classification means economic growth, more funding for the Division of Research and more opportunities for breakthroughs in discovering new technologies and businesses.

R1's recognition process dates back to 1970 when the Carnegie Classifications originally began developing their recognition system to support its research and policy analysis development. Later, in 1973, the first framework for R1 was established and has been updated every three years since to reflect the changes among colleges and universities.

There are generally two classifications: Universal and Elective. Charlotte was awarded R1 status in the 2025 Universal classification for "very high research activity." The new classification of R1 means that Charlotte joins UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, North Carolina State University and newly-awarded East Carolina University as the only institutions in North Carolina to achieve this milestone.

According to Charlotte, the new R1 status will provide opportunities for students to pave new paths to making a difference in various fields such as healthcare and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, energy, data science, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, business leadership, arts and culture and other programs that Charlotte offers. The new designation will not affect tuition according to the University.

The University expects that the R1 status will help Charlotte see a positive change in enrollments and increase visibility overall.

"An R1 designation is an indication of the significant research taking place at a university," said Charlotte. "We anticipate the increased visibility and opportunity to conduct research at a top-tier institution will attract additional students to our University, which could ultimately impact the admissions rate."

Alongside faculty and staff, students also play an important part in the research department.

The department hopes students take pride in this achievement and use it to their advantage to make their efforts known outside of Charlotte.

"Our graduate and undergraduate students play a vital role in our research enterprise," said the University. "We hope they take great pride in this achievement and see opportunities to widen the impact of their efforts through this designation."

However, due to the anticipated growth in applications and enrollments, Charlotte hopes to initiate new curriculums and resources that better suit the needs of current and future students.

Some new programs include a Ph.D. in data science, spring writing workshops for young writers and a Pre-Collegiate Enrichment Program (PEP) for high school third and fourth years to take college-level courses while still in high school. According to the University, these programs are all predicted to launch in the fall of 2025.

With the anticipated additional funding and student enrollment, Charlotte also hopes to see more student involvement in research and facilities.

"Students have always been an integral part of our research and the facilities in which it is conducted," said Charlotte. "The R1 designation signals that more students will be engaged in more facilities."

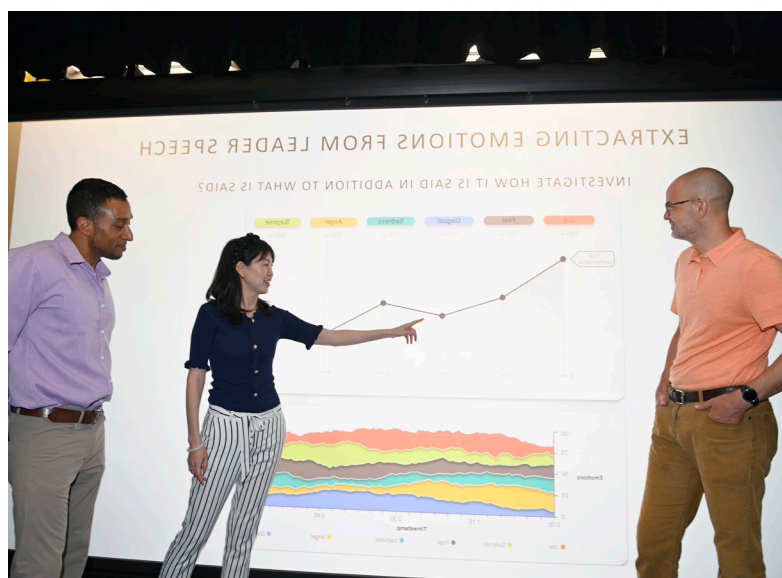
This increase in student involvement and research resources resulting from the R1 recognition expects to attract top scholars from across the globe to come teach and learn at Charlotte.

The new designation of R1 will also affect institutional research visibility and funding. Due to this honor, funding will ultimately grow with increased visibility outside of Charlotte and its reputation on the grand scale of the United States.

While the new R1 status is prestigious, it is not permanent.

The University hopes to maintain this status, and improve even further with new research developments to help Charlotte's name grow globally.

"An R1 designation further enhances UNC Charlotte's reputation and visibility on a national level, increasing our ability to continue attracting top-tier faculty and students. It also opens up access to competitive funding and makes the University more attractive to industry partnerships," said the University. "An R1 designation will attract and retain active scholars from across the globe while opening up access to additional funding, making a university more competitive for grants and awards."



UNC Charlotte launches AI Institute to lead national innovative research

Sofia DiStefano | News Editor

UNC Charlotte is setting the stage to become a national Artificial Intelligence (AI) leader with their newly established AI Institute.

The AI Institute, officially unveiled on Feb. 6, results from years of hard work and research across various campus departments. Efforts from Charlotte's Division of Research and stakeholders Deb Thomas and John Daniels, have now brought the vision of making AI research a more integrated part of the collegiate experience to life.

Along with its broad goals, the Institute also explores how researchers and students can use AI in unexpected areas. The Institute's six "AI Hives of Activity" are the hubs for each area.

The "AI Hives of Activity" include the AI4Health Center, the TAIMing AI Center, the Center for Humane AI Studies, the Center for Leadership Science, CIPHER (Computational Intelligence to Predict Health and Environmental Risks) and the Center for Applied GIScience.

Stephanie Schuckers and George Banks co-direct the Institute. In addition to their new titles with the Institute, Schuckers is a professor in the Department of Computer Science, and Banks is a professor in the Department of Management at the Belk College of Business and co-director of the Center of Leadership Science.

The Institute's goal is to expand the use of AI technologies and increase Charlotte's internal and external AI awareness.

"AI cross-cuts all of campus, which is really good, but from the [external] point of view, people understanding what we do in AI was hard because it was so [integrated] across the University," said Schuckers. "Internally, people didn't know what each other were doing because it was cross-department, cross-college, basically all across campus."

Charlotte's strong backbone of interdisciplinary work was one of the strengths that helped pave the way for the Institute's emergence.

With over 40 interdisciplinary programs and strong collaboration with specific departments, Banks said the Institute hopes to use its tools and resources as a catalyst to ensure that the University keeps moving forward and reaching new milestones.

"There's AI research going on in all of our colleges on campus," said Banks. "The Institute is a vehicle to help capture synergies, avoid the silos and then to also provide resources to those you know that are in their own departments or own colleges."

According to Banks, these tools and algorithms have been used for decades, but were not as adaptable until now. As algorithms have changed and improved over the years, they can now be used in scenarios students typically may not expect.

These advancements have offered new ways to study complex human behaviors, such as leadership dynamics. Bank's primary focus is within the Leadership Science field, and he highlighted that AI can help researchers ana-

lyze situations where a leader's words may unintentionally have a negative impact.

However, with the help of AI tools, researchers can analyze the transcripts of these meetings to identify such instances and better understand the impact of a leader's words.

"At my center, we're using AI to look at verbal and non-verbal leader behaviors, and like virtual meetings, so we can then understand what makes for an effective leader or an effective follower in these meetings," said Banks. "So we can then customize training and development. Whether that be for student success in the classroom because students on campus everywhere are working in teams."

Banks further expressed his expectations of seeing AI language model tools such as ChatGPT, Llama and DeepSeek analyze other data types as research categories improve to examine more profound things, such as the delivery and emotions behind a speech.

"[Researchers] can also tokenize other nonverbal behavior, [such as] elements of a leader's facial expression," said Banks. "You can take audio data and kind of chop that up, and integrate the words, the visual, the tone or pitch, and triangulate on the emotional expression or signal of the leader."

While Banks explained his research focus with speeches, Schuckers shed light on her work with identification technology research in the CITeR (Center for Identification Technology Research) Center. Currently, five universities, Clarkson, West Virginia, Buffalo and Michigan State Universities, now including UNC Charlotte, are all focused on identity and biometrics.

"The research we do is focused on identity and biometrics. So basically, [we look at] how to secure your data through biometrics," said Schuckers. "[We also look at] how to understand who somebody is online, so you can give them the right information and help prevent identity theft and fraud [related] to stealing somebody's password, for example. All this research we do is to help ensure our systems are safe."

Although the Institute is still in the strategic planning process, Schuckers and Banks explained that they hope to see even more growth for the University, especially through student involvement.

"By having the Institute, we can help pull the information together to represent it to the outside world. So we can build partnerships with businesses and other community organizations to find where they need to go," said Schuckers. "We can, as directors, look for the right expertise and put people together to start something new. That's what's exciting about it because there's a lot of opportunity to grow beyond what we're currently doing."

The Institute hopes to engage with different stakeholders across the institution to help formulate its next steps. It plans to hold various events for students to gain in-person experience and celebrate the Institute and all it will bring to the future generation of researchers.



UNC Charlotte welcomes 13 speakers for the 5th TEDxUNCCCharlotte

Sebastian Quiroz-Gutierrez | Contributor

TEDx hosted its fifth event at UNC Charlotte, featuring 13 speakers ranging from UNC Charlotte undergraduate students to the CEOs in McKnight Theater at the Cone University Center on Saturday, Feb. 15.

The event welcomed students, staff and industry professionals to listen to various speeches through the TEDx program. TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience and learn from presentations by local speakers and experts.

The event's purpose was to inspire action through exchanging ideas.

"The whole point is sharing an idea, an original idea, showing people, 'Hey, I took action on this thing, and then it triggers other people to do the same thing,'" said Zoé Brown, a second-year student at UNC Charlotte and the event manager for TEDxUNCCCharlotte.

Attendees were met by a TEDxUNCCCharlotte photo backdrop and an event lineup board showcasing all the speakers. Outside the theater was a reception area full of high-top tables with small lamps, creating a welcoming atmosphere. Inside, the main stage stood ready as a crowd of attendees filled about half the room.

With over 200 in attendance, those present could listen in on the diverse speeches and each presenter-themed topic.

Reflecting on her TEDx experience, Venus

Kajangu, a fifth-year student who attended the event, said that the speeches provided unique perspectives and a learning opportunity for her.

"It's challenging my perspectives but also challenging how I present myself because every TED Talk has been unique to the person," said Kajangu.

Among the 17 speakers, Eniolaoluwa 'Enny' Ogunyemi was the second presenter to take the stage. Her topic, "Redefining Accents," explored the power of accents in shaping an individual's identity and emphasized that an accent can reveal a person's life and that even those who believe they do not have an accent can be perceived differently by others.

"Your accent is your passport; I thought that was so clever and so amazing because it changed

my perspective on how I see other people's accents as well as how I see my own," said Kajangu.

Jean Wright, the fifth speaker to take the stage, discussed "Why Lungevity Matters." As CEO of the COPD Foundation, she stressed the importance of lung care and raised awareness about the invisible epidemic of chronic lung diseases.

Once thought to be primarily a smoker's disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

“

"It's challenging my perspectives but also challenging how I present myself because every TED Talk has been unique to the person [presenting]."

- Venus Kajangu, fifth-year attendee

Enny Ogunyemi,
graduate student

(COPD) is now understood to have genetic, environmental and childhood asthma-related risk factors, as well as risks for first responders.

Following the intermission, speaker Sarah Gallucci shared her life-changing experience with AI. She described how her life has slowed down with how fast AI can assist in daily tasks. AI has allowed her to shift from a work-centered lifestyle to having more free time to enjoy hobbies like running and eating healthy.

While Gallucci highlighted the ways technology can reshape daily life, Jasmine Ballard shifted the conversation toward cultural identity and

personal heritage.

Ballard, the founder and chief storytelling officer of Melanotion, explored her passion for identity and cultural confidence across the diaspora, emphasizing the importance of embracing cultural roots to help people uncover their identity and family history.

“Being born in Ghana and living in the United States predominantly and trying to connect back to my roots and get those stories from my dad and my mother during the holidays, that’s become my priority,” said Ankomah Donyinah, a Charlotte staff member attending the event.

The event concluded with a networking session outside McKnight Theater, where attendees had the opportunity to connect with speakers, ask questions about their presentations and engage in professional discussions over snacks and drinks.

“I had pretty high expectations. You know, the TED brand is great for public speaking, and I knew the context there would be for certain students,” said Donyinah. “I was impressed by the diversity and depth of the topics they chose as well.”



Jenna Drew,
undergraduate
student

Jean Wright,
COPD Foundation
Physician & CEO

Baldomero
Chavez,
undergraduate
student

TEDx

UNC Charlotte

2025 SPEAKERS

Jennifer Adelhardt

Charlotte Adjunct Graduate Faculty &
Doctoral Scholar

Topic: ADHD as a Superpower

Enny Ogunyemi

Graduate Student

Topic: Redefining Accents

Barbara Lash

Charlotte Communications &
Engagement Specialist, Division of
Research

Topic: Inclusive by Choice: Lessons
Learned from Professional Athletes &
Teams

Mary-Catherine Berger

Graduate Student

Topic: What you missed when you first
learned about Shakespeare

Jean Wright

COPD Foundation Physician & CEO

Topic: Why Longevity Matters

Sara A. Gagné

Charlotte Chair & Associate
Professor

Topic: Urban Nature (You Have More
Wild Neighbors than You Think)

Sarah Gallucci

Alumna; CPCC Professor

Topic: Better Humaning with A.I.

Craig Lewis

Alumnus; Global Urban Design
Consultant

Topic: The Science of Walkable Cities

Jenna Drew

Undergraduate Student

Topic: Creating an Arts Hub in Charlotte

Jasmine Ballard

Melanotion Founder & Chief Storytelling
Officer

Topic: Unpacking Identity and Cultural
Confidence across the Diaspora

Baldomero Chavez

Undergraduate Student

Topic: Why the American Dream Dies
with First Gen Immigrant Children

Evan Smith

Undergraduate Student

Topic: Free Will, Absurdism, and the
Pursuit of Meaning

Arin Patterson

Charlotte Senior Associate Director

Topic: How Effective Leadership is TBD

Opinion: Charlotte should have given full transparency about the asbestos in Sanford Hall

Ainsley Latkovic | Asst. Copy Editor

Were you aware that asbestos-containing materials (ACM) were identified in Sanford Hall in 2013? Asbestos, a cancer-causing chemical, is completely banned in over 50 countries, but not the United States. Despite no legal obligation to abate or remove asbestos in the University buildings, Charlotte should have demonstrated transparency for students.

The U.S. is notorious for ironic laws. You can fight in wars at the age of 18 but cannot drink beer until 21. You can be protected from asbestos from K-12, but as soon as you enter college, good luck.

Over 30 years ago, the Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Reauthorization (ASHARA) of 1990 was created because the Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) “estimated that more than forty-four thousand school buildings” were comprised of ACM “exposing more than fifteen million school children [...] to unwarranted health hazards.”

As a result, public schools were given money to create plans to protect the children and work towards the abatement of the ACM. Nice idea, right? The government wants to protect the future generation of this country, but only until they are adults.

Unfortunately, the ASHARA does not include public universities, which is why Sanford Hall was allowed to stay standing and in use for over 50 years. During this half-century, UNC Charlotte was growing, as was the demand for on-campus housing.

With new dorms being built, the reconstruction of old

dorms became a necessity. Most bright-eyed students want to be housed in a clean, safe and functioning building they can call home, and a university wants to pride itself on giving that desire to its students.

That being said, throughout Sanford’s life, there were two renovation projects; both included covering up the asbestos-made floor tiles. The renovations were a reaction to the high demand for housing, not necessarily the desire to be proactive toward the abatement of asbestos.

After 55 years, it was finally decided Sanford’s life would end. Before the start of its demise, an asbestos report was conducted in 2024, revealing more than just numbers.

172 out of the 371 construction material samples taken were considered ACM, ranging from 1-65%. Not only does this show that certain materials contain 65 times more asbestos than what the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) deems an ACM, but it also shows little initiative in being the best 49ers they can be.

Communication, something that is the basis of all relationships, can sometimes lead to uncomfortable conversations, but they need to be had. Facing the truth is no easy feat, but a conversation is better than silence, and that silence soon becomes another issue swept under the rug.

Charlotte could have used the opportunity to destroy and renovate the dorm to demonstrate full transparency with students. They could have set the precedence that the relationship with students is of utmost importance.

It could have shown students that their lives are just as important as they were in childhood. It could have shown these policymakers that all lives should be protected against unwarranted health hazards.

Instead, there was no conversation. There was no plan to entirely get rid of this chemical, not until a decade after the fact. Transparency is the key to trust, and without trust, we are not a community; we are nothing.

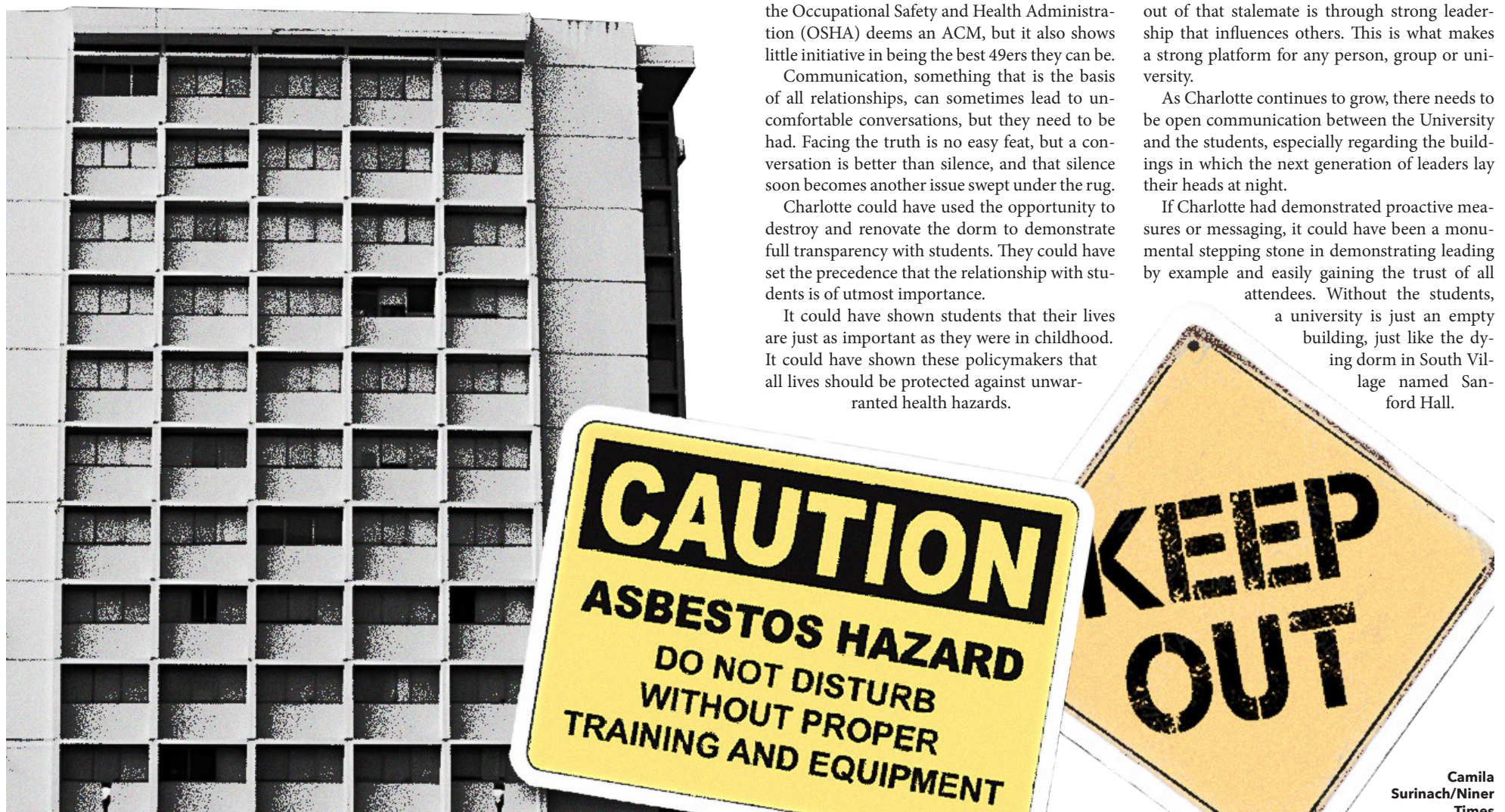
Charlotte is a growing school, No. 81 in size in the nation to be exact, and to keep that momentum going, it needs to make sure that the students can put trust in their University.

A university’s job is more than just teaching textbook material. Their job is to demonstrate how to succeed through one’s own actions, leadership and influence. Had they focused on the deconstruction of Sanford Hall sooner, it would have shown students that Charlotte leads by example.

Actions speak louder than words, but when there are no words and actions are not being made, a stalemate is created. The only way to get out of that stalemate is through strong leadership that influences others. This is what makes a strong platform for any person, group or university.

As Charlotte continues to grow, there needs to be open communication between the University and the students, especially regarding the buildings in which the next generation of leaders lay their heads at night.

If Charlotte had demonstrated proactive measures or messaging, it could have been a monumental stepping stone in demonstrating leading by example and easily gaining the trust of all attendees. Without the students, a university is just an empty building, just like the dying dorm in South Village named Sanford Hall.



Camila
Surinach/Niner
Times

Opinion: Black students are flourishing at UNC Charlotte

Morgan Royster | Contributor

Lack of resources, feelings of isolation and microaggressions can interfere with Black students who choose to attend predominantly white institutions (PWIs), but not at UNC Charlotte.

Schools and predominantly white institutions were integrated in the 1960s due to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Years before desegregation within schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were popularized for Black students seeking a higher education. HBCUs create many opportunities for Black students to succeed while also creating a more comfortable atmosphere for minorities.

In today's society, Black students still experience prominent issues while attending PWIs. However, according to some, Charlotte has created an inclusive environment for Black scholars.

Nieq Perry, a second-year student at Charlotte,

shared her experiences.

"There are many different resources on campus spanning from various student organizations," said Perry.

Perry highlighted that the school offers a variety of resources for Black students to flourish.

"Several organizations like First Generation Students, Black Student Union and Building Black Students add to the available campus resources," said Perry.

Some Black students may still experience separation from campus culture and discrimination. However, Perry has not felt detached while attending the University.

"I have never felt isolated, and I can faithfully put my trust in campus leaders if I were to experience discrimination on campus," said Perry.

In 2015, Queen City News published an article about African-American students who reported

racial concerns about some administrators. The students allegedly overheard Charlotte staff making racial and discriminatory comments about various minority-based groups and leaders.

At Charlotte, if a student experiences any form of discrimination, they can contact the University's Office of Civil Rights and Title IX.

Campus organizations similar to the Organization of African Students and the Black Organization Alliance Board continue to allow Black students to manage leadership positions at Charlotte.

Second-year Jesse Igbeide enjoys the inviting climate of college life at Charlotte.

"The campus is very diverse and there are enough people to help me feel comfortable and accepted at my school," said Igbeide.

Similar to Perry's point of view, Igbeide would agree that there are numerous opportunities for

Black students to get acclimated at Charlotte. "During my time at [Charlotte], my professors have been a great help, and I love that," said Igbeide.

The J. Murrey Atkins website offers a variety of links where Black students can access career development organizations, mental health programs and community sources.

In 2023, College Factual reported that Black students who attend Charlotte make up 15.4% of the total student population.

A data chart by College Simply indicates that UNC Charlotte is becoming well known for its diverse population, and many Black peers are pleased with the University's consistent growth and inclusivity.



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Dan Rice/Niner Times



Ivory Galloway/Niner Times

Opinion: Campus culture incentivizes caffeine addiction

Cory Nguyen | Staff Writer

Jordan Aldrich/Niner Times

They keep you up at night, make your heart race and electrify you when you get a taste of their presence. No, not your crush, but the caffeine coursing through your veins and in as high as 86% of other young adults within the last 30 days.

According to Cafely, the U.S. comes in at a remarkably high position of No. 24 in the global rankings of coffee consumption, at 1.22 cups per capita. This does not include caffeine in energy drinks, where, according to a 2023 Statista data analysis, the U.S. was ranked No. 1 in volume sales at 29.69 liters per capita.

With a U.S. population of about 334 million people, there are about 2.67 billion gallons of energy drink consumed annually. Put differently that is 169.6 million average Toyota Camry gas tanks or 1.67 billion average American toilets full of water.

A country-wide precedent of caffeine consumption exists, which UNC Charlotte perpetuates, and not necessarily to the campus culture's benefit, specifically regarding partners that hand out free drinks in high-traffic

campus locations or in areas where students go to study.

The normalization of these promotional giveaways can be attributed to the framing of the ingestion of caffeine as a tool to enhance a student's academic performance through its stimulative properties.

However, according to a survey administered at Florida State University, there is a lack of correlation between caffeine consumption and academic performance, such as a student's GPA.

Further, when someone consumes high levels of caffeine long-term, they can experience several negative withdrawal symptoms when reducing consumption, such as headaches, fatigue, irritability, brain fog, increased depression and increased anxiety.

According to the Addiction Center, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) considers withdrawal a clinical condition, although they do not formally classify caffeine addiction as a substance use disorder.

These withdrawal symptoms are nonconducive for work productivity. So, what is the tea

behind the sponsoring of caffeine at Charlotte?

Current campus marketing strategies kickstart a student's journey into extended caffeine consumption by turning Charlotte's campus into a platform for companies to promote their products, which rely on the habit-forming properties of their product to maintain steady clientele and, most importantly, to generate profit.

Although platforming does not inherently mean an incentivization of caffeine dependency, it does create a window for these vendors' primary goal: To build a consistent consumer base using chemical dependency and to do that through easy freebies.

This is concerning because college students are an ideal market segment to sell and maintain caffeinated products as they are typically stressed and overworked. Thus, they are likely to engage in caffeine dependency to keep up academically and avoid experiencing negative withdrawal side effects if they are consistently ingesting these beverages.

Essentially, Charlotte is giving these companies easy access to an ideal vulnerable sector sus-

ceptible to caffeine dependency.

However, this is a two-way street.

The bulk of students feel reliant on external energy sources stemming from a lack of time to properly self-care. This can be attributed to, beyond Charlotte, an overarching economic and collegiate system that makes it difficult for most students to find enough time to care for school, work, family, friends and themselves.

Although there are larger systemic issues involved, Charlotte still has agency in the policies and strategies used to reduce the amplification of detrimental caffeine dependency.

Creating and emphasizing partnerships that empower students' long-term mental and physical health could generate stronger individuals, healthier students and an empowered campus.

In more ways than one, promoting lasting, reliable energy sources is key to fostering a healthier institution, and Charlotte may find it more sustainable to re-assess theirs.



Beneath the surface: Diving into Charlotte's underground music scene

Nick Caceres | Staff Writer

Right beneath the surface of Charlotte's culture lies a vibrant punk scene with a variety of outsider genres and identities with a strong network of local artists and musicians. Local venues have been a haven for these musicians, providing a lively audience for artists and bands alike and helping to grow Charlotte's independent music scene.

A bulk of the scene can be found and experienced at a small venue in Lakewood, The Milestone Club. Founded in 1969, the venue has hosted a wide variety of bands, both local and beyond, in its 56-year history, including notable acts such as Nirvana, R.E.M. and The Bangles.

Today, along with the establishments of other small venues like the Rabbit Hole and Snug Harbor, it is hard to find a single week at these venues without a stacked show, hosting a variety of punk and indie bands sprouting out of Charlotte's urban sprawl.

One of the bands that can be found playing at venues around Charlotte and North Carolina is Dollhaver. Fourth-year student Kai Harris founded the band in 2023 as their lead guitarist and vocalist with fellow musicians he met on Charlotte's campus.

"We're influenced a lot by extreme metal in general," said Harris. "You name it, grindcore, death metal, black metal and recently, I got a fixation on war metal, which has been inspiring some of our new stuff and sludge metal as well."

A band that has also played many shows at The Milestone Club is Saintlogic. In contrast to Dollhaver, they pull from many indie rock influences: Car Seat Headrest, Weezer and Wednesday.

Saintlogic had a headlining show in January 2025 at the venue to celebrate the release of their debut album, "Dogs with Jobs," with special guests Dollar Taxes and Those Dogs.

"We've had the pleasure of playing with a lot

of really cool bands both in Charlotte and out of Charlotte, but that one was special just because we had worked on this thing for so long, and a bunch of our friends and people came out," said Saintlogic frontman and guitarist Tommy Fitzgerald. "It was really cool to see people wearing our merch at the show. That one was really special because it was our first time putting together and headlining a show."

Another artist who has been heavily involved in the local scene is Grace Nelson, who is the vocalist for the weird and gritty digital punk band Girl Brutal, which pulls lyrical inspiration from more experimental acts like Machine Girl, Brutalismus 3000, IC3PEAK and Death Grips.

One of the first things one might notice when watching Girl Brutal playing live is Nelson's adornment of bunny ears, which play an overt role in breaking certain gender preconceptions in entertainment.

"I do recognize that I am, of course, a female in music, and with that comes certain stereotypes or weird expectations that certain people might put onto a female artist," said Nelson. "I took the idea of Playboy Bunnies, which is a very iconic sex symbol for women, for a long time. I'm taking this sexualized icon and turning it into quite the opposite. The point is not to be hot and sexy; it's to be weird, gross, scary and scary."

Nelson is also known for her solo DJ sets, which have been a growing force in Charlotte's nightlife, playing rave-ready selections of hard techno, gabber and downtempo.

"I feel like even a year ago, a lot of the DJing you would see in Charlotte was house DJing or just like social DJs," said Nelson. "There weren't really a lot of raves that people were talking about or going to, and I feel like pretty recently that's picked up. A lot of people are coming out to these DJ nights at the Milestone, and that's pretty cool."



Courtesy of The Milestone Club



'To Be Consumed' is Goodyear Arts' latest student art exhibit

Wes Packham | Asst. Arts & Culture Editor

"The Weight of What We Take"
Baxter Miller III



What does it mean to be consumed? For UNC Charlotte student artists, it is obsession, emotion and nature. Goodyear Arts' annual student showcase brings these interpretations to life, curated by fourth-year artist Caroline Wingerd in a striking exhibition of emerging talent.

Goodyear Arts hosts a student-oriented gallery annually in collaboration with UNC Charlotte's Department of Art & Art History to promote up-and-coming student artists.

Wingerd applied to be the curator for the 2025 exhibit, detailing her proposition for the theme, the gallery layout and her exhibition statement. She had been interested in curating a Goodyear Arts exhibit since her inclusion as an artist in the 2024 exhibit.

In 2023, she was co-curator for a show while studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Poland; in 2024, she was on the curation team for

a show at The Light Factory Photo Arts Center and in 2025, she curated

the Levine Scholars Gallery.

The theme of the exhibit "To Be Consumed," decided on by Wingerd, was meant to reflect themes of consumption for the exhibit, whether symbolic or literal.

"I journal a lot, and it was something that I found myself coming back to a couple of times. Through talking to people, I found [there are] a lot of artists [doing] work about how we consume the things we consume," said Wingerd. "This just seems like a show that would fall into place, and I really wanted to make it happen."

Wingerd heard back on Jan. 28 from Goodyear Arts, letting her know she was accepted as the curator. With the show opening on Feb. 14, she had just over two weeks to pull the show together.

"It was super stressful. [It was a] very quick turnaround, [I] barely had any time to think," said Wingerd. "I had to really make sure my exhibition statement sounded good; people are actually going to read this beyond the faculty."

Wingerd gathered a list of students to contact, thinking about who had works that would fit the theme.

The gallery opened to the public on Feb. 14. Wingerd spoke to those attending, and a live DJ played while visitors browsed the gallery.



The opening reception allowed attendees to speak to artists directly.

"I had one girl come up to me once she realized that I was the artist of one of the posters," said fourth-year illustration student Jordan Aldrich. "She said [she] recently had a conversation that was similar to what's put on the poster with her family and how seeing it put in a space like that was very cathartic."

"To Whom It May Concern" was one of Aldrich's pieces, a screen-printed poster describing a difficult conversation she shared with a family member. The emotional weight of the conversation drove her to create the piece to both process and express her lingering feelings.

It was many of the artists' first time displaying their work off campus, giving them their first eye into the professional art world.

"That's the first that I've gotten as far as shows—that's the first show that my work has been in. I've been applying to a lot of opportunities, even internships, and just getting a lot of 'no's," said third-year McKenzie Edmund. "But this entire time, I've just been waiting for the door that God needs me to go through."

Edmund is a visual arts major with a painting concentration; her piece "My Garden" was

originally meant to depict the biblical story of creation. Frustrated that she could not make the painting look as envisioned, she turned to spontaneity. Her work represented her acceptance and the consumption of imperfection.

Her second piece, titled "In, Not Of," delves into themes of displacement and suffering. Created during a difficult time in her life, she allowed herself to paint freely and express her unbridled emotions. She used nontraditional methods on her self-built wooden canvas, using only tools instead of paintbrushes to channel her frustration into art.

"That piece was revolutionary for me because it was the first piece that, from start to finish, I was committed to not being worried about the end product," said Edmund.

Each student had unique interpretations of the theme, utilizing different mediums to express their perspective on the topic.

Photographer and fourth-year Ever Templeton embraced nature and its effect on human creations for her interpretation of consumption. Her photographs showed abandoned cars and the effects of oxidation and nature on the machines, which she displayed crooked in thrifted picture frames.

"People are always buying new cars, but no one really stops to think about how that affects us," said Templeton. "We have all these abandoned cars everywhere. I wanted to acknowledge that while also showing how nature consumes these man-made objects."

In contrast to Templeton's focus on nature, fourth-year art education student Baxter Miller III focused on human relationships and how they consume us. His piece titled "Closest Friend Kept at a Distance" represents a complex relationship between Miller and his close childhood friend. It explores the tension between comfort and detachment, capturing both emotional distance and familiarity through the vulnerability of nudity.

Miller's second piece relates to his experience studying abroad in Italy titled "The Weight of What We Take." Reflecting on anti-tourism imagery, he created a piece representing generosity and unseen damage by incorporating loose stitching and unraveling fabric.

"My practice is very mixed media, very textile-based. I incorporate sewing into a lot of my work, and that's kind of unique to me. A lot of that comes from my culture—I'm half Filipino, and my mom's side of the family worked in sweatshops," said Miller. "Sewing is a very important practice to my family, and even though I'm here in America, continuing that tradition is very meaningful to me."

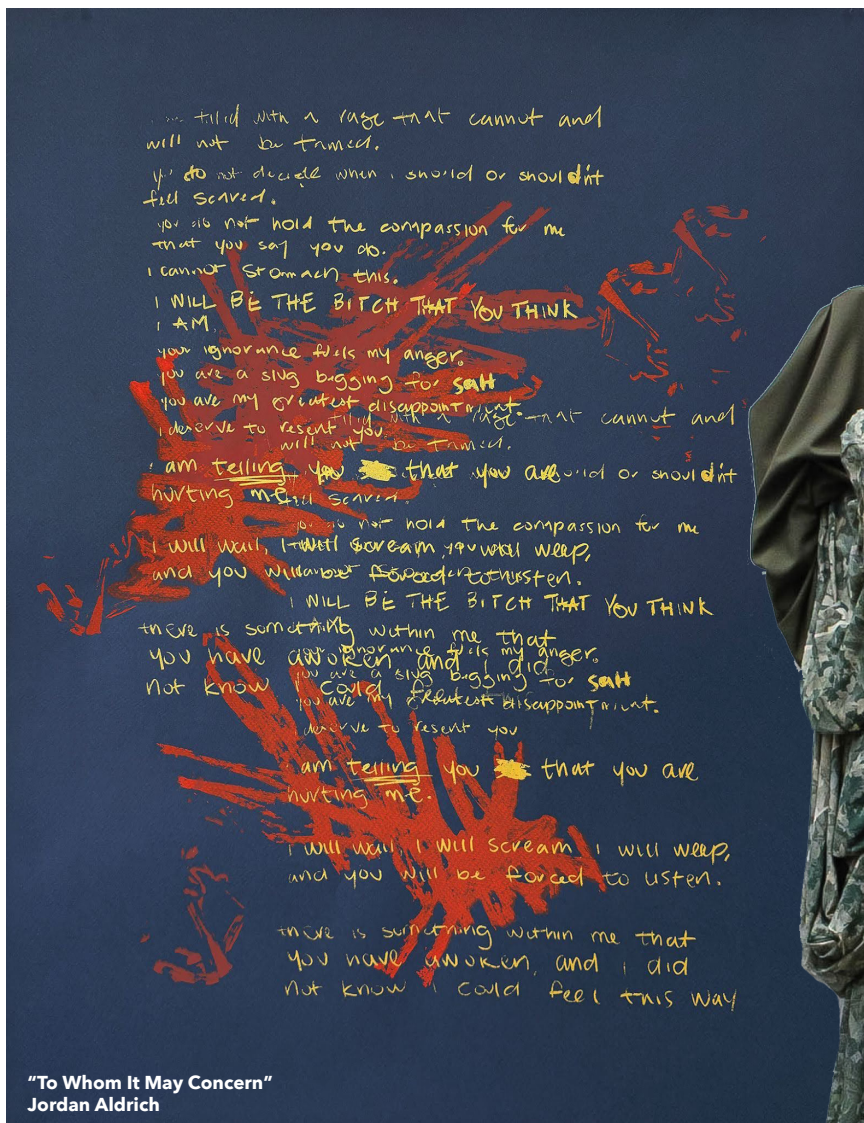
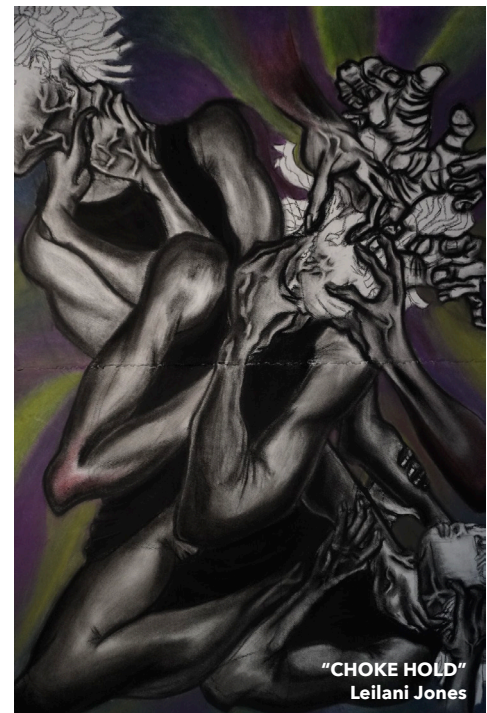
Goodyear Arts' cooperation has been vital to the show's success, working to help curators and artists the best they can to further their mission of promoting the independent art scene of Charlotte. Wingerd's work putting the show together cannot be understated.

"I was so relieved. It was really stressful for two weeks putting everything together. At the

same time, I was also putting together a show at the Student Union," said Wingerd. "I'm just really happy that people [can] now go see the artwork and see all the hard work of these artists all put together."

Curation would be nothing without the talented artists who created the work for the exhibit: Jordan Aldrich, Callie Brewer, Celia Castaldo, McKenzie Edmund, Maddie Foss, Leilani Jones, Evie Jordan, Claire Kiester, Baxter Miller III, Ever Templeton and Caroline Wingerd.

The exhibit will remain free and open to the public until Feb. 28.



Steve Moore & Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times

Charlotte women's basketball sparks success with the help of Alexis Andrews

Ian Shure | Staff Writer

As Charlotte women's basketball improves, so has the performance of junior guard Alexis Andrews. After beginning American Athletic Conference (AAC) play with a 0-6 record, the 49ers have rebounded to a 3-5 record as of Feb. 21.

During this bounce-back period, Andrews has elevated her game, averaging 13 points, 2.3 rebounds and 0.6 assists per game and on Feb. 12 erupted with a 27-point outburst against Wichita State University.

Calling to a new home

After two years of playing at the College of Charleston, Andrews wanted a new challenge and transferred to Charlotte.

"I needed somewhere that I was going to be able to showcase 100% [of] what I can do at all three levels," said Andrews. "I wanted to grow my game as a three-level scorer."

At Charleston, Andrews played well; in her sophomore season, she started every game and averaged 12.5 points, 3.9 rebounds and a 35.3 three-point percentage in 2024.

However, she realized she could take an even greater step in the right direction if she came to Charlotte.

Now, in a new offense at Charlotte, her skillset from Charleston has translated well and helped unlock her game.

"[Charleston] made me a better shooter because I came in there as a shooter, but that ramped up my shot quite a lot more than what it was coming out of high school," said Andrews. "So I really did grow there, and I took what I learned from there and then brought it here, and the mid-range shot to my game that made me a three-level scorer all around."

Adjusting to improve

At Charlotte, Andrews has had a different role than what she was in at Charleston, coming off the bench in most contests for the 49ers.

"Being on the bench is a role that I have grown into with being here and previously starting every game of my career," said Andrews.

"This is my role, and this is what I want to do. Once I get that in my head, it's up from there."

In February, Andrews has found her footing, securing more minutes and helping the team offensively.

Andrews has scored double-digits in six of her last seven contests as of Feb. 21, including multiple 20-point performances.

"I knew I could

shoot the ball. [Charlotte] knew I could shoot the ball," said Andrews. "I've added the mid-range shot a little more into my game to stretch the floor. It gives me the advantage of the defender not knowing what exactly I'm gonna do."

With that new mid-range, Andrews is shooting 40.3% from the field, better than any stretch during her career at Charleston.

Finding a voice

Andrews was not alone in adjusting to a new setting as Charlotte women's basketball also underwent a coaching change and major roster changes in the 2024 offseason.

Tomekia Reed was named the head coach for Charlotte women's basketball on April 25, 2024.

Reed has played a huge part in developing many players since arriving, including helping Andrews find her voice and settle in.

"Coach Reed has added a little flair to me," said Andrews. "Me just being quiet, coming in here, not saying much, she knows I'm a person of little words. I'm not gonna say much, but she's [an] outspoken person, and she's always on 10, so she's like my hype man. So now I take that energy and carry it over to the court and know that leads to me play good and be able to have somebody that's going to look at me and say, 'Yeah, that's what we need.'"

A change that Andrews and the 49ers faced is adjusting to a new level of play in the AAC. As Charlotte's roster is almost entirely comprised of transfer additions from smaller schools, the AAC has called for new competition.

Charlotte has had some trouble acclimating, standing at 9-17 overall with three games to play.

"We just can't take plays off," said Andrews. "We have time where we take plays off, or it might be a whole four minutes where we are just having little mistakes or mistakes that are just making things go really bad. We have to take out those moments and make sure that we're getting the best out of every position."

Tournament play on the horizon

While the 49ers are still forming their identity, the upcoming end-of-season AAC tournament looms for Andrews and Charlotte.

As Andrews acts as Charlotte's offensive wildcard, she could be a name to watch with the 49ers looking to play spoiler.

"We're feeling good; we're ready to play. We think this is our time to go in and compete and possibly upset a couple [of] teams," said Andrews. "We had a couple of bumps early on, but we think we can get going to beat some teams down the stretch."

