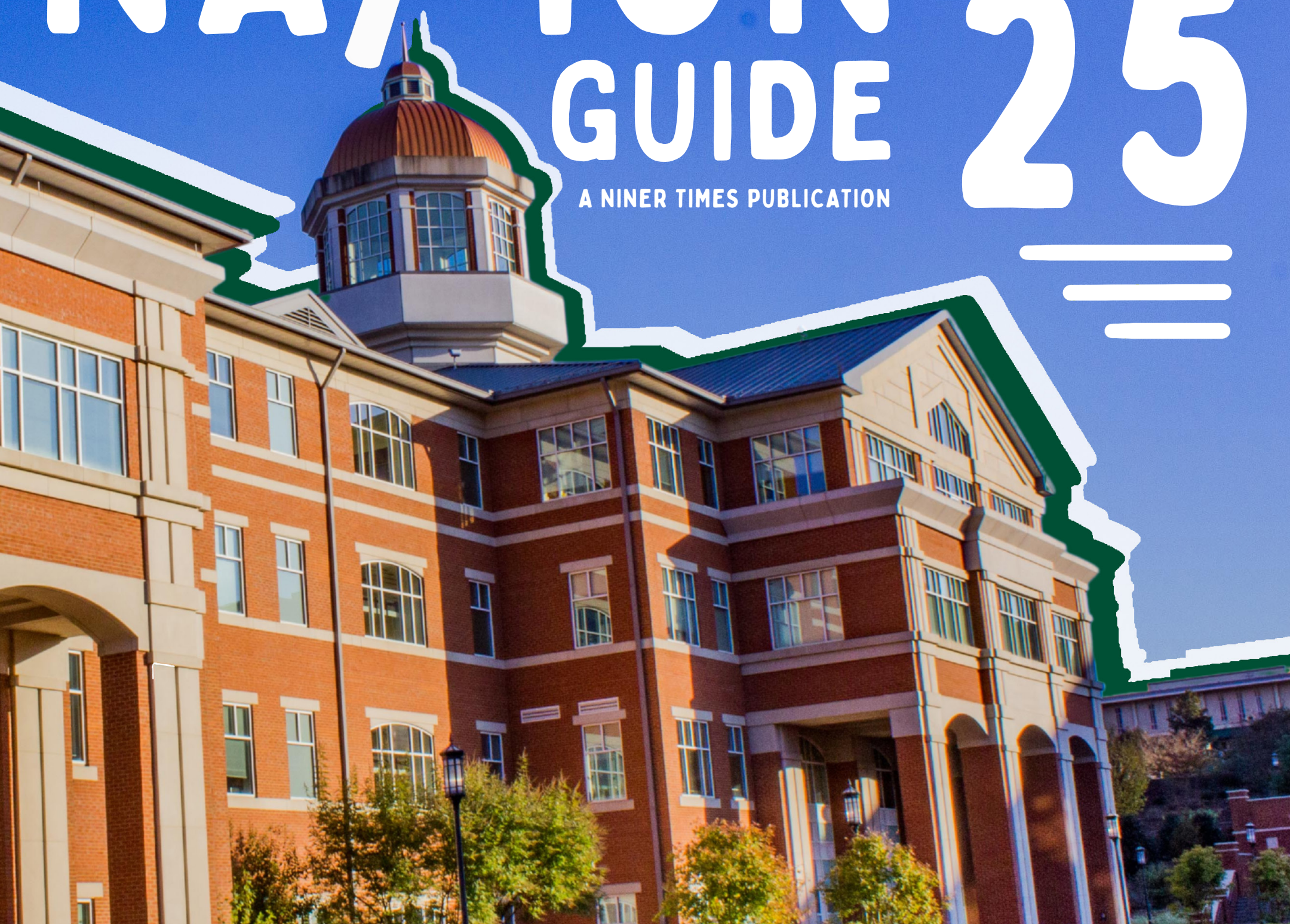


# NINER NATION GUIDE

# 20 25

A NINER TIMES PUBLICATION





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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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Dan Rice/Niner Times File

## Events to watch for on and off campus

**Tianyu Lights Festival**  
April 18-June 22, 6-10 P.M.  
Concord Mills

**Heroes Convention**  
June 20-22, 11 A.M.-7 P.M.  
Charlotte Convention Center

**Taste of Charlotte Festival**  
Presented by Food Lion  
June 6-8, 11 A.M.-6 P.M.  
Tryon Street

**The 116th NAACP National Convention**  
July 12-16, 9 A.M.-6 P.M.  
Charlotte Convention Center

**Durag Fest**  
June 21, 2-10 p.m.  
Sugar Creek Station

**Friday Nights at Camp North End**  
May 2- Oct. 24, Times vary  
Camp North End

## NOTES FROM THE NEWSROOM:

### Say yes

Davis Cuffe | Editor-in-Chief



By no means a reference to one of my favorite Elliott Smith songs or guidance to fold to peer pressure. "Say yes" was the advice my mom gave me on my first day of college.

Urging me not to be agreeable or compliant but open, my mom wanted me to not hold myself back. Before transferring and in my first year in college, saying 'yes' helped me make friends with people I would have never talked to

otherwise and take on experiences I would have otherwise passed up out of apathy.

At Charlotte, in my second year, saying 'yes' helped me rise through the ranks of the Niner Times and become editor-in-chief, as I never shied away from an opportunity.

Last year, in my third year at Charlotte, it helped me connect with a campus and city that was foreign to me as a transfer student. Giving good thought to every opportunity

or occasion put me in a lot of uncomfortable situations, but none that I regret or did not grow from.

At the end of the day, it is what college is for. When else will you be in reach of so much opportunity and growth? Probably never.

I am not telling anyone to do drugs or overwhelm themselves with commitments, but even if you are tired or uninterested or busy, if you are presented with something that could help you, say 'yes.'

## Joining the Niner Times

The Niner Times hires students of all years and majors. No prerequisite is required to join. All work in the Niner Times is paid and is a great opportunity to build your resume, professional portfolio and connection to campus.

We are currently hiring writers, photographers, editors, videographers, podcasters, designers, illustrators, on-screen talent and reporters. All positions are paid.

Working with the Niner Times, you will never be required to work on something you do not want to or when you do not want to. This means you work on what you want when you want.

To join, please fill out one of the interest forms linked in our Instagram bio @niner\_times and the QR code below.







# The **PRIDE** of Niner Nation Marching band

**Join Here**





# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## NINER TIMES SUMMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF WELCOMES NEW 49ERS

Welcome, new Niners!

Charlotte is so lucky that you have chosen to make this vibrant city and campus your home for the next four years. This next chapter of your life is one to remember, so do not rush a second of it.

Whether you were born and raised in Charlotte, and chose to stay close to home for college, or you are from way up north on the East Coast, from a small town in north New Jersey, the experiences you can have here are limitless and will be some of the best memories you will look back on in years to come. So much hard work has been completed for you to earn your spot here at UNC Charlotte, and you have done it! So make every moment count by embracing all the good to come.

As an out-of-state student, my first semester at Charlotte was a little shaky. I was nervous that I was not fitting in well with other students because I do not have that typical 'Southern charm,' but rather a northern attitude. I had not yet found that 'just right' feeling in any of the things I was surrounding myself with.

But that was when I realized that maybe it was because I was trying to portray this image of myself, of someone I am truly not. As I write this letter to you all during the summer, going into my fourth year of college, I will leave you with my best 'life hack' of college.

My biggest piece of advice to any incoming college student is to be your authentic self. You have probably heard that a thousand times, and are thinking, 'yeah, whatever.' But I truly mean it. You will find freedom in being true to yourself, better friends, more energy, enjoyment in little things and the niche interests that make the hours of homework worth taking a break from.

For me, my most authentic self is when I am sitting at my desk or in the newsroom of the Niner Times, writing a story. Although I am no Shakespeare, I feel truly at peace when working on a story or anything journalism-related. I could not care less if the others in my journalism classes think I am overzealous or a know-it-all

when I raise my hand a lot or participate in any class activity.

This is what makes me happy, so why would I change that to please some random student I do not even know and most likely will not see post-grad?

In my opinion, it would be a waste of four years if you did not tap into whatever creative outlet you have that aligns with what you are most passionate about.

Throughout my two years at the Niner Times, I have grown into an individual I never thought I would become. I have changed immensely for the better. I have learned so many valuable lessons from past editors. I have traveled to places that I never expected to. I have been 50 feet away from former presidents. I have made friends that I genuinely could not live without. Deciding to go after my goals and aspirations and getting involved was the best choice I could have made, and it has given me the confidence I always wished I had.

Walk on campus with confidence, play the music you like, and if that is country, rap or indie-pop, so be it. Go to the party, or stay at home, join the club of the sport you have been playing since eighth grade or try something new. You can even pick up the latest edition of the Niner Times to see what is happening on campus.

There are stories every day waiting to be uncovered, and luckily enough, you are on a campus with a newspaper that does just that. Embrace every moment of college, and I promise that you will succeed in life. The stress, heartache and bad days will always be there, but they do not have to be your everyday.

As the school year begins, enter it with the mindset that the sky's the limit. I know that sounds incredibly lame, but you really do have the power to make the life you dream of!

**SOFIA DISTEFANO**  
Summer Editor-In-Chief



Courtesy of Sofia DiStefano



# LETTER FROM CHANCELLOR GABER



Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

Welcome to the 2025-26 academic year, Niner Nation!

I'm thrilled to kick off another exciting year with all of you. Whether you're returning to campus or just starting your journey at Charlotte, there's so much to look forward to.

There's truly something special about being a Niner. From top-tier academics to hands-on experiences, Charlotte offers opportunities you simply won't find anywhere else. Thanks to our strong connection to the city — one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic in the country — you have access to incredible internships, job prospects, networking events, arts, culture, sports, and entertainment. And with the light rail running right through campus, it's all just a ride away.

You've probably seen the news — Charlotte continues to rise in national rankings. We're proud to be ranked No. 81 among public universities by U.S. News & World Report, putting us in the top 100 nationwide.

Even more exciting, we've earned Carnegie R1 status — the highest classification for research universities in the U.S. This means even more opportunities for you to work with world-class faculty on groundbreaking research and projects that make a real impact. It also boosts the value of your Charlotte degree, now and in the future.

That's why you'll often hear us say, "Only at Charlotte" — because you won't find these kinds of opportunities, experiences, and momentum anywhere else.

You made a great choice by coming here. And you're not in this alone — we have incredible professors, advisors, mentors, and staff who are here to support you every step of the way. Don't hesitate to reach out, whether that's in class, during office hours, or just by sending an email. We're all rooting for your success.

Make the most of your time here by getting involved! Show your Niner pride at our athletics events — we have 19 Division I teams, including our newest addition, women's lacrosse. And don't forget to rock your green clothes for #WearGreenWednesday.

As your chancellor, my number one goal is to help you succeed. I can't wait to see everything you'll accomplish this year — and I'll be cheering you on every step of the way.

Go Niners!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon L. Gaber".

Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber





# EXPERIENCE THE WORLD WITH **UNC CHARLOTTE**

.....  
[oip.charlotte.edu](http://oip.charlotte.edu) | [international@charlotte.edu](mailto:international@charlotte.edu)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
**CHARLOTTE** / OFFICE OF  
INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAMS

## Fall 2025 Events

### Study Abroad Fair

The annual Study Abroad Fair will take place on Wednesday, October 8th, 2025 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Prepare for a day filled with fun activities and chances to meet providers, faculty, and students promoting study abroad programs around the world!

[edabroad.charlotte.edu](http://edabroad.charlotte.edu)

### International Education Week

Monday, November 17th to Friday, November 21st, 2025

[oip.charlotte.edu/IEW](http://oip.charlotte.edu/IEW)

Please **visit [oip.charlotte.edu/resources](http://oip.charlotte.edu/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.

## Live. Learn. Be Global.

Make an international friend through the  
**Friendship and Culture Exchange Program**

Become a **Global Engagement Scholar**

Attend an **International Speaker Series** event

Live in the **Global Gateways** Wing of Witherspoon Hall

Become a **Conversation Partner**

Become an **Education Abroad Student** intern

Join the **Phi Beta Delta Honor Society**

Take part in the **International Coffee Hour**

## Study Abroad 101

Explore opportunities to go abroad! All UNC Charlotte students going abroad are required to complete Study Abroad 101 before meeting with an Education Abroad advisor or starting an application.

[edabroad.charlotte.edu/getstarted](http://edabroad.charlotte.edu/getstarted)

## Global Engagement Scholars Program (GESP)

Open Enrollment

Earn a microcredential and gain global and intercultural competency skills. Join the GESP! Visit us online for the application process at [global.charlotte.edu/GESP](http://global.charlotte.edu/GESP).



# CAMPUS EVENTS TO ADD TO YOUR CALENDARS THIS YEAR

Sunnya Hadavi | Lead Writer



Niner Times File

There are many things to do as a student on campus and in the city of Charlotte. The biggest challenge, especially for new students, is knowing what happens and when. This guide covers a fraction of events, focusing on the bigger events each Niner should experience at least once.

## Student Organization Showcase

A perfect way to find ways to be involved, the Student Org Showcase features over 250 student organizations. It is recommended for all students who want to be more involved in the campus community. The Showcase is hosted at the start of each semester and is always packed. This fall, the Showcase is the day before classes on Aug. 17 from 4-6 p.m. and is in the plaza across the Popp-Martin Student Union.

More information about the Student Org Showcase can be found on Niner Engage.

## Greek Life events

UNC Charlotte's Greek councils and organizations host various events throughout the academic year to showcase their organizations and their long history. The following events are some of the most significant that they host and are open to all students, even if they are not members of a Greek organization.

- NPHC Yard Show (August) & Yard Fest (April)
- NPHC Stroll Competition (October/November)
- DGC Picnic (August & April)
- DGC Cultural Kickoff (March)
- Greek Weekend (April)
- PHA & IFC Air Band (April)
- Greek Games (April)

More information about these events can be found on the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life Instagram (@cltgogreek) and especially on each organization's respective Instagram pages.

## Norms Vintage Market

The Norms Vintage Market student organization brings UNC Charlotte's thrifting culture to life. Markets are organized multiple times during the academic year and are at the heart of campus across the Student Union. Dozens of vendors are present and sell various clothing, memorabilia and jewelry. It is one of the best ways to support sustainable shopping and local businesses.

While the first market of the academic year is usually at the start of September, dates have not been posted. Check for flyers around campus with the dates, or check their Instagram (@normsvintagemarket).

## Niner Nation Week

The best time to showcase your Niner Pride is during Niner Nation Week. The University will host many events on campus and in Uptown to celebrate current students and alumni, including the Homecoming Palooza and campus scavenger hunt. The week concludes with the Charlotte 49ers football homecoming game.

This year, Niner Nation Week is from Oct. 13-18. The homecoming game will be played against Temple University on Oct. 18.

## Annual International Festival

The 47th annual International Festival will be held in the Barnhardt Student Activity Center this September or early October. The festival is one of the University's longest-standing traditions and attracts over 20,000 people. Over 35 nations are represented at the International Festival, which features booths with activities, food and items for purchase.

Information about the International Festival can be found at ifest.charlotte.edu.

## Conferences, research events and talks

UNC Charlotte hosts various academic and professional events, from seminars to confer-

ences. These occur throughout the academic year, especially in the spring semester. The best way to be involved in or hear about these events is by communicating with professors and those within your academic department.

- Honors Research Symposium (December)
- TEDxUNCCharlotte (February)
- Women in Data Science Conference (March)
- Media Literacy Matters Conference (March)
- Analytics Frontiers Conference (April)
- Graduate Research Conference (April)
- Undergraduate Research Conference (April 24, 2026)

## Cultural, international and holiday student events

With over a hundred different cultural and international student organizations, there is always an event celebrating the cultural diversity on campus.

Information about these events can be found on the student organization's social media and Niner Engage. Here is a fraction of the events hosted annually:

- Black Student Union's Black History Month Kickoff (February)
- Organization of African Students' African Night (February)
- Muslim Student Association's Ramadan If-tar (February/March)
- Latin American Student Organization & Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity's Jar-ipeo Night (March)
- Asian Student Association's Hello Asia Market (March)
- Vietnamese Student Association's Viet Night (April)
- Triveni Indian Student Association's Holi Celebration (April)
- UNC Charlotte Hillel's Shabbat Dinner

## 49er Goldrush 5k

Every year, University Recreation (UREC) hosts the 49er Goldrush 5k in February for students and all members of the local community who want to be active. The 5k route loops around campus and sees a high turnout. UREC hosts smaller events to help those who wish to participate but may need help preparing for a long-distance run.

As the event gets closer, more information can be found on the UREC website, including registration information.

## Late Night Breakfast

Hosted on the last day of classes in the fall and spring semesters, Late Night Breakfast is one of UNC Charlotte's most popular traditions, and students take part in it before the start of finals. University administration and staff serve breakfast foods for free at the South Village Dining Hall (SoVi), and there is live music and dancing.

## Want to know more?

There are many more events held on campus that could not be mentioned in this guide alone. The city also features various annual festivals for those who want to venture off campus.

The best way to learn about these events would be to check UNC Charlotte's social media regularly, read newsletters in your Charlotte email, follow local news outlets and keep up with the Niner Times (ninerimes.com or @niner\_times).



CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE EVENT INFORMATION!

NINERTIMES.COM





# BUILDING AN EMPIRE:

## Sharon L. Gaber is improving the UNC Charlotte name one step at a time

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

“

“I put my own pressure on myself to be able to do things. I have grown kids that keep in contact. I still am, [just a] mom, but I also look at the 31,000 students here like they’re all my kids. I want to do the best we can for every single student and recognize that every student has a different set of needs, challenges and opportunities.”

- Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber

What does it take to raise a university’s standing in five years drastically? For UNC Charlotte, the answer is Sharon L. Gaber.

UNC Charlotte’s 76-spot climb in public universities’ national ranking, record-breaking enrollment in the fall of 2024 with 31,091 students, reaching R1 status and implementation of an Artificial Intelligence Institute have all turned UNC Charlotte into an academic powerhouse, and all under Gaber’s leadership.

“It’s a great honor and responsibility. It’s not something I ever planned on doing, and yet, it’s something that I’ve been fortunate enough to get to this position,” said Gaber. “I know I’ve tried hard to do a good job so that there will be future female chancellors.”

While an accomplished administrator in 2025, Gaber did not always have her eyes set on entering the world of higher education leadership. Gaber initially gravitated toward city planning and economic development.

The West Coast native has earned an A.B. in Economics and Urban Studies from Occidental College, an

Courtesy of UNC Charlotte



M.P.L. from the University of Southern California and a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning from Cornell University.

After years of studying, Gaber secured a job in California, working in Long Beach. Her role in the Economic Development Department sparked her passion for improving the lives of others and inspired her to pursue a career in higher education.

“City planning is about solving issues—transportation, infrastructure, equity—and I realized that what really excited me was thinking about how to make cities better, how to make people’s lives better,” said Gaber.

Before Gaber went to work towards a Ph.D., she talked to her planning director, who was un-supportive.

“He was like, ‘That’s [graduate school] a waste.’ And all I said was, ‘Oh, okay, thank you.’ I don’t think it’s been a waste,” said Gaber.

Despite the doubts from her previous director, Gaber remained confident and found inspiration from her sole female professor at the University of Southern California, Jennifer Wolch, who was highly influential in her choice to pursue a higher education leadership role.

“I had one female professor in that entire time [and I thought] that was interesting,” said Gaber. “She [Wolch] was really good at planning, so she was a role model. She went on to become a dean at UC Berkeley. So I kind of followed her footsteps, but I had a different set of opportunities.”

Gaber debuted as a female higher education leader as the assistant department chair and graduate officer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Over the course of 12 years, she moved up to become the department chair of community and regional planning and associate to the vice chancellor for research. In 2002, she began working for Auburn University as an urban planning professor, leading to her becoming the interim provost and vice president for academic affairs in 2008.

After moving around from university to university, Gaber landed in Toledo, Ohio, as the University of Toledo’s president in 2015. In 2020, Gaber’s plans began to look different as COVID-19 reshaped the higher education landscape, and Gaber was drawn to Charlotte.

When Gaber received the call urging her to apply as Charlotte’s chancellor, she was not looking for a new job or to move to a different state. At Toledo, Gaber brought a diversity plan to promote inclusivity on campus, an enrollment plan to help with the University’s graduate rate and retention and a master plan to reduce the University’s footprint in the area.

While doing well in Toledo and making improvements, Gaber realized the possibilities with Charlotte, so she became in favor of taking the offer to apply.

Gaber saw Charlotte as an incredible opportunity to connect with the city and engage with students and the wider community, something that she has always had a passion for improving city life.

“I saw Charlotte as a city with so much poten-

tial,” said Gaber. “What I wanted is to be a part of a university that is helping to inspire, engage and activate the city because I think that it aligns with my interest [in urban planning], but it’s also what a university should be doing.”

Given the atmosphere at the time, with the COVID-19 lockdown and navigating the “virtual world,” Gaber said the selection process was different and stressful, involving multiple interviews and committee reviews.

After a rigorous process, Gaber made it past three other finalists and through the peak of COVID-19 before being finally announced as chancellor in March 2020.

Gaber’s earlier days as chancellor were marked by a unique set of challenges as the world adjusted to the new realities of the pandemic. With the campus quiet and empty during the spring of 2020, Gaber spent much of her early days on Zoom and exploring the campus, learning about the city and University as she went along.

“I sat in [my] office every day, and I’d look out, and nobody was here,” said Gaber. “I mean, the first thing you do when you come to a new place is to meet people, right? Nobody [could] sit down and have a meeting, so I was ‘Zooming’ everyone. It was out of order because first, I learned my way around campus and the city, and then I met everyone else.”

During those early days cooped up in her office, Gaber began working on UNC Charlotte’s 10-year strategic plan, “Shaping What’s Next.”

The strategic plan, created to assist with student success set for 2021 - 2031, outlines four goals: A: Transform students’ lives through education opportunity and excellence, B: Power the future through inquiry, research and creative discovery, C: Drive progress for North Carolina and beyond and D: Live our guiding commitments by leading in equity and engagement.

Written out under section A was to go from No. 113 to No. 87 in the U.S. News & World Public Universities National Ranking. In the fall of 2024, the University announced that it had already surpassed that goal and reached No. 81 ahead of the predicted time by seven years.

While becoming a Research 1 (R1) level institution was a long-term goal that was expected to fall under section B, the milestone was reached six years earlier than the initial 10-year plan set by the University and Gaber.

Years before Charlotte’s R1 status, UNC Charlotte would have used research from other North Carolina universities rather than its own.

With hopes of changing that reality, as using other research was holding Charlotte’s student research back, Gaber was at the forefront of change to bring Charlotte the prestigious Carnegie Classification of R1.

In addition to leading the change to R1, Gaber has focused on expanding the University’s physical presence through the recently approved “Campus Master Plan.”

Within the Campus Master Plan, the University aims to designate specific areas to bring a more traditional campus to life for Charlotte. Although not previously included in the master plan, the University purchased The Edge apartments, expanding the campus borders. Gaber hopes the initiative outlined in the plans will improve student life with more housing.

Changes to buildings such as the Cone University Center might be made to improve their functionality as part of the Campus Master Plan. Gaber said that in the meeting with other campus administration members, she was the one to remind everyone that the University would still need to have University founder and first chancellor Bonnie Cone’s name honored.

“I was the one who mentioned that we still have to have a building named for Miss Bonnie. To me, that seems like a no-brainer,” said Gaber.

As the University grows, Gaber remains committed to accessibility, ensuring that she puts the students above all despite how busy she may be.

“For me, it’s making sure that I’m accessible, that I’m listening, that I lead with empathy. I think understanding being human is the most important thing, as well as connecting with people,” said Gaber. “I put my own pressure on myself to be able to do things. I have grown kids that keep in contact. I still am, [just a] mom, but I also look at the 31,000 students here like they’re all my kids,” said Gaber. “I want to do the best we can for every single student and recognize that every student has a different set of needs, challenges and opportunities.”

Once a month, Gaber hosts a lunch in the Popp-Martin Student Union. Around 25 students join her for lunch to talk about the semester. Whether it be about class or something that has recently annoyed them, Gaber listens to it all.

Gaber uses that time with students to focus primarily on determining what is working versus what is not at the University.

“I love doing [the lunches] and hearing from them; there are some little

tactical things that I’ll get along the way, too,” said Gaber. “For me to connect with students, it’s the best part of the job.”

While making strides for the University and student, faculty and staff-specific needs, Gaber has also broken barriers on the administration level. Gaber highlighted the gravity of holding a position that had long been out of reach for many women before her.

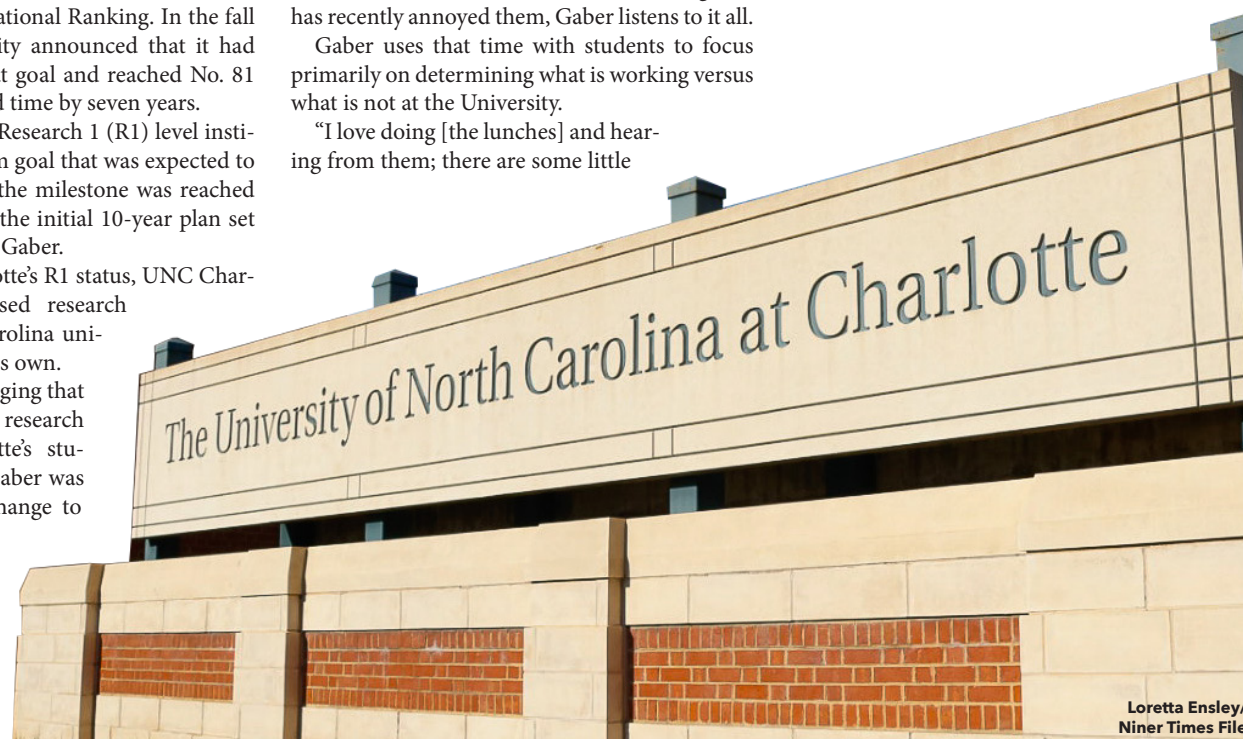
“When I first became chancellor, my daughters were like, ‘What do you mean they haven’t had a woman before?’ and I think when you’re younger, you think it makes sense that a woman or a man [can be in that role], but I think looking at history, it hasn’t always been that way,” said Gaber.

Stepping into the role with primarily male predecessors, Gaber recognized the challenges women in leadership face.

In addition to Wolch’s early influence, Gaber also holds a deep admiration for Cone, whose legacy continues to guide Gaber in her leadership. Gaber honors Cone’s impact by keeping a photograph of her in her office, a constant reminder of the foundation Cone built for the University.

As Gaber continues to guide UNC Charlotte into a future of growth and innovation, she remains committed to honoring the legacy of those who paved the way for her and others. With a deep respect for the past and an unwavering vision for the future, Gaber is not only shaping the trajectory of the University but also leaving an undeniable mark on the broader community.

For her, leadership is not just about achieving milestones but ensuring that the opportunities she has worked hard for will empower future generations of students and leaders to follow in her footsteps.



Loretta Ensley/  
Niner Times File



# UNC CHARLOTTE ON THE RISE:

## rankings, research and record enrollment

Deonna Dickens | Staff Writer

Marking its highest enrollment in history, UNC Charlotte experienced a transformative 2024–2025 academic year, defined by significant achievements and changes.

### Colleges and administration

In December of 2024, William ‘Bill’ Tolone was appointed dean of the Graduate School. Formerly the associate dean of and professor in the College of Computing and Informatics, Tolone began his new role on Jan. 1, 2025. Since then, several important leadership roles have been filled. On Jan. 9, 2025, Michael Putman assumed the position of associate provost for Academic Programs and Space. Later, on April 25, 2025, Christopher R. Boyer was named the founding dean of the College of Humanities and Earth and Social Sciences.

On July 1, 2025, a few new faculty members will enter their new roles. Teresa Petty was appointed to the position of associate provost for Undergraduate Education and dean of University College. Eric D. Heggstad was named the inaugural associate provost for Faculty Affairs. Richard J. Buttmer Jr. is the current dean of the Belk College of Business.

### Student organizations and resources

In the fall 2024 semester, to celebrate the Non-Panhellenic Council’s (NPHC) 50th anniversary on the UNC Charlotte campus with the addition of a dedication in the Star Quad, an area named by the Divine Nine themselves. This meaningful tribute was made possible through the joint effort between the University Foundation and Kevin Bailey, vice chancellor of student affairs.

The Student Government Association (SGA) held the 2025 elections on March 20, bringing new student leaders into office. Isaiah Grayson and Madison Brown secured the student body president and vice president positions, while Emily Hoyle won the senior class president campaign. Ja’Mia Degree and Amarielle Oliver were announced as the junior and sophomore class presidents, respectively.

At UNC Charlotte, students have no shortage of ways to get involved. There are currently over 400 student organizations to participate in at Charlotte, including over 250 tied to Greek Life. Many organizations hosted fundraisers to allo-

cate money for those in need. Others held educational, cultural and community-focused events.

### Rankings

UNC Charlotte saw record-breaking numbers in fall 2024, enrolling 31,091 students and surpassing its previous enrollment record of 30,488 set in the fall 2021 semester.

Just a few weeks later, on Sept. 24, 2024, U.S. News & World Report released its 2025 rankings, and the University made some impressive gains. UNC Charlotte made a notable leap, rising 15 spots to tie for No. 81 among U.S. universities. The University also earned its highest national ranking to date, climbing 26 places to a tie for No. 152 out of 434 public and private institutions across the country.

The University also stood out in several key categories, ranking No. 45 for most innovative schools, No. 62 for social mobility and No. 7 for online bachelor’s degrees.

### Research 1 (R1) achievement

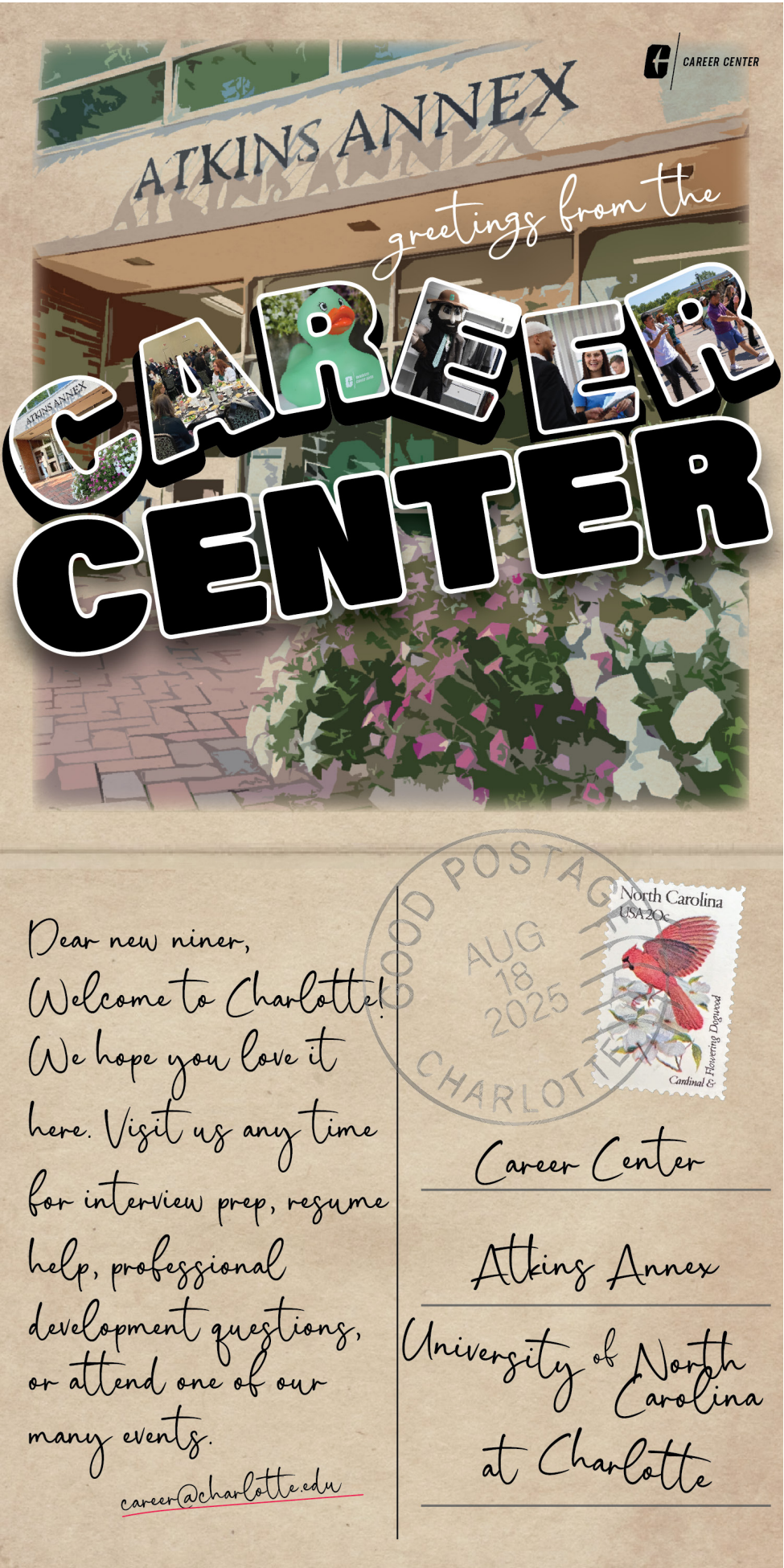
On Feb. 13, 2025, UNC Charlotte was officially designated as a Research 1 (R1) University by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, in cooperation with the American Council on Education. Only 187 schools earned the R1 title in 2025. This designation represents the highest level of research activity for universities. UNC Charlotte now joins an elite group, placing it within the top 4% of research universities nationwide. In the lead-up to this recognition, the UNC Charlotte invested \$92 million in research and conferred an average of 160 doctoral degrees.

### Looking forward

As a new school year rolls in, more campus advancements will occur.

The first phase of the Jerry Richardson Stadium expansion will take place on Aug. 27, 2025, at 11 a.m. Once complete, the project will boost the stadium’s capacity to 21,000. Gate 2 will not be operational during much of the construction, and some tailgating spaces will be temporarily relocated.

The Leon Levine Foundation is expanding its support for the Levine Scholars Program, a merit-based scholarship program, with a \$24.9 million gift.







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# STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON CAMPUS DINING OPTIONS

Giselle Jimenez Del-Carmen | Staff Writer

At UNC Charlotte, dining spots are located throughout campus and offer a wide range of options, making food available to students in convenient locations.

Through a Niner Times survey, students shared what factors ultimately affected their choices and opinions of dining during the academic year.

Dining options on campus include Chick-fil-A, Wendy's, Bojangles, Subway, Panda Express and many more. Each has its contributing factors, making it the top spot for students to choose where to eat.

Whether it is customer service or simply a favorite spot, some options are more popular than others regarding location and accommodations. At the same time, others are chosen due to speed and quality. Through the survey, students gave insight into their top choices for a given category and explained why. Student perspectives rely on the number of times they choose to dine on campus, shaping their opinions and preferences. Per the survey, 50% of students who responded reported that they eat daily on campus, with 35% eating a few times a week and the remaining 15% eating rarely.

On a broader scale, students were asked what their favorite dining spot was. Without asking for specific reasons, the question helped generate an overall idea of the top spot chosen by students. Of all the eateries, Chick-fil-A was the most popular, with 30% of students who participated in the survey choosing it. Other options, such as Subway with 15% and Bojangles, Wild Blue Sushi and Panda Express, each with 10%, were also popular.

Students' reasons for being on campus differ, but the majority are attending class, going to work or heading home. That includes students who live on campus as well as those who commute. Whatever the circumstance, such as grabbing food on the go to get to class, working either on or off campus or beating traffic to get home, it all determines which eatery students choose.

Location contributed as the highest factor, with 70% of students choosing what is closest to their classes or jobs. If students were on the go, the popular choice was Chick-fil-A, with 35% choosing it. It is located at Prospector, close to the library and many academic buildings, such as Friday and Smith.

Students commented on food quality, customer service and speed. Many other factors accompanied location, and the most common was speedy service, with 60% mentioning it. However, some student participants gave specific an-

swers on why they chose Chick-fil-A.

"It's usually cheaper than dining halls and much faster when I'm short on time," said Gabe Torres, a third-year student.

Whereas, the location of Chick-fil-A was convenient as well.

"It is reliable, I know it's always gonna be good. Also, easy access from my classes," said first-year Catherine McBride.

Others also commented on their customer service.

"The staff are so nice, and the food is so yummy," said Mariah Gilmore, a first-year student.

Bojangles, the runner-up with 20% of the most popular vote, was also chosen for convenience. Located in the Popp-Martin Student Union, it is a few minutes on foot from North Village and is a part of one of the four food courts on campus. It is also known for its boxed supreme dinner option. According to students, this ultimately seals the deal for them in terms of convenience.

"It's easy to order online. The wait is sometimes not long, and it's convenient to eat out of the box," said Imani Bellamy, a second-year student.

Although campus life is not always about rushing or finding something to eat on the go, there is always downtime for students to hang out with friends or spend alone time on any given day of the week. Whatever the stress-free day looks like, most dining options are still open, whether after classes or on the weekend.

Students were asked which eatery they would choose to hang out with friends. Again, Chick-fil-A took first place, with 35% of the students choosing it. During the weekends, the two runner-ups, Starbucks and Subway, at 15% each, are popular due to Chick-fil-A closing on the weekends.

Apart from location and customer service, students' choice of specific dining spots also depends on the food itself. On a broader scale, students were asked if they thought campus dining options were accommodating, to which 70% answered yes, with the remaining 30% answering no. Narrowing it down, what can fall under accommodations are vegan, gluten-free or vegetarian options.

This includes the quality and variety of the eatery's menu, as it ties in with accommodation for those with special dietary needs. Students would determine which menus have the most variety and quality. If staying healthier is also important, looking for dining options with a separate menu for healthy foods is also considered. Those who consider healthy options when choosing where

to dine totaled 25%.

"I'd argue we're easily in the top 50 nationwide when it comes to campus dining. What sets us apart is the team behind the scenes. People like Jody Thompson genuinely care and are willing to meet with any student to discuss concerns or new ideas," said second-year student Matthew Kingsley. "There are still things to improve, but I truly believe they're listening and doing their best to give students what they pay for. Whether it's adding better options or removing things that aren't working, they're constantly adjusting to meet student needs."

Jody J. Thompson is the director of Auxiliary Services and the manager of the Food Services program. Along with Thompson, Charlotte has a district dietitian, Maggie Sullivan, available to students to talk about dining services.

However, students also feel differently about Charlotte's accommodations, especially those with dietary restrictions or follow vegetarian or vegan diets.

Second-year student Jasmine Tran, who follows a vegan diet, explained that at times she struggles to find places outside of one spot on campus that has options for her.

"The only place I can get a full meal on campus right now is Subway. I know they're adding Qdoba and Halal Shack, which I'm excited about because I can eat from both of those places," said Tran.

Winding back to variety and quality, 50% of the students considered the quality of the food, and 40% considered the variety. However, with the food quality holding the majority, students also considered both when choosing where to dine. When students were asked which dining spot had the best variety or alternative nutritional food, Subway took the top spot, with 35% of students going for this option. Chick-fil-A came in No. 2 with 25% and Shakesmart with 15%.

Other factors, such as pricing, payment methods, seating availability and more, affected their choices. When asked to scale their satisfaction at the end of the survey, the average rate for the dining options was between three and four. The breakdown for this consists of pricing, with 30% of the students choosing this, the ability to use declining balance, with 20%, and the availability of seating, with 15%.

Students can advocate for any dining concerns by speaking with dining services at Charlotte and the SGA Business Affairs Committee.

## WHAT ARE NINER'S TOP DINING SPOTS?

### CHICK-FIL-A 40%



### SUBWAY 10%



### BOJANGLES 10%



### WILD BLUE SUSHI 10%



### PANDA EXPRESS 10%





# WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

Tackling the newfound freedom of college life can be tricky; sometimes, students may need some help navigating that journey. Whether it is managing physical or mental health, preparing for your future career or just figuring out where your mail went, UNC Charlotte's campus offers a wide range of resources to make student life smoother and more successful.

While stepping out of your comfort zone and exploring campus beyond your routine might feel intimidating, taking advantage of these resources might relieve some of the unnecessary stress that comes with college and make the time more memorable.

## Student Health Center

Officially known as the Waddell Center for Student Health and Wellbeing (SHC), the SHC is first on the list of resources you will want to take advantage of throughout the school year. For students who do not have a car or access to medical care with a doctor in the University area, the SHC, across from the greenhouse, is just a walk or campus bus ride away from affordable healthcare.

Open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., the SHC is open to students who can make appointments either online or by calling the SHC directly. Students have access to pharmacy services, sexual health resources and medical services, including immunization aid if needed.

## Center for Counseling and Psychological Services

College life can bring excitement but also stress, anxiety and homesickness. Charlotte's Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers various services to help students throughout the semester. Some of their services include individual or group counseling, mental health screenings, workshops on stress management, mindfulness and resilience and crisis services.

All services through CAPS are confidential and included in student fees, meaning that there is no extra charge for the majority of support services.

## Career Center

Whether you are a first-year student looking to explore career options or a fourth-year student preparing for postgraduate life, Charlotte's Career Center is a powerful ally to all students, as it can help mold you into the individual you would like to become in the future.

The Career Center is more than just a place for students to get a headshot for their LinkedIn profile. It provides valuable information and assistance for real-world scenarios. There are resume reviews, mock interview workshops, internship and job search assistance, multiple career fairs throughout the academic year, employer networking opportunities and graduate preparation resources.

Located next to the J. Murrey Atkins Library, the Career Center provides students with everything they need for success in the job market. It also helps them navigate Hire-a-Niner.

As much as you are supposed to have fun during college, you should also be taking advantage of these years to prepare yourself for your future career. Open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., students of all years can make an appointment or drop in at the center to gain some guidance.

## Student Involvement Center

A great way to enjoy the college experience is by getting involved. Whether that be in a club sports team, Greek Life, a student cultural organization, dance club or the acapella group, there is a place for you to get involved and enjoy a unique experience.

UNC Charlotte aims to provide the most that it can for students in any student organization. The Student Involvement Center is in the Popp-Martin Student Union on the second floor and has everything you could possibly need for arts and crafts supplies, button making and printer access for flyers. If you do not know how to make a personalized button for your student organization, that is no problem; the involvement center provides each organization with 100 free buttons and instructions on how to make them. Using the involve-

ment center as a resource is highly encouraged if you are trying to get your club or organization on the map on campus.

## Mail and package services

Although its typical location is currently under construction, the mail and package services at UNC Charlotte are another great resource for students. For out-of-state students, especially, if you want to send a birthday present, receive one or ship something important back home, the on-campus mail room is just the place to go.

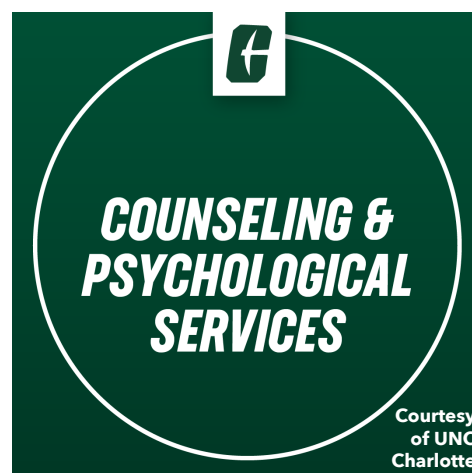
Currently, the mail room is located on the first floor of the Popp-Martin Student Union, but once construction is completed, it will move back to the lower level of Prospector.

The mailroom has a variety of resources and services, including express and priority mail (domestic and international), packaging supplies, postage stamps and postcards, signature/delivery confirmation, bulk mail, package services and money orders. This way, students do not have to worry about separately going out to buy stamps, envelopes or boxes if they need to

send something out.

To purchase supplies, the mailroom also accepts all forms of payment, including cash, card, Apple Pay and through the 49er account.

College life is full of new challenges, but you do not have to face them alone. UNC Charlotte offers a strong network of resources designed to help you succeed inside and outside the classroom. By taking advantage of these services, you are easing college stress and building a stronger college experience.





# BRICK-BY-BRICK:

## Building a campus that feels like home

Davis Cuffe | Editor-In-Chief

A question as old as the University itself and one heavily debated among the UNC Charlotte student body: “How many bricks are on campus?”

Making up every building and walkway on campus are red bricks, coming together to make space for students to eat, sleep, learn and live.

These bricks were added to campus through the efforts of James H. Woodward, who served as UNC Charlotte’s chancellor from 1989 to 2005 and was instrumental in making UNC Charlotte what it is today.

Upon his arrival to campus in 1989, Woodward was greeted by a campus that was somewhat disjointed and underdeveloped. After the University’s first chancellor, Bonnie Cone, acquired the 1,000 acres on which the campus would be built in 1961, university officials moved quickly to build the campus that would support 13,222 students in 1989.

“When we looked around campus, we found out we had about 20 different styles of light fixtures,” remarked Woodward in an interview with the Niner Times. “Well, that was crazy.”

Taking inspiration from a summer at Harvard University’s campus and time abroad visiting European campuses, Woodward sought to create a campus that offered cohesion and a capable learning environment for a growing student body.

To make that vision a reality, Woodward constructed his campus master plan, which is still used today. It outlines what materials should be used for buildings on campus, along with where and how to build those buildings. Woodward’s plan has since been revised to adjust for the current day, but it still guides UNC Charlotte in any new construction or renovations on campus.

Before Woodward could put those plans to good use, he would have to complete the largest fundraising effort in University history. While UNC Charlotte’s current campus unfortunately acts as a spoiler, Woodward did the impossible and raised over \$250 million to construct the campus in his image.

A highlight in his master plan, which was instrumental in earning the funds required as they detailed how the proposed buildings would benefit both the city and students, was, of course, bricks.

His reason for having bricks as the main material for buildings on campus was to create the cohesion and longevity he felt at Harvard.

“When you walked into the core of Harvard and looked around, you saw [that] all

the buildings had the same brick. So you felt like you were at home,” said Woodward. “Whichever direction you looked, you were still at the same university; it was your home.”

“Our goal was to build a campus that 100 years from now, as well as one year from now, would look like a coherent university campus.”

Behind the scenes of Woodward’s fundraising efforts was his wife, Martha, whom he married at 16 years old.

To gather interest and gain the trust of prospective donors in the Charlotte area and nationwide, the Woodwards put the chancellor’s house, formally known as the Bissell House Chancellor’s Residence, to good use. In the first nine months of their stay in the residence, they held 73 events, roughly one event every three to four days.

Woodward says Martha hosted every single event practically on her own, welcoming guests, cooking meals, making conversation and inadvertently building UNC Charlotte.

When thinking back to his wife’s efforts, Woodward reflects on lyrics from the Dolly Parton song, “If You Hadn’t Been There,” which she wrote for her husband.

“This is from Dolly Parton. ‘I am here today because you were always there.’ Now, I could have said

those words. I am here having some success as chancellor because you, sweetheart, were always there,” said Woodward.

Even through late nights hosting events and talking to donors, Woodward was a key player in not just funding buildings on campus but designing them.

As the son of a contractor and the recipient of a doctoral degree in engineering mechanics, Woodward had plenty of experience in engineering and oversaw the fundraising and the design of the University of Alabama at Birmingham buildings before his time at Charlotte. During construction, Woodward was an advocate for planting the trees that line Charlotte’s walkways and add to its natural beauty.

Through his oversight and vision, UNC Charlotte set the standard for future expansion and added nearly a dozen buildings on campus. Some of those buildings include the Dale F. Halton Arena, Friday and Fretwell buildings, three residence halls and two parking decks.

Although he is no longer involved with UNC Charlotte’s construction, Woodward says he is content with the campus’s direction and hopes to see more student housing built to accommodate the growing student body of over 30,000.

“There’s got to be student housing built, and that’ll continue to be done, but I’m extremely pleased with—I mean, the current leadership of the campus is absolutely marvelous,” said Woodward. “Chancellor Gaber, we’re really, really, really lucky to have her.”

While Woodward has all the answers regarding Charlotte’s construction, one question he cannot answer is the age-old, sought-after question of Charlotte’s brick count.

This, of course, leaves Charlotte’s biggest mystery up to the students to count each individual brick. If you do happen to take up this endeavor or just find yourself gazing upon some of Charlotte’s red brick buildings, take a moment to remember that every brick is a building block of history, ambition and the future still being written.



Megan Bentley/Niner Times File  
& Courtesy of UNC Charlotte





# JOIN THE NINERTIMES

## Student-driven news since 1947

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

The Niner Times aims to provide accurate and fair news to the UNC Charlotte community. We cover campus happenings, news and events in the city of Charlotte and North Carolina and topics that are important to students. We publish written, photo and video content on-line (ninertimes.com) and on social media. We also produce a supplemental bi-weekly (every other week) in-print newspaper that hits stands on Wednesdays.

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# OUR HWB Promise

We are committed to fostering the holistic wellbeing of students by providing collaborative care and support.



## STUDENT HEALTH (Located in the Joyce Davis Waddell Center for Student Health and Wellbeing)

### OUR FOCUS IS HEALTH CARE

We are here to provide comprehensive medical care, disease prevention, health education, and various specialty services to all registered UNC Charlotte students, regardless of the type of health insurance they carry. Student Health also has a full service pharmacy on-site.



## CAPS (Christine F. Price Center for Counseling & Psychological Services)

### OUR FOCUS IS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

We are here to provide short-term individual and group counseling, crisis management, consultation, referral services (on and off campus), and educational and preventive initiatives related to promoting mental health for the campus community.



## CWP (Center for Wellness Promotion)

### OUR FOCUS IS WELLNESS EDUCATION

Our team is here to educate and empower students on many issues including sexual and relationship violence, substance use, recovery from substance use disorders, sexual health, and much more.



## UREC (University Recreation)

### OUR FOCUS IS PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Our team develops and implements recreational programs that align with our core values - student development, balance, fun, quality, and safety - in order to achieve wellbeing.



WELLBEING IS THE **NORM** at Charlotte







# ANSWERS WITH ALBIN:

*A look into the  
upcoming season  
with Charlotte  
football*

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

**W**hen getting to know Charlotte football's new Head Coach Tim Albin, it is evident that he deals in a different kind of currency—heart currency, which holds more weight than anything written in his contract.

Albin has spent 37 years eating, sleeping and breathing football. Now, change has brought him a new beginning in Charlotte, with his hiring officially announced on Dec. 6, 2024. As spring football recently wrapped up and summer workouts ramp up ahead of the 2025 season, the *Niner Times* sat down with Albin to learn more about the man behind the headset and his vision for the program.



**NT: How do you plan to write a new chapter of your story at Charlotte, and how have you adjusted to the city so far? Do you have any favorite parts or notice anything weird?**

Albin: I adjusted very well to the city of Charlotte. Me and my wife have thoroughly enjoyed it. I've said this many times here in the last probably six weeks, [that] the food scene in Charlotte is insane. I have put on a legit 10 pounds. So my workout regime is not matching my intake, I'll say that. As far as the program, I'd say we're on schedule. We're still in the honeymoon phase because we haven't played any games. But we're moving towards getting closer to that every day.

**NT: What is a fun fact about you that many people might not know?**

Albin: I don't know a fun one. I mean, I try to pride myself in a "my glass is half full, not half empty." My blood type is 'be positive.' I try, I do my best, but I struggle sometimes, so I don't know if that's a fun fact, but that's how I try to go about every day, you know?

**What should Charlotte fans look for in the upcoming season?**

Albin: In today's [world of] NIL, there's a financial transaction talk. But we spend our time on the heart currency. That's a word that I've heard before from a colleague [heart currency]. We want to start with making sure that anybody we target to attend Charlotte as a student athlete, they're gonna need to choose Charlotte because of what Charlotte is. The driving force is to help develop the skillset for these athletes to be successful in life. That is really my focus, and it's an academic piece. It's giving back to the community. I'm really excited [about] where we are to this point. We're not a finished product, but the fan base is gonna be proud of what they do off the field. Then, they're gonna come and watch, continue to support us and watch a great product. We want great ambassadors to this University and its leadership.

**NT: When looking through the locker room and depth of roster, what do you see out of this team?**

Albin: Looking in the locker room again and going through this second [transfer portal] window, we've addressed some areas that needed to be addressed. We're gonna have 23 or 24 new players that are going to show up for the first time, joining us here in the next few weeks.

**NT: What does the versatility of the quarterback room look like?**

Albin: Right now, it's a three-person race. All three had really good springs. One of the three had a little bit of an ankle sprain and missed a couple of weeks. Other than that, it's gonna be a really intense and very competitive battle. It's way too early to say who's in the lead. But all three guys are highly intelligent. They're unbelievable students of the game. I think the biggest coaching point I would give those three guys is,

"Hey, don't try to do too much. Let the game come to you and let the guys around you make some plays as well." I think if those guys can do that, that's gonna give them the best chance to be successful.

**NT: After 20 seasons with Ohio, what emotions came with making the decision to move to Charlotte and begin a new chapter? What was it like during your opening press conference with the 49ers?**

Albin: So, Athens is home to my family. It was not easy, but there were opportunities for me to go do some things at other programs for more money several times in those 20 years I chose to stay. I didn't want to pull my kids out of school. It wasn't worth making a move—I've always said that because it's the truth. Our family equity was more important to me than a few more bucks. I wasn't gonna let the bottom of the screen on ESPN be the last time they [my players] heard from Tim Albin. The timing was tough, but it's just what it is. It ripped my heart out, and my wife was standing beside me in front of the team [on a Sunday]. Then, Monday was the press conference here. To be honest, the passion of our fan base, the leadership of this University from Chancellor Gaber, to Director Hill, Dennis Bunker [the chairman of the Board of Trustees], the people that I met the next day, and the whole program and the fan base, the healing process began immediately because of the wonderful people. I know why the Good Lord's got us here, and so it's been very comforting.

**NT: At Ohio, you and your wife started the Bobcat Kids Fishing Day tradition. Have you started any new traditions here at Charlotte yet, either with the team or your staff?**

Albin: We've all implemented our Unity Council, which is voted on by their peers and by position. It gives the player, your team, a voice. You've got a representative from every position, and we meet biweekly. We've also implemented the beautiful campus, all the buildings and the history of former Chancellor Woodward, on the bricks and the whole story behind that. You can earn your brick, and that's something that I'm very proud of. We want our athletes to use our resources that we give that we make available to them to their fullest extent. That's the core value behind the brick [is using your resources to your fullest extent]. On fishing day in particular, I have a plan for that hopefully [in July], when we have some time off, I wanna get the staff together for a little retreat here around the Charlotte area. We have not done that yet, but it's in the works.

**NT: What's the most rewarding part of being a coach?**

Albin: That's an easy one. It's seeing these guys earn a degree. [It is] the most powerful thing, the education piece. I'm the first generation in my family to earn a college degree. I've been very fortunate. A college degree will change your chil-

drens' children's lives. You cannot put a price tag on that. That's what drives me. I'm a firm believer that if you have a locker room full of good men, the scoreboard will work itself out in your favor more times than not.

**NT: What are you looking into as an overall plan for the team? What steps do you plan to take to guide Charlotte to a winning season?**

Albin: We're gonna be a one game at a time outfit. I don't even know who we play week three. I know who we play week one and I know [who] we play week two because it's a home opener. We're gonna go one at a time, and we're gonna put a plan together. We're gonna go out there and try to execute it. We're gonna find corrections, win or lose. We're gonna implement those corrections and do what we do and go out there and do it again a week later.

**NT: Do you have a game day routine? What does it look like for you?**

Albin: As a coach, I'm just going through things, scenarios in my head. The wind, the weather, what time of day it is, where's the sun gonna be in that fourth quarter?

There are a lot of things that just from a standpoint, the music doesn't fit for me. Routine-wise, I'm not superstitious, but I'm stitious. I'll have certain items that I'll be wearing. There'll be a pattern eventually, but I'm not a, "I gotta have this." I'm not superstitious; I'm stitious.

**NT: What are your expectations heading into next season? How does it feel knowing that you'll be facing some big names like Kirby Smart and Bill Belichick?**

Albin: I'm gonna stick to one game at a time. We're going to respect all opponents, but fear none. That's something that I've said before. I'm excited about our program and our product for our fan base. We're here to win on a consistent level, [and] that's going to take talent. But to win consistently, it takes character. We want to win consistently.



Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics



# GUIDE TO GAME DAY—tips, tricks and must-dos

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

The Charlotte sports season is coming up fast, and there are a few things every 49er fan should know before throwing on their green and gold and heading to a game.

## Parking and tailgating

Tailgating is a key part of the Charlotte game day experience, but it comes with some important guidelines, especially when it comes to parking.

Parking passes are required on game days and can be purchased online. Students are not permitted to park in Lot 25, which is reserved for visitors.

Tailgating is only allowed in designated areas, which usually open eight hours before an event. On weekdays when classes are in session, tailgating opens three hours before game time. All tailgating must end 15 minutes prior to the event and wrap up two hours after the game concludes.

A hot spot for students is the 49th Acre Tailgate Park and Pavilion, located on the west side of campus. This space features food trucks, tents and a great atmosphere for fans to gather before the game.

Grills, both propane and charcoal, are permitted under safety guidelines, which are available

through the Office of Legal Affairs.

Only beer and unfortified wine are allowed for tailgating—no liquor and no underage drinking. Anyone visibly intoxicated may be asked to leave by the University or state officials.

## What to know before attending

Once inside an athletic facility, re-entry is not allowed, so make sure you have everything you need before heading in.

Fans are expected to follow the Charlotte Fan Code of Conduct, which emphasizes sportsmanship and respectful behavior. This includes:

- No profanity, racial or sexist remarks
- No threatening or intimidating actions toward officials, student-athletes, coaches, other fans or team representatives.

Make sure to check the weather forecast before heading out. For hot and humid days, bring sunscreen, hats, water and sunglasses. For colder or rainy games, ponchos, insulated jackets or raincoats are your best bet—but be mindful that umbrellas are not allowed inside facilities.

## What to bring

Bags, besides clear bags, diaper bags or small clutch purses that follow size guidelines, are pro-

hibited inside of athletic events—this includes: purses, backpacks and fanny packs.

Charlotte students do not need to worry about tickets for events because every student enters for free with the use of their physical or mobile student identification.

Items such as water, cameras, seatbacks or seat cushions and bug spray are also highly recommended to be more comfortable in outdoor areas.

Water bottles should only be empty and translucent, of 32 oz. or less, to be permitted inside events. There will be campus buildings open and available that will have bottle-filling stations.

Some camera equipment, including photography stands, tripods, video cameras and flash photography, is not allowed at any time inside stadiums. Cameras with lenses less than four inches are permitted.

When buying food from concession stands, the FanFood app is useful for ordering online and bypassing the line, so fans can miss less of the on-field and on-court action.

## Prohibited items

- Use of tobacco products or e-cigs within 100 feet of the facility

- Any form of weapons (fireworks, firearms, explosives, mace, pepper spray or other weapons)

- Glass or aluminum bottles

- Laser lights and pointers, selfie-sticks

- Outside alcohol and illegal drugs

- Balls and frisbees

- Outside food and beverages

- Personal heaters

- Pets (service animals permitted under ADA guidelines)

- Stadium seats with armrests, folding chairs

- Strollers, infant carriers/seats

- Radios or speakers

- Any item deemed unsafe, suspicious or inappropriate by event staff

## Final takeaways

It is always most important to enjoy yourself. Game days at Charlotte are continuously growing to give fans and athletic teams alike the opportunity for spirit, community and fun. These policies help keep everyone safe and ensure a great experience for all.

Always remember: if you see something, say something. Let us take care of each other and make Niner Nation proud.



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# 3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR WITH CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS IN 2025-2026

Davis Cuffe | Editor-in-Chief

As the transfer portal and new name, image and likeness (NIL) rules shake up college sports, UNC Charlotte athletics has not gone unchanged. New coaches, new players and even new programs have made Charlotte sports as interesting as ever.

Free admission for students to games means entertainment is just a walk away on any given day. Here are three things to keep an eye out for when considering tuning in to UNC Charlotte sports.

**Charlotte football enters new era (again)**

Following a fateful homecoming game loss, Charlotte Athletics decided it was time for a change and fired their head football coach, putting an end to the Biff Poggi era.

Poggi was 6-16 in his tenure as Charlotte's head football coach and is now Charlotte's third coach since 2022 after hiring Tim Albin. Although Albin's hiring displays the apparent instability within the program, he brings a winning pedigree that Charlotte football has not seen or had in the program's history.

After a 3-9 year in his first year as Ohio University's head coach, Albin led the Bobcats to a 30-10 record in the following three years. Charlotte football has won over six games once, a 7-6 effort in 2019.

Still, Albin's presence does not guarantee winning. The mass exodus of players following Poggi's firing means Albin had to put together a team nearly from scratch, something the first-year Charlotte coach was still in the process of doing through the spring practice period.

Defensively, Charlotte should take a step up; Albin's Ohio unit allowed just 18 points per game last season and took key parts of that defense with him to Charlotte. In their 2024 season, Charlotte allowed 35 points per game, so, frankly, it would be hard for them to get much worse.

Most of Charlotte's questions lie on the other side of the ball. Redshirt sophomore Grayson Loftis started behind center in the 49ers' spring showcase but is said to still be in competition with redshirt junior quarterback Conner Harrell. With Albin's hire coming after the transfer portal's opening, the weapons around either quarterback may be lackluster come Aug. 30 when Charlotte kicks their season off against Appalachian State University.

With the 2025 SEC Champion University of Georgia and Bill Belichick-led UNC-Chapel Hill on schedule in 2025, something to keep in mind while watching is that this is a team in the first year of a rebuild. Rome was not built in a day, and Charlotte football will not be either.

**New look basketball**

Following the 2023-2024 season, Charlotte men's basketball lost four of their five starters to the transfer portal; the conclusion of the 2024-

2025 season saw no better, with four starters and a majority of the bench players departing due to graduation or transfer.

With just three returning players, Head Coach Aaron Fearne has built a team from scratch, and one that will look to compete in 2025.

Fearne's work in the transfer portal has been impressive, bringing in multiple highly touted portal prospects, including 7'2" junior center Anton Bonke. In addition to Bonke, Fearne added multiple double-digit points per game scorers, including senior guard Damoni Harrison, who averaged over 15 points per game last year at the University of Southern Indiana.

On the other side of the coin, but on the same side of campus, Charlotte women's basketball has seen similar changes, with eight players entering the transfer portal, including their top three leading scorers.

While the team has yet to replace those lost to the portal, 49er fans can have faith in their coach, Tomekia Reed. Formerly at Jackson State University, Reed posted a 125-54 record through six seasons and secured three NCAA tournament appearances. She led the Tigers to five consecutive regular-season SWAC titles and three SWAC tournament titles.

**Women's lacrosse to build or break in year two**

Charlotte women's lacrosse made history in 2025, launching the program after years of anticipation.

Led by Head Coach Clare Short, the team came together quickly and started hot with a 20-2 win in their first game, but finished 6-10 on the season.

Short did well in attracting players to the developing program, compiling a competent roster with a good mix of veteran players and young talent.

Senior attacker Kylie Gioia starred in her season with the 49ers, ranking among the nation's top scorers and assisters, finishing with 81 points and 44 assists.

Alongside Gioia were graduate students Claire Schotta and Gianna Cutaia, who made major impacts on offense and defense while acting as leaders and foundational pieces of the program.

With Gioia and three other graduate students departing and the first-year programs' gold glow of excitement falling as they enter year two, the pressure will be high for the team to perform and truly establish itself.

Luckily, they should have the talent to do so; sophomore attacker Isa Torres, who led the team in goals in 2025, is set to return, as is star junior goalie Katie Ling.

As Short continues to bring in talent and mold the program in her vision, Charlotte's newest program will be one to watch in 2026.



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



# TOP 10 CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS MOMENTS FROM 2024-2025

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

Amid another year of transitions and changes brought by the transfer portal and NIL landscape, Charlotte Athletics achieved a lot under the helm of seventh-year Director of Athletics Mike Hill.

With new faces arriving in the Queen City and school records falling, the 2024-2025 academic year was a wild ride filled with ups and downs for the 49ers. The following is a look back at some of the top highlights from this memorable season.

## 1. Charlotte women's lacrosse program is launched

A project more than two and a half years in the making finally became a reality when the Charlotte women's lacrosse team debuted for the 2024-2025 season. Head Coach Clare Short, formerly the head coach at Queens University of Charlotte, brought her expertise to the field, leading a talented freshman class alongside a top-10 ranked transfer portal class.

In the program's inaugural year, Short and Assistant Coach Sarah Stagaard were hands-on with every detail, designing sticks, uniforms and lockers for the players. What seemed like a fast-

tracked launch was years in the making—waiting only for the right culture and chemistry to get the ball rolling.

## 2. Blake Gillespie throws second no-hitter in baseball's program history

Junior right-handed pitcher and University of Georgia transfer Blake Gillespie delivered a statement win for Charlotte baseball on March 7, leading the 49ers to a 5-0 win over James Madison University.

Gillespie threw the second no-hitter in 49ers program history, nearly 38 years after Ronnie Honeycutt recorded the first on April 14, 1987, against the University of North Carolina at Asheville. In a dominant performance, Gillespie allowed just one baserunner—a walk—who sophomore catcher Logan Poteet quickly threw out.

Over nine innings, Gillespie fired 70% of his pitches for strikes and racked up 11 strikeouts, etching his name into the Charlotte record books.

Following his historic outing, Gillespie also became one of the top 50 pitchers in the nation on the College Baseball Hall of Fame National Pitcher of the Year Watch List.

## 3. Tennis programs are nationally ranked

Following a five-game homestand at the Halton-Wagner Tennis Complex from Feb. 14-March 9, the men's tennis program entered the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) national rankings at No. 67 on March 13.

The women's tennis team also made noise nationally, entering the ITA rankings at No. 64 on March 6 before climbing to No. 40 after a 4-1 win over No. 36 Furman University on

March 28. The 49ers swept the Paladins in singles play, earning their fourth win over a ranked opponent this season.

Charlotte's momentum continued as the women's team faced No. 36 Wake Forest University on April 1, narrowly falling 4-3 at home. Despite the loss, the 49ers finished the regular season with a stellar 21-4 overall record and a dominant 16-2 record at home.

On the men's side, Charlotte posted an 8-3 home record and notched a historic milestone when junior Ivan Drey Copp was named the American Athletic Conference (AAC) Men's Tennis Player of the Week on April 15. Drey Copp led the 49ers to their first-ever team victory over Virginia Commonwealth University on April 12.

Both tennis programs enjoyed remarkable seasons, earning national recognition for their statement wins, individual honors and dominance at home.

## 4. Men's golf becomes American Athletic Conference champions

A record-breaking 49ers men's golf team performance led them to their first-ever AAC Championship—and 11th conference title overall—on April 23 at the Ritz-Carlton Members Club in Sarasota, Fla.

Charlotte entered the final round of the tournament behind the University of South Florida by five strokes. Clutch performances by junior Justin Matthews, who shot a 66 (-6), and sophomore Daniel Boone, who shot a 68 (-4), helped lead a comeback.

All five 49ers competing shot under par in the final round, pushing the team to 35-under overall and setting a new conference record for the championship.

With the victory, the 49ers clinched an automatic bid to the NCAA Regionals held

May 12-14 across six regional sites. Charlotte now looks to continue its strong postseason run, hoping for a trip to the NCAA National Championship at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, Calif., from May 23-28.

## 5. 49ers sink Pirates' ship at Jerry Richardson Stadium for in-state rivalry

Charlotte football took down in-state rival East Carolina University 55-24 at Jerry Richardson Stadium on Oct. 5, 2024, marking one of the program's biggest showdowns of the season.

With both teams entering the game at 3-3, the 49ers seized control early, jumping to a 14-3 lead in the first quarter. Redshirt junior defensive back Elijah Culp grabbed a second-quarter interception to maintain Charlotte's momentum, while junior running back Cartevious Norton, redshirt junior wide receiver Jaius Mack and redshirt senior linebacker Stone Handy delivered big plays.

Charlotte led 31-10 at halftime and never looked back. The 55-24 final marked the program's second-largest win over a conference opponent and tied the school record for most touchdowns in a game.

## 6. Ian Pilcher picked No. 24 overall by San Diego FC

After a standout 2024 season, Charlotte men's soccer senior defender Ian Pilcher saw his professional dreams come true on Dec. 20, 2024 when San Diego FC selected him as the No. 24 overall in the 2025 Major League Soccer (MLS) SuperDraft.

Pilcher became the fifth first-round pick in program history and the 17th player overall to be drafted from Charlotte.

He guided the 49ers to back-to-back AAC Championships in 2023 and 2024 and three



Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics  
Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times (center)

Courtesy of  
San Diego FC



NCAA Tournaments in 2021, 2023 and 2024. Before the draft, Pilcher was one of the select few invited to the 2024 adidas MLS College Showcase in San Diego, Calif.

In a full-circle moment, the Charlotte native returned home on April 19 when San Diego FC faced Charlotte FC at Bank of America Stadium.

### 7. Chaisilprungruang punches individual ticket to NCAA Regionals, earns AAC accolades

Freshman Pinky Chaisilprungruang made an immediate impact in her first season with the 49ers, emerging as one of the top young golfers in the nation.

Ranked No. 46 nationally among Division I players, Chaisilprungruang was the top individual in the AAC and racked up several honors: three-time Golfer of the Week, Golfer of the Month (September), Player of the Year and Freshman of the Year.

She became just the second player in program history—joining Cecilie Finne-Ipsen—to qualify for NCAA Regionals as an individual. She will compete at the Charlottesville Regional from May 5-7 in Charlottesville, Va.

### 8. Ben Montgomery breaks track & field's program record at Bob Pollock Invitational

Sophomore sprinter Ben Montgomery shined brightest among Charlotte's 19 Top-10 performances at the Bob Pollock Invitational in Clemson, S.C., on Feb. 1.

After advancing through the 60m with a 6.84, Montgomery made history in the 200m. His time of 21.00 flat broke the program record set by Jason Moore in 2006—a massive leap from Montgomery's previous best of 21.71 at the VertKlasse Meet in High Point, N.C., on April 5, 2024.

### 9. Charlotte football hires Head Coach Tim Albin

A new era began for Charlotte football on Dec. 8, with the hiring of Tim Albin—a two-time Mid-American Conference (MAC) Coach of the Year and leader of 2024 MAC champion Ohio University.

Albin, the fourth full-time head football coach in Charlotte history, came in following the departure of former Head Coach Biff Poggi. He arrived with a 33-19 career record at Ohio across four seasons, including a 23-9 mark against conference opponents.

He wasted no time getting started, bringing in new talent through recruiting and leading the 49ers through spring practices ahead of summer workouts.

### 10. Women's lacrosse makes history with inaugural win

Playing their first season at Jerry Richardson Stadium, women's lacrosse gave themselves a warm welcome home with a 20-2 win over Gardner-Webb University on Feb. 8. The 49ers set an AAC record for the most goals scored in a program debut in conference history.

Kylie Gioia starred in her senior season debut, finishing with four goals, three assists and five draw controls. Graduate student attacker Claire Schotta also tallied four goals in the historic win.

The 49ers closed the 2025 regular season with a 5-4 home record at Jerry Richardson Stadium, making a strong statement throughout their first year of competition.

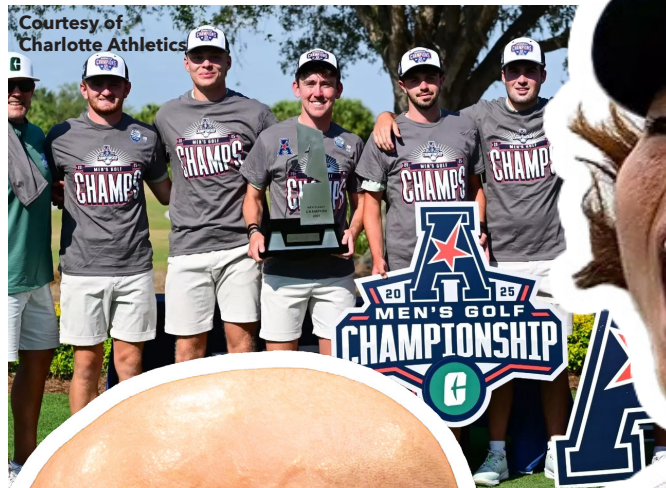
### Looking ahead

Whether it was earning national rankings, rewriting the record books or welcoming new leadership, Charlotte Athletics made its mark in 2024-2025. The 49ers continue to raise the bar, and there will still be much more to come.

Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics





# What to know about CHARLOTTE'S CLUB SPORTS

Evan Campos | Lead Writer

Photos by Dan Rice, Megan Bentley & Kai Diaz/Niner Timers File

UNC Charlotte's club sports program has become one of the most active and competitive scenes on campus. With dozens of teams—from men's ice hockey to ultimate frisbee—these student-led, student-run organizations offer opportunities to compete, travel and build community.

For students who want to keep playing at a high level without the commitment of Division I athletics, club sports provide the structure, challenge and camaraderie that define a real team experience.

## How to get involved

Getting started is easy. Students can explore current offerings and register by logging in at [charlotte.dserec.com/online/clubsports](http://charlotte.dserec.com/online/clubsports) using their NinerNet credentials.

Rosters, team contact information and upcoming events are listed there. From that point, it is just a matter of reaching out and showing up.

Club sports are open to any enrolled student in good academic standing. Most teams require a participation fee—usually to cover travel, uni-

forms or league dues—but costs vary.

Many teams offer tryouts, though some, especially in the recreational tier, are open to anyone who wants to play.

If you do not see a club that fits your interests, you can even start your own.

That process begins with a meeting with the assistant director of sports clubs and the associate director of student organizations.

Full instructions are available at [urec.charlotte.edu/sport-clubs/about-sports-clubs](http://urec.charlotte.edu/sport-clubs/about-sports-clubs).

## Landscape of club sports

Charlotte's club teams continue to grow in size, skill and impact.

The men's ice hockey team competes in the American Collegiate Hockey Association and has grown steadily in recent years as part of the Atlantic Coast Collegiate Hockey League. 2024 marked the third consecutive year that the team played in the Outdoor Classic at Truist Field against Appalachian State University club hockey in a game that welcomed roughly 4,200 fans and raised over \$30,000 for charity.

The women's club field hockey team has also seen consistent growth since its inception in 2021. It recently participated in the 2025 National Field Hockey League Spring Tournament, sparking a push to become a D1 sport on UNC Charlotte's campus.

Many clubs engage in joint fundraising events or cross-practices with other teams. Whether it is a shared scrimmage, a co-hosted charity event or even just helping one another with travel logistics, club teams often find ways to support each other beyond competition.

UNC Charlotte currently supports more than 40 club teams, including men's and women's rugby, lacrosse, volleyball, tennis and soccer.

These teams travel to compete against universities across the southeast in national and regional competitions.

Charlotte club disc golf's success at the national stage, taking home back-to-back national championships, impacted campus, as the University added disc golf baskets around campus, creating a space for the team and students to practice or play.

Club baseball and equestrian have also shown steady growth, expanding their rosters and building momentum both on campus and in competition.

There is also space for less physically demanding personal-interest sports. Clubs like 49er Running, Quidditch, snowboarding, disc golf and spikeball blend physical activity with unique communities of like-minded students.

While some of these teams may not compete in traditional leagues, they offer competition, connection and fellowship.

## Why join?

The club sports program emphasizes ownership of your schedule, your sport and your experience. These teams are powered by student leaders who handle everything from coaching decisions to budget planning.

That makes joining a club not just a way to stay active, but a way to lead.

To learn more or get involved, visit [charlotte.dserec.com/online/clubsports](http://charlotte.dserec.com/online/clubsports) or email [imsports@charlotte.edu](mailto:imsports@charlotte.edu) with questions.





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# Skate

## UNC CHARLOTTE'S SKATEBOARDERS FORM A TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY AT THE STAR QUAD

Sunnya Hadavi & Guadalupe Aguilar Sosa | Lead Writer & former Arts & Culture Editor  
Photos by Sunnya Hadavi/Niner Times File

UNC Charlotte's Star Quad is known for many things. On campus tours, it is the area where you can hear your echo. For historically Black sororities and fraternities, it is a classic spot for strolling and performances. However, it is most known as a popular spot for skaters.

Atop some of the steepest stairs on campus, the Star Quad sits between the J. Murrey Atkins Library, Cone University Center and the Student Activity Center. Even if students

avoid the area, the sound of skateboards and cheers is unavoidable.

From doing tricks and skills to chatting, these student skateboarders are there for hours every day, no matter the temperatures or tumbles. While some find it annoying, they have created their own community on campus.

"People shouldn't feel intimidated by us. I think we are kind of rowdy and annoying sometimes. But if a passerby just started a conversation, or even if we were in their way, all you have to do is talk to us. And honestly, 99.9% of the people here will be so nice and so welcoming," said Adam Leidhold, a fourth-year mechanical engineering student and skater.

Leidhold began skating on campus as a first-year after seeing others at the Star Quad. He now skates there three or four times a week.

"Once I came to college, [I saw] this community of people who are out here consistently. It made me want to get better. [It] made me want to come out here and skate," said Leidhold. "I think the past three or four years that I've been here have been the most I've ever skated in my life. And it's because of the community."

Originally from Massachusetts, Leidhold travels home for breaks but only finds himself motivated to skate when back on campus.

"Even though I have time to skate [back home], I don't end up skating. But when I'm here and don't have time to skate, I [still] end up skating," said Leidhold. "Which is funny, but it's just the community that pushes you to get better."

For these students, skateboarding is not simply a quick way to get to class but also a way to pass the time and take a break.

"I often go between the library and skateboarding. I'll be studying for maybe an hour, and then I'll come to skate. It's just a nice way to stay active and socialize with people," said Manny Merino, a fourth-year student. "Then, when I'm done, I just go back to studying. I do that all day, rotating."

Merino began skating for the first time the summer before starting at Charlotte. In the last four years, he has progressed in his skating and created lasting friendships.

"At first, they're all strangers, but it really only takes maybe two days to get to know everyone," said Merino. "Then you have a whole entire friend group that's willing to do anything, hang out, help you study, make connections."

It is the connections made through the Star Quad that help these students throughout the semester.

Jonathon Burns, a third-year, deals with stress from classes through skating. It is why he and the other skaters often stay at the Star Quad for hours.

"For me, it's a safe place. It's where I go to get negative thoughts out or just clear some stress and not think about anything else," said Burns. "Here, I can do it judgment-free and with my friends."

On a regular basis, there are at least five skaters at the Star Quad. These include experienced skateboarders, those with little to no experience and even students who rollerblade.

There are also a variety of personalities and backgrounds.

"It's a mix of all introverted skaters, extroverted skaters. It's a big community, for sure. So you get different people [from] different backgrounds in the city," said Dillon Syhavong, a fourth-year student.

The friendship between the Star Quad skaters runs deep. For most of the skaters, these are the people they spend most of their time in college with and keep in touch after graduation. Alumni frequently visit the skate spot as well to catch up.

"I'm going to skate wherever I am. And I definitely plan on, when I graduate, coming back here and skating," said Merino. "A bunch of my friends already graduated, and they come back here and skate, not just on the campus, but in the city of Charlotte as well. [They] take a little day trip just to visit all their old friends and whatnot."

For the skaters, the Star Quad is where they know they can see most of their friends and catch up during the semester.

"I know I can see every single one of my friends in this community," said Bryson Williams, a third-year student. "That's how I've met almost everyone I [know] in college. It has been from this place right here."

Most skaters joined the







group because of their interest in skateboarding and tricks. Some only recently started their skating journey, while others have picked up the board from a young age.

Raffael Ziemski, a fourth-year exchange student from Germany, is at Charlotte for a research program. He began skating at 16. The community encouraged him to skate more, and the others are now his good friends and roommates.

“Ever since I got here, I’ve been skating pretty heavily, like every day,” said Ziemski. “It’s fun and challenging, and I love the trends and the overall vibe [of the community].”

To showcase their love for skating, the skaters made their own page on Instagram. They post clips from any skater on campus and accept non-campus clips from Charlotte students.

The close friendships motivate these skaters to try new tricks and push themselves past their limits.




“When I first met Bryson, he was just skating off [to] the side. He didn’t have anything skill-wise, but his fear of commitment was not there. He would throw himself down anything and try a trick that anyone years ahead of him was trying,” said Burns. “It made him get really good fast. Seeing people like that, they can just do it. It pushes me to do it too.”

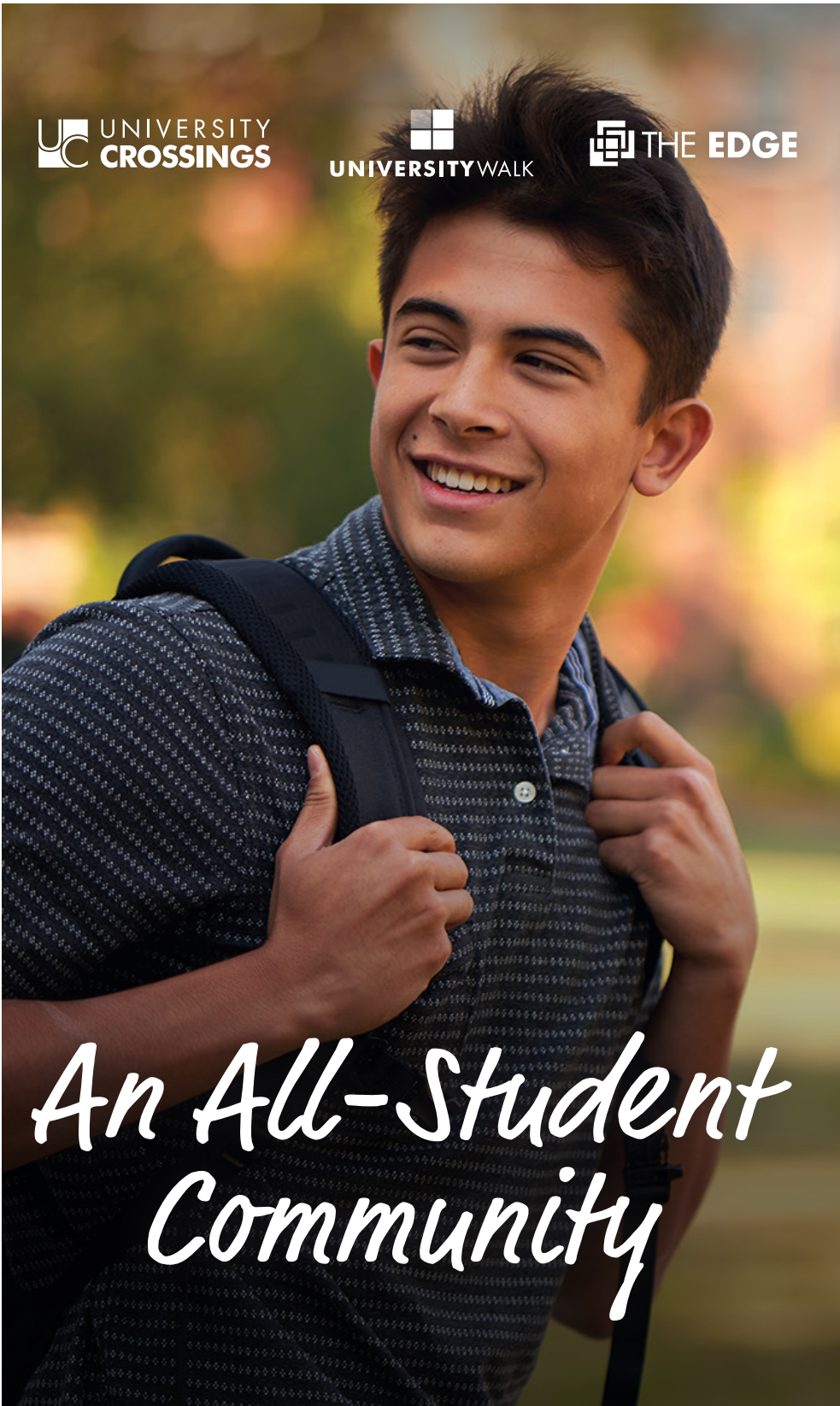
While the group is tightly knit, they are always open to new skaters and extend an open invitation to anyone who wants to improve their skills or make some friends.

“Don’t be intimidated. If you skate, just come out. We are more than happy to skate with anybody, no matter if you’re a beginner or not because we were all beginners once,” said Merino.









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Megan Khor/Niner Times



# Walking Through Campus

**NINERTIMESPLAYLIST**



Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

Walking to that 8 a.m. class across campus can certainly be a burden at times, after a late night of studying, practice, rehearsal or work. Sometimes you just need the walk as time to unwind and relax. Or maybe you need the walk to give you a little confidence boost for that upcoming quiz. Either way, this playlist will bring you all the vibes you need on your walk to class. The Niner Times’ “Walking Through Campus” playlist features songs ranging from indie-pop to rock, with some classic names like Radiohead and new and rising artists like Malcolm Todd.

With 30 different songs, comes music from various artists across the board of genres. The playlist starts out with songs from Lizzy McAlpine, Clairo and The Marias to bring a chill vibe to the start of your day. “Spring Into Summer” by McAlpine has become a popular song recently, as it was released in 2024. As you go through the playlist, you will find hits from Billie Eilish’s latest album, “Hit Me Hard and Soft,” and a little hint of Doechii and SZA, because who could survive a full day of classes without those two?

Music has always been the best form of medicine, so enjoy and walk with pride as you have made it to another year of school.




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# 5 MOVIES & TV SHOWS TO WATCH THIS SUMMER



Camila Surinach/Niner Times

Olivia Knott | Staff Writer

Summer is raising its head again, and there are some must-watch movies and TV shows to stream during this season. With all of the excitement and fun that summer brings, these recent releases are sure to keep you entertained.

## Movies

### A Minecraft Movie

“A Minecraft Movie” came out on April 4, 2025, bringing joy and mirth to the masses. Starring the undeniably hilarious Jack Black and Jason Momoa, this movie was fun while holding a certain sense of nostalgia.

The premise of the movie is making the Minecraft game come to life. It incorporated aspects of humor, laughter and reminiscent memories. Several Minecraft YouTubers were cameos in this movie, adding a full circle feel.

With summer coming around and our school year coming to a close, a little bit of nostalgia can help us reminisce on the good times in our lives. It can bring back all of the good memories and the fun times that we had during our school years, as well as the fun videos of old Minecraft gamers.

Director of the film, Jared Hess, is known for directing some notably funny movies such as “Nacho Libre” and “Napoleon Dynamite.”

Hess did a wonderful job bringing the Minecraft game to life. He added a fun storyline for the game and made it unique.

This movie is a fun time to watch with family and friends, feeding you nostalgia, enjoyment and many good laughs.

### Captain America: Brave New World

“Captain America: Brave New World” is a Marvel must-watch. The plot is fun and exciting, and who does not love Marvel?

The plot centers around Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie) becoming the new Captain America after Steve Rogers (Chris Evans) retires.

The film covers themes of legacy, teamwork

and overcoming hardships. It is an inspiring film that is a hit with more than just Marvel fans.

The characteristics of leadership and heroism that Wilson shared with Rogers led him to wield the shield.

It reminds us of the importance of friendship, togetherness and carrying on legacies.

## TV Shows

### When Life Gives You Tangerines

This tearjerking K-drama was released on Netflix on March 7, 2025. Sweet and romantic as well as gut-wrenching and heartbreaking, this is a must-watch for the summer season.

The cute romance between Yang Gwan-sik (Park Bo-gum) and Oh Ae-sun (IU) will have you tearing up.

“When Life Gives You Tangerines” covers three generations of women living in an oppressive patriarchy. Despite the hardship these women endure, there is a beautiful love story between Gwan-sik and Ae-sun that lightens the series.

The ups and downs of this couple’s relationship and their resilience through all of their hardships are nothing short of awe-inspiring and swoon-worthy.

The story covers the intricate lives of these characters to tell a beautiful story. It is a touching series to stream this summer. Not only will it cause you to reflect, but it will also give you hope that everything will be alright, like it is in the show.

### Forever

“Forever” was released on Netflix on May 8, 2025. It was based on Judy Blume’s 1975 novel “Forever.” The eight-episode Netflix series covers the passionate romance of Keisha (Lovie Simone) and Justin (Michael Cooper Jr.) and how their relationship develops and changes them as individuals.

Set in Los Angeles, this touching story shows the disparity between Keisha and Justin’s lives.

Justin lives in the Hollywood Hills with his parents, while Keisha lives with her single mother, who is hardly home.

Keisha and Justin meet at a party and get to know each other from there. Their love blooms after several instances of miscommunication, and their romance lasts nearly two years.

The episode lengths are roughly 40 minutes to an hour, which makes it digestible and not too long. The series is a well-written piece with a thought-provoking theme, making this series a summer must-watch.

The story demonstrates that sometimes people come into your life to improve you and make you better, and after they have served their purpose, you are meant to part ways.

The story reminds the audience of hope and growth. The acting is poignant, riveting and moving, showing the tumultuous difficulties as well as the triumphant victories of young love.

### The Residence

“The Residence” was released on Netflix on March 20, 2025, and it covers the witty detective Cordelia Cupp (Uzo Aduba) and her quest to uncover the enigmatic murderer of the U.S. president.

Just like “Forever,” “The Residence” is a short mini-series with only eight episodes, ranging from 50 minutes to nearly an hour and a half.

The series is witty, funny and lighthearted whilst also being intriguing and mystifying. It has an Agatha Christie style of mystery to it that makes it fun to watch.

Shonda Rhimes’ signature writing style of snappy conversations and witty quips makes this a great watch for this summer season.

These five series and films are worth binge-watching for the summer. Each of these films pres-

ents something exciting while having wonderful themes to learn from and enjoy.

With themes of romance and purpose in “Forever” to the lightheartedness of “A Minecraft Movie,” all of these movies bring a bit of joy to the summer.

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# HOW UNIVERSITY FOUNDER BONNIE CONE BUILT UNC CHARLOTTE FROM THE GROUND UP

Tucker Neal | Staff Writer

**B**onnie E. Cone was the visionary who pioneered UNC Charlotte into the nationally recognized institution it is today. Serving as a teacher and leader in the Charlotte community for over 50 years, Cone is credited as the founder of the University. Throughout her life and career, she represented what it means to be a true 49er.

Cone was born and raised in Lodge, S.C. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Coker University, she moved to Charlotte to teach at Central High School, now Garner High School. Cone later earned a Master of Arts in Mathematics from Duke University.

In 1946, she was appointed as the director of a night school in Charlotte established by the UNC System, created to help WWII veterans obtain an education. Thanks to her tireless efforts to expand the school, it eventually became Charlotte College, a two-year institution.

Cone was president of Charlotte College and oversaw the relocation and construction of a new campus. In 1961, the campus was moved from the basement of Central High School to the 1,000-acre plot of land where it remains today. At the time, there were only two buildings on campus.

In 1963, Cone and other board members worked together to expand the campus and transition it to an official university in the UNC System. She was dedicated to growing the college and creating new opportunities for people in Charlotte and surrounding areas. Eventually, they were acknowledged, and a bill was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly.

"The bill was passed and set to go into effect in July 1965. We were made the fourth campus of the University of North Carolina on that marvelous day. I was no longer hungry because on that day, my soul had been fed," said Cone in a 1987 interview.

After this, Cone was named the first acting chancellor of UNC Charlotte. She led our transi-

tion into a four-year university with a plethora of new departments. She even helped develop the master plan for the campus.

Cone was the voice of Charlotte as it blossomed into a diverse educational community. She was highly involved in the development of various new programs and helped the University gain national recognition. She personally oversaw the development of the Botanical Gardens and the School of Nursing.

After working as vice chancellor of student affairs and community relations, Cone retired in 1973. She continued to be fully dedicated to the operation and expansion of the University. She worked directly with students and faculty, attended many events and raised funds for the University into her 90s and made sure to never miss a commencement.

Cone was devoted to the education of every student at Charlotte, even after retirement. She continuously encouraged and inspired students to pursue and obtain a degree. Her passion for personal development was apparent and contagious to everyone she worked with during her career.

"This institution exists to serve those that would not be served otherwise. I am still very proud of those that provide instruction and inspiration to these very special people," said Cone in a 1988 interview.

Many of Cone's closest friends and relatives say that she always kept her personal opinions private. She did not verbally express the need for change because she was actively generating it each day.

Cone was a strong and influential leader during a time period when women had limited leadership opportunities. She was the first woman to serve as president of the Southern Association of Junior Colleges in 1959. She was also the first woman to teach on Duke University's west campus and lead many civic organizations in Charlotte.

"She didn't really need to preach about women and the importance of women taking charge. She just enabled them to do that," said Genevieve Barnhart, Cone's great-niece, in a 2014 interview.

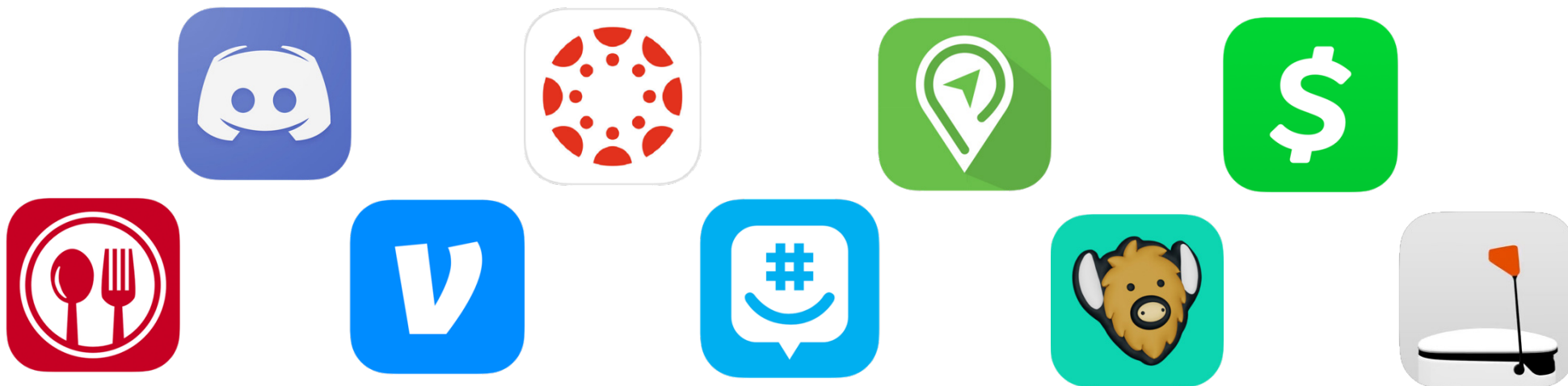
Cone's diligence and passion earned her 10 honorary degrees, as well as respect and recognition across the state for what she was able to accomplish. In 1956, she was named WBT Radio's Woman of the Year. In 1965, she won the Distinguished Citizen Award from the North Carolina District of Civitan International.

In 2003, Cone was buried in the Van Landingham Glen Gardens on campus after her death at age 95. Even now, we continue to be inspired by her determination and passion. Cone's name is honored by various awards and scholarships, and Cone University Center serves as a campus community center.

There are many other namesakes in her honor. Part of U.S. Highway 29 near campus has been named the Bonnie Cone Memorial Highway. Additionally, the Bonnie Cone Leadership Academy in Huntersville, a primary and secondary education institution, was opened in 2023.

Today, we remember Bonnie Cone as the heart of our University and as a woman who never stopped fighting for the education of all people. Each past, present and future Charlotte student is a part of her dream. She would be immensely proud of the lively, innovative community her University has become.





# MUST HAVE APPS

## Mobile apps that will make college much easier

Sunnya Hadavi & AJ Siegel | Lead Writer & former Copy Editor

Photos courtesy of the Google Play Store

If there is anything that makes starting college in the twenty-first century, it is the reliance on technology. Phone apps have become a staple on UNC Charlotte's campus, but it is often hard to know which ones you actually need. So, here is a list of the most important apps to download to make your first year run a little smoother.

### Canvas

You may be familiar with Canvas from high school but be prepared to use it daily from this point on. All classes at Charlotte utilize Canvas to organize assignments and grades. While you can access Canvas through your computer, the app will be a lifesaver. With notifications, you will be reminded of upcoming deadlines and notified whenever grades are added. If you are ever stuck out when there is an assignment due, you can also use the Canvas app to easily submit your work.

### Discord

It is no secret that Discord has been growing in popularity recently, and as a college student, you will see it used in many ways aside from gaming. Discord is an app that can be used to easily communicate through messages or voice chat in an organized manner. With the ability to make detailed servers, many classes and clubs have been using Discord to keep in touch with one another and give updates. Discord also has the Student Hub feature, which makes it easy to find any student-run servers relating to our university. The

most popular servers that Charlotte students run in the UNC Charlotte Hub are: "Niner Esports," "Real Woodward Hours" and "UNC Charlotte Subreddit."

### GroupMe

Similar to Discord, GroupMe is one of the more popular ways for students to connect. These group chats are frequently used for classes and clubs to make it easy for students to get information and ask each other questions. Like Discord, you can also link groups with UNC Charlotte, so they are discoverable by any Charlotte student. Almost every class will end up with some form of group chat, and GroupMe is an easy and popular choice. You will undoubtedly need to ask a classmate for help at some point, so it would be good to get a head start and download GroupMe now. You could even be the one to start class group chats to help you and your classmates.

### Mobile Order

The Mobile Order app is one of the easiest ways to order food on campus. It includes every dining option on campus except the two dining halls, so you can place your order on your way to a restaurant rather than wasting time waiting after you place your order. Like any mobile ordering app, you can customize your orders and monitor how long your order will take. You can pay on this app by linking a credit or debit card along with your 49er account or your declining balance.

### Starship

Like Mobile Order, this app is a great way to order food on campus. Starship connects to the Starship dining robots, which can deliver anywhere on campus. Getting food deliveries from the robots has an extra \$3 delivery charge, but sometimes it can be worth it. You can order from any dining location included on the Mobile Order app and can use a credit or debit card, 49er account or declining balance to pay. In the app, you can even select a song to play when you receive your delivery from the robot.

### Passio GO!

With the massive hills and many buildings on campus, using the Passio GO app for the UNC Charlotte buses can be a great way to get around. With three main routes and many stops, it can be hard to know when the bus you need will arrive. To save yourself from waiting for a long period of time or having close encounters where you miss the bus, the Passio GO app will show you where each bus is on campus. On busy days, you can count on this app to help you best save your time.

### Venmo or Cash App

Both Venmo and Cash App are used to send money to people. These apps will be lifesavers for late-night fast food cravings and gas money for last-minute road trips. Not many people use cash now, so Venmo and Cash App are easy ways to finally return that \$10 you owe your roommate. Many fundraisers also accept these as forms of

payment, which can be much easier than messing with card readers. Club fundraisers or even puppy-petting charity events often accept digital payments and donations, so these apps are a great way to take advantage of these campus events without worrying about having your cash or card on you.

### Yik Yak

For those living on campus, Yik Yak is a way to see what other students are up to and have a good laugh. The app lets you anonymously send submissions and threads that those within a five-mile radius can see. Although not available on UNC Charlotte WiFi, it is a way to feel connected with other students. Who knows, maybe your submissions will get featured on student-run UNC Charlotte Instagram pages.

### Ex Libris Library Mobile

J. Murrey Atkins Library is a great resource for all kinds of things on campus, and this app brings all of that to your phone. With the app, you can access your library account and the Atkins catalog. You can also chat with librarians and receive alerts about when your rentals are due. The library's study rooms are a great place to get work done, and you can reserve those spaces on the app too. It has a lot of the resources included on the Atkins website, but the app can be easier to use, especially on the go.



# ESSENTIAL ITEMS to have in your DORM

Davis Cuffe | Editor-In-Chief

Moving out of your house and into a dorm can be a scary experience for new students. With the limited space, you must beware of overpacking, so here are some staple items for your new dorm.

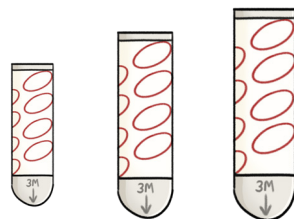
## Small fan

Dorms are prone to air conditioning and ventilation issues, so opening a window will not be enough. Pack a small fan to stay cool during hot Charlotte days and avoid sweating through the first semester.



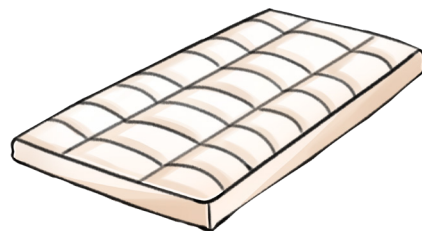
## Command strips

What is a dorm without some decoration? The dorm is your space, so make it your own. While you should be mindful of your roommate's preferences, the dorm walls are your canvas to hang up whatever you want. Command Strips are great for hanging things up without risking damaging the surfaces of your dorm.



## Mattress topper

With the move to an unfamiliar territory, avoid spending the night tossing and turning in bed by packing a mattress topper. Standard dorm mattresses are cheap and uncomfortable; buy a mattress topper to negate this and get good rest.



## Shower shoes

Shower shoes should be a no-brainer for dorm living. Dorm bathrooms will be nowhere near as clean as your bathroom at home. Avoid sharing foot space with everyone who lives on the floor of dorm bathrooms, and pack some shower shoes to ensure cleanliness and peace of mind.



## Shower caddy

Leaving shower supplies in the bathroom or carrying everything over by hand are equally rough options. Dorm bathrooms are a shared space, so people may snatch or use your supplies, and carrying all supplies from your dorm to the bathroom can be challenging. A shower caddy conveniently solves both of those problems.



## Desk lamp

The lighting in dorms is often bright and abrasive; softer light is your friend during late-night study sessions. Along with providing a more relaxed atmosphere, a lamp can offer an alternative to keeping the ceiling light on if you and your roommate have different sleeping schedules. Do not be that roommate that blinds the other when they try to sleep; pack a lamp to chill out in your dorm.



## Mini fridge

Nothing is worse than a warm drink when trying to cool down after a hot day. Giving yourself the ability to store food with a mini fridge allows you to have cold beverages on demand. It also offers an alternative to the dining hall and other campus meal options. Whether you choose to share the fridge with your roommate or keep it to yourself, you cannot go wrong with a mini fridge.



## Laundry bag and detergent

Unfortunately, your parents can no longer do your laundry, and the laundry machine is no longer nearby. Dorm laundry machines can be confusing and are often a trek from your dorm. Having a laundry bag makes your dirty clothes easy to transport and store, while laundry detergent is essential to doing laundry. Pack both these items to make dorm living a little easier.



## Cleaning supplies

Keep your dorm neat. The dorm is often a shared space and one that you should be mindful of in terms of cleanliness. You may not find the dorm messy, but your roommate might. A small vacuum will come in handy in cleaning up larger messes and general maintenance, while wet wipes and freshener sprays help maintain a fresh, clean environment. How you treat your dorm can set the standard for future living and relationships with your roommates; keeping a clean space is key.



Before you make final decisions on your dorm room wish list, be mindful of the prohibited items list for your building. Space heaters, adhesive LED light strips and hot plates sound like good ideas but are banned on most lists. Happy packing, and good luck!

Megan Khor/Niner Times



# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GOING GREEK AT CHARLOTTE

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

Greek Life at UNC Charlotte is an integral part of campus culture, offering students opportunities for personal growth, academic achievement and community engagement. With over 40 active fraternities and sororities, Charlotte's Greek community is diverse, inclusive and committed to community service and leadership opportunities while providing a forever home to students of all walks.

UNC Charlotte's Greek Life has seen impressive growth. In 2008, there were only 28 chapters and 896 Greek students. Seventeen years later, there are now 41 chapters and 1,800 students involved.

UNC Charlotte's Greek Life is organized into five different councils that have recruitment at various times at the beginning of the academic year.

Recruitment for the Interfraternity Council (IFC) and Panhellenic Association (PHA) is currently open for the fall 2025 semester. Formal Panhellenic recruitment is expected to start early September, and IFC Recruitment takes place later on. Students interested in joining the National Panhellenic Council (NPHC), Diversified Greek Council (DGC) or Independent Greek Council (IGC) should follow the different chapters on Instagram to learn specific information about their recruitment for the fall.

## Interfraternity Council (IFC)

This council oversees 12 fraternities, representing approximately 800 members. It emphasizes scholarship, leadership and community service and aims to set a standard of excellence within the fraternity community.

## Panhellenic Association (PHA)

This organization consists of seven National Panhellenic Conference sororities, with over 700 women participating. PHA organizes formal recruitment events and promotes leadership, scholarship and philanthropy among its members.

One of the most awaited days within the PHA is known as Bid Day, which takes place at the beginning of the fall semester in September. Bid Day is where all the women who made it through recruitment get their bid from their forever family and run 'home' to their fellow sorority sisters.

The PHA also plays a significant role in Airband, one of the most popular Greek Life events that takes place during the spring semester on campus. Airband is a dance competition with-

in the PHA where each sorority spends months working on routines to perform in front of a crowd of hundreds.

## National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)

Known as the "Divine Nine," this council includes historically Black fraternities and sororities that have been a part of UNC Charlotte's campus for over 50 years.

UNC Charlotte's first-ever fraternity to be on campus was Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., which was part of the NPHC in 1970.

These organizations have recently been celebrated for their everlasting legacy of service and unity with the Divine Nine plaques placed on campus in the Star Quad. There were 10 plaques

placed during the fall 2024 semester, honoring each chapter within the Divine Nine and an additional informational plaque.

These plaques were placed in the Star Quad as the area on campus was given its name thanks to the members of the NPHC. Through various events hosted over the course of the years such as Yard Fest, and other NPHC activities, the Star Quad grew in popularity and was made a well-known spot on campus.

The NPHC is currently looking forward to the addition of the ninth chapter within the Divine Nine, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., as it has been in the works for quite some time and, according to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, is looking to become official during the 2025 - 2026 academic year. If Iota Phi Theta is

officially added to campus, UNC Charlotte will be one of the few universities in the nation to be home to all nine chapters.

## Diversified Greek Council (DGC)

This council represents culturally based fraternities and sororities affiliated with organizations such as the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO) and the National Asian Pacific Islander American Panhellenic Association (NAPA).

The DGC not only aims to provide students of other cultures with a place of comfort in the Greek community, but also to teach others about their heritage. The DGC hosts a semiannual picnic, inviting all members from each chapter to attend, which also takes place in the Star Quad. Students within DGC are invited to attend to watch various performances and enjoy some comfort food.

Although established on campus in 2009, the DGC has grown immensely since. With a total of nine different chapters, the DGC has secured its powerful presence on campus.

## Independent Greek Council (IGC)

This council serves as a governing body for fraternities and sororities that do not fall under the other councils. Established on campus in 2010, the IGC has seen consistent participation as it continues to do philanthropic projects and host events for its chapter members.

Chapters are governed by the IGC as long as the University registers them and other panels do not already govern them. The IGC cooperates with member organizations, the sorority and fraternity community and the University. IGC organizations include Alpha Omega Epsilon Sorority, Sigma Alpha Omega Christian Sorority, Inc., Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity.





# Get involved with Charlotte's STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Emily Brown | Staff Writer

Blaise Uy/Niner Times

## Academic/pre-professional

Charlotte's academic/pre-professional clubs provide opportunities to create a community inside your major and desired career field. These clubs offer many benefits such as resume building, learning career skills and networking. They also provide the space to explore other fields of interest. With clubs covering pre-law, marketing and game development, there is a club to fulfill everyone's interests.

Examples: Black Women in Medicine and The Association of Data Science



## International

Charlotte's variety of international clubs is the perfect way to learn more about other cultures and languages. These clubs appreciate the diverse community that we have on campus and strive to educate others about cultures that they might not know a lot about. They also provide a space for people from similar cultures to connect.

Examples: Arab Student Organization, Ghanaian Student Association, Nihon Club and the Native American Student Association



## Media

Media organizations make an impact on their members and the campus community. The overarching organization, Student Niner Media, comprises of five departments: Niner Times, Nova Literary-Arts Magazine, Midas Magazine and marketing.

There are also media organizations out of Student Niner Media.

Examples: Axe & Quill Writing Society and the Charlotte Film Community



## Performance

If you like to sing, dance, act, give speeches or maybe all four, our performance clubs are the perfect place for you. Regardless of your performance experience, our various clubs will allow you to grow and develop your skills.

Examples: Freestyle 101, Cheer, Improv Club and Speech Team



## Service

Service clubs allow you to give back and assist your community on campus and beyond. These clubs provide various acts of service, including collecting and distributing hygiene necessities, coloring pictures for children fighting cancer and cleaning up public places.

Examples: 100 Black Women, Best Buddies and Reproductive Justice Collective

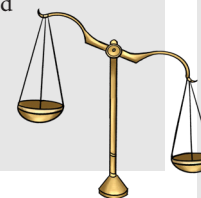


## Greek Life

Charlotte has 44 sororities and fraternities. Whether you would be a legacy in a sorority or fraternity or want to add to your college experience, Greek life may be for you.

There are five Greek councils. The Independent Greek Council governs the independent fraternities and sororities on campus and assists in communication between them and the University. The Interfraternity Council governs and regulates fraternities. The Diversified Greek Council encourages collaboration between organizations from different backgrounds. The National Panhellenic Council oversees and fosters collaboration between the Divine Nine sororities and fraternities, the historically Black Greek life organizations. The Panhellenic Council includes seven sororities that engage in philanthropy, community and social events.

Examples: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc, Alpha Chi Omega and Delta Sigma Phi



## Multicultural

Charlotte's multicultural clubs center on various nationalities, ethnicities and orientations that create our community. These clubs focus on connecting people from similar backgrounds and identities. They also provide a space for people from specific backgrounds to communicate with each other.

Examples: Black Student Union, Disability Culture Club and Curl Conversations



## Club sports

Club sports are the perfect place for students who wish to continue or get involved in a sport they are passionate about. No matter what sport you play, basketball, volleyball, swimming or any other sport, our club sports might be the place for you.

Examples: 49er Running Club and Charlotte Lifters



## Religious/spiritual

The religious and spiritual clubs are a space for people whose faith is important to them. These clubs provide a community that is centered on religion or spirituality.

Examples: Impact Charlotte, Muslim Student Association and Young Life



## Political

Charlotte's political clubs provide a space for students who are passionate about politics or are interested in learning more. If you want somewhere to discuss and debate the issues that impact our world daily, these clubs might be for you.

Examples: Government and Politics Debate Club, Mock Trial and NextGen UNC Charlotte



## Interest

No matter your passions, interest clubs on campus are a great way to get involved and meet people. These clubs are ways to relax from the stress of classes. Check out these clubs if you want to have fun while discovering your passions.

Examples: Community Garden Club, Gold Rush Robotics and Japanese Reading Club







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# OPINION: DON'T LET CHATGPT GRADUATE FOR YOU

Wes Packham | Arts & Culture Editor

Ava Weaver/Niner Times

As AI has grown and evolved over the past three years since ChatGPT's release, it has become more advanced and capable of nearly any task you throw at it.

With its advanced capabilities, there comes the temptation to use it to help with your college assignments.

However, you need to be careful. What may start as an earnest attempt for understanding—maybe just asking for clarification on a difficult-to-understand topic—can quickly spiral into you relying on AI for every assignment, start to finish.

But is that what you truly want? To come into college for four years of education and learning, just to walk away with a degree that might as well have been attributed to ChatGPT?

You should assess your own goals against what you want out of college. If all you want is a degree and you do not care how you get it, feel free to use AI to your heart's content. But I believe that to be an insult to all who sought higher education before you.

But in the 21st century, AI is all but omnipresent, and it is crucial to balance your own learning and intellect with help from AI. Education is supposed to be a time for learning and development, and an overreliance on AI tarnishes the name that higher education has held for centuries.

Many professors have a strict policy against AI use on assignments and during quizzes, and violating these policies can result in hefty punishment, up to expulsion from the University.

You should understand that education is a

privilege, and risking that just because you want to take the easy way out is not a risk many should take.

One might find a certain sense of pride in being able to learn without the use of AI. It has been done for centuries, and there is no reason it cannot be done today.

I do not believe that complete ignorance is the best path. AI is a new technology, just like any other. Like those before us who were skeptical of the internet in replacement of libraries and encyclopedias, it is important to judge AI based on an assessment of its benefits and risks, rather than an emotionally-fueled complete denunciation of the technology.

As technology develops quickly, it is not a direct analogy to compare the development of AI to the development of the internet.

The difference is where the workload is going. When the internet first developed, one would still have to search and find all their resources for learning or teaching themselves and implement them themselves. But AI is different. It completes almost any task you throw at it in a matter of minutes, even seconds. Assignments that may have taken hours have been reduced to minutes just from typing a few simple prompts.

Also, the data centers used to power large language models such as ChatGPT use a significant amount of energy and require billions of gallons of water to cool these heat-producing systems.

Two big players in AI development, Microsoft and Google, known for Copilot and Gemini, respectively, have reported notable increases in

water consumption over the recent years of AI's boom in popularity.

Between 2021 and 2022, Microsoft's water usage jumped 34%, totaling nearly 1.7 billion gallons, and Google's water consumption went up 22%, reaching more than 5 billion gallons.

Beyond the environmental impact, it is also not uncommon for a large language model to be flat-out incorrect.

While it may give the illusion that the AI is thinking, that is just not how large language models work. At an elementary level, a large language model guesses each word subsequently and picks which word fits best based on its training. The glaring flaw is that the most likely word, while likely to be correct, is not guaranteed to be the correct response.

But where does that leave us? From a broad perspective, AI is an advanced technology that can enhance many aspects of learning. However, generative AI specifically seems to be doing more harm than good in the educational space.

If you are going to use AI as a part of your learning, you must check the most important facts and do not take everything it says at face value. Understand the risks that come with it and approach it cautiously.

AI can do many things to streamline your workflow. It can excel at writing to-do lists, breaking down topics in easier-to-understand ways or helping you make study plans for upcoming tests.

While AI is great at menial tasks, it cannot replace deep comprehension or authentic

skill-building.

I believe there are two categories of tasks that AI can work on. The first being supplementary tasks. Not directly related to an assignment, these may include: organizing notes, setting up to-do lists or making study plans. Since AI is not directly assisting or doing assignments in these cases, there does not seem to be a problem with AI usage here. But for the second category, tasks that relate directly to an assignment, is where it becomes more nuanced.

One should do their own value assessment on how much integrity they are giving up when rescinding an assignment to AI. These gray areas are where no one can say for sure whether AI could be considered dishonest. Is it cheating to ask AI to reword a sentence? How about a full paragraph? Or just brainstorming essay ideas?

It is best to delegate AI to duller and more repetitive tasks. I remember once in my first year at Charlotte, I used AI to convert my Canvas assignments into a spreadsheet and to keep track of all my assignments, all from one document. This is just one example of how AI can enhance your learning process, while not doing the learning for you.

That is just one point I want to drive home. Keeping a proper balance between your own intellect and AI will allow you to succeed and help you stand out from others.

AI should help you learn, not learn for you.



Opinion:

# Seize THE DAY, today!

Amari Andrews & Emsley Jackson | Staff Writer & Opinion Editor

It is cliché to say, “You only live once,” but the power of living life intentionally and boldly in the moment is something that many people look past. As the philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca said, “The whole future lives in uncertainty; live immediately.” In a world that says we need to plan, *carpe diem* tells us to pause and focus on right now, right now.

The Latin phrase ‘*carpe diem*’ was first used by the Roman poet Horace in his collection of poems called “Odes.” The full line of text reads, “*Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero,*” and translates to, “Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the next day.”

This message still holds weight today. After years of uncertainty following a global pandemic and economic instability, many people today are doing the things they want in order to create meaningful experiences and live intentionally.

In a guide published by *Becoming Minimalist*, Joshua Becker wrote, “In a world that’s noisy, hectic, and constantly in motion, simplicity is countercultural ... And in a society that’s always wanting more, choosing to be satisfied with less is definitely a radical act.”

Choosing to be satisfied with less does not always have to be material. As Becker said, we live in a society with eyes always on a bigger prize. This can result in comparing yourself to people living the elaborate life you desire and disregarding the simple blessings you should be celebrating every day.

For college students, the mindset of seizing the day may come as a luxury. From juggling classes, work, internships and other plans for the future, it is very easy to get caught up in the question: “What is next?”

“I wish I could be a full-time dancer and artist right now,” said Teyana Hudson, a third-year student at UNC Charlotte. “It’s just very unrealistic to drop everything and leave. I also don’t have the re-

sources or connections.”

Hudson’s words reflect the reality many people face: having the desire to seize the moment and follow their passions but being held back by finances and social struggles. However, the setback of being unable to follow your passion in the moment should be the reason you work harder to find ways to turn those aspirations into opportunities.

Some people feel landlocked in college by the need to get their life together. In reality, as many college graduates will tell you, this time is one of the most fluid in your life. Use your freedom to open future doors.

Living with the ‘*carpe diem*’ mindset does not always mean dropping everything to fulfill your dreams. It can also mean bringing authenticity and purpose into your busy life. You may not see it now, but the reminder to live in the moment is what turns ordinary things into unforgettable memories.

For example, wishing you were traveling the world eating at five-star restaurants but stuck with the dining hall? Get creative; you have the whole world at your fingertips. Look up dorm-friendly recipes, research cool cuisine in the University City area and romanticize some of the options we have on campus. Find purpose in your fuel.

You may not be able to achieve everything you want at the moment you want it, but embracing where you are now can drive you to higher levels of growth, self-discipline and, even better, purpose. Seize today not because of immediate future success but because you are laying the groundwork for your self-worth.

As life continues, ‘*carpe diem*’ reminds us that uncertainty will forever be alive, but instead of worrying about the unknown, it encourages us to live in the present. Finding meaning in things that go on day-to-day is a continuous act of growth that allows us to live authentically and with greater purpose.



Camila Surinach/Niner Times



# OPINION: BARNES & NOBLE SHOULD OPT OUT OF SCAMMING STUDENTS WITH NINER COURSE PACK

Wes Packham | Arts & Culture Editor

“You must take action to opt out.”  
“You must opt out.”  
“The last day to opt out of the program.”

Dozens of emails reading the same text have polluted my email inbox ever since enrolling as a student at UNC Charlotte in 2023. Each semester, the same song and dance repeat: I am auto-enrolled in the Niner Course Pack, again.

First implemented in fall 2023, Niner Course Pack advertises itself as an affordable option for students to receive the textbooks required for their courses from the on-campus bookstore, Barnes & Noble.

Charging \$20 per credit hour of courses is often cheaper for students to enroll in the program to save them money on their course materials.

But are they doing this out of the goodness of their hearts, or does Barnes & Noble hold ulterior motives for this?

Barnes & Noble has been the official bookstore on Charlotte's campus for several years, and they profit greatly off of Charlotte's student body, being the only official place to purchase course materials.

Barnes & Noble claims that being an opt-out program, as opposed to an opt-in program, is done to reduce the costs of textbooks for students. They claim that when more students opt in, they can purchase more textbooks, reducing the overall cost.

But is that really where Barnes & Noble is saving their money, or is it from students like me?

In the spring 2025 semester, I enrolled in 16 credit hours worth of courses, totaling to a \$320 charge for the Niner Course Pack. But the real kick is: I had zero textbooks that semester. I would have spent \$320 for absolutely nothing.

This is no mistake on their part. Barnes & Noble profits heavily from this program. Why else would they have implemented it? It does not make much sense for a company as large as Barnes & Noble to implement a program that explicitly loses them money.

This is not to say that the Niner Course Pack is not beneficial for many students. It differs between majors. Some majors may require more textbooks than others, making the offer worth it, while some have fewer, and in my case, zero.

Despite this, it is incredibly deceptive and

amoral to profit off of stressed-out college students who may miss these emails in their busy lifestyles, often profiting hundreds of dollars off of a single student, not to mention a student body of 30,000.

And this is all done while making it a lengthy process to unenroll. I remember the last time I unenrolled, I had to navigate through about a half-dozen webpages, all attempting to convince me to stay opted in to the program.

This lengthy process seems to try and confuse users as much as possible, making the 'opt-out' buttons smaller than the 'stay opted-in' buttons.

If you have to jump through this many hoops just to opt out, it seems more likely that Barnes & Noble wants as many students to stay opted in to the program. It comes across as a very fake performance that seems just to be asking me to send them \$300 for nothing.

If Barnes & Noble truly wanted to provide the best service it could to students, it is expected that they would make it a simple decision that students could make.

Not a convoluted process that might leave students confused halfway through.

Even when I did opt out, I was unsure if I had actually unenrolled, adding more to the vagueness of it all.

I do not expect Barnes & Noble to change this program anytime soon. At just over two years old, and likely part of a contractual agreement with the University, it seems the best way for students to save money for the time being is to do proper research on their course materials and opt out if needed.

I do have to give some props, though. I believe that the University had its students' best interests in mind when they entered into this agreement with Barnes & Noble, and it does provide cheaper textbooks for a not insignificant portion of the student body. And since the charge is lumped in with your total tuition cost, it is easier for students who receive financial aid to use the funds on textbook costs, something that would be more difficult if you had to purchase them separately.

Until Barnes & Noble or UNC Charlotte makes some changes, students should stay attentive. Do your research, check your syllabus and do not let a bookstore bill you \$300 for nothing.



Chris Crews/Niner Times File & Courtesy of UNC Charlotte



# EAST VILLAGE

## OFF-CAMPUS STUDENT LIVING

STUDIO, 1, 2, 3, and 4-BEDROOM APARTMENTS

### NEW MANAGEMENT AND NEW OWNERSHIP



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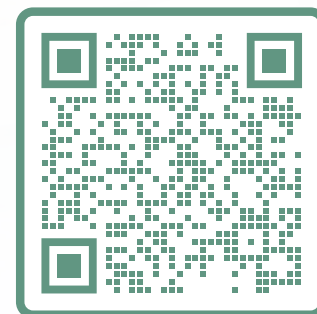
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Blaise Uy/Niner Times

# OPINION: IT IS OK TO ENTER COLLEGE WITHOUT A PLAN

Rachel Johnson | Staff Writer

Vividly drawn astronauts, doctors and professional athletes adorn the papers that are creatively scattered across the desks of a bevy of five and six-year-old students. It is the day that every new elementary school inductee enjoys the most: the day that they are asked to describe their dream job. This innocent activity, however, alludes to a greater problem in society: the necessity for a plan.

As we get older, our interests fade and falter. The dream jobs we yearned for as adolescents lose their luster as we get older, and as college nears, certain students begin to feel unsure about what specialty they should even consider pursuing. For the 50% of students who enter college unsure about their major, anxiety and pressure only heighten when choosing courses.

What many students fail to realize is that there is value in fluidity and patience. Having a general idea of potential degrees and career pathways is imperative, especially considering college requires time and money that many cannot afford beyond a certain threshold. Moreover, extra schooling is inevitable for students who prematurely decide on a major they are uncertain about

solely for the sake of having a 'plan.'

Interests of young adults fluctuate greatly, especially as they enter college. From ages 18-21, the human brain undergoes significant changes that impact academic infatuations. The prefrontal cortex, which is the section of the brain that supports planning and abstract reasoning, experiences large maturations before and during the early 20s.

These changes in brain development and decision making greatly impact college planning, with 80% of college students opting to change their major at least once during their undergraduate tenure.

With the knowledge of how likely redirection could be in college, students must give themselves permission to slow down. Taking time is hard in a society where 23% of people feel like they are constantly in a rush, and 60% of students reportedly feel stressed every day. As coursework surmounts and adult obligations accumulate, overcoming the constant state of urgency that hustle culture invokes may seem impossible.

Tools exist to alleviate the cumbersome nature of constant planning and staunch commitment.

Options to explore different career paths and majors exist, and students who enter college undeclared can still finish school on time.

Many experts recommend declaring a major by the end of your second year, which gives students time to pursue shadowing opportunities and career seminars that can aid their decision-making process while they exercise freedom and self-discovery through the attendance of a variety of creative gen-eds.

Help from dedicated academic advisors can also assist students further in visualizing the pathways necessary to complete certain majors. This can provide students with insight into classes they can take that provide intrigue and academic rigor while fulfilling requirements for a multitude of specializations that the student may want to pursue.

Most colleges ensure that gen-ed credits apply to any major, giving students the leeway to explore different topics and disciplines while earning crucial credit hours.

Although society places individuals on timelines where certain frameworks are expected to be followed, defying comparison and neat plan-

ning is the best way to uncover what truly invokes passion in one's life. Journeys are not linear, and change will occur in many ways throughout young adulthood, whether minimal or drastic.

Students who remain undecided should not feel discouraged. The best inspiration arises from moments of uncertainty. Learning how to navigate change equips students with the confidence they need to conquer adversity later on in their career endeavors.

Plans are helpful, but patience truly catalyzes growth. Change will occur for students physically, mentally and emotionally. Instead of hurriedly crafting solutions to maintain stability where stability is not possible, allowing change to flow into areas of life where it is least expected creates some of the most exquisite realizations and opportunities.

Do not be afraid to switch majors or remain undeclared for your first year of college. Instead, embrace the liberation that comes with uncertainty and fully cherish living in the present. When students work hard in the moment in whatever area they happen to be in, the rest will follow.



# GUIDE: DINING AND FOOD OPTIONS ON CAMPUS

Lauren Simendinger | Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte offers many food options for students. Whether you are craving burgers, sandwiches, Mexican, Asian food or chain restaurants, Charlotte offers something for everybody. Students can pay for their meals with meal plans, Optional Dining Accounts (ODA) or their 49er accounts.

## **SoVi:**

SoVi, or the South Village Dining Hall, is one of two traditional dining halls on campus. Located at the South Village Crossing, students have the option of hot soups, fresh salads, hot pizza, rich Asian food and more. They even offer gluten-free options for those who need them. South Village Crossing is also home to Charlotte Greens, where students can customize their salads to their liking, and the SoVi Market + Bakery, where sweet treats are available.

## **Popp-Martin Student Union:**

The Student Union is home to many dining options, including Social 704, Charlotte's other dining hall. It offers the same things as SoVi, but with additional allergy-free options. There are plenty of other restaurants, including three popular chains: Bojangles, Wendy's and Starbucks. Bojangles offers Southern-style food like fried chicken, biscuits, rice, etc., while Wendy's is known for their burgers, salads, chili and fries. Starbucks sells coffee and baked goods. Other dining options are Shake Smart, the Bistro, the Market on Craver featuring Erbert & Gerbert's and the Market Powered by Amazon "Just Walk Out." For this market, you scan your credit or debit card for entry.

## **Prospector:**

Though the upper level is currently under construction, Prospector's lower level still has three

great options for students to eat at. There is the chain Chick-fil-A, which sells chicken, salads and other goodies. Burger 704 offers beef and veggie burgers, with fries and tater tots made to order and a signature sauce. 49er Fresh is a small market located by the entrance that sells sandwiches, sushi, desserts and other snacks. The upper level will open in the fall 2025 semester, and house the Mexican restaurant Qdoba, the Halal Shack for those who like Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern flavors, and a brand new restaurant called The Oasis created by UNC Charlotte. The Oasis will include everything students want, from sushi and sandwiches to coffee and ice cream.

## **Cone Center Main Street Market:**

The Cone Center is home to three dining options, including two chains. Panda Express specializes in Mandarin and Szechuan dishes, such as Kung Pao, mushroom, orange chicken, broccoli beef, honey walnut shrimp, egg and spring rolls and more. Subway allows students to customize their sub sandwiches however they like, whether they order a six-inch or a foot-long. Students can also visit Whitney's Bakery, which sells cakes, cookies and other sweet treats.

## **Additional places around campus:**

There are still plenty of other places around campus where you can find good food to eat. The J. Murrey Atkins Library houses the other Starbucks, located on the ground floor. The Thoughtful Cup on Fretwell's first floor is yet another option for coffee, tea, lemonade and sweet treats. Klein Hall's Aurum Cafe features an Auntie Anne's, where students can get hot, freshly-made pretzels. It also has a Change Please Coffee, and Fresh2U offers grab-and-go items. Finally, the Center City Building has the Market at Dubois, where more grab-and-go options are available.

Check us out!

Use our WiFi

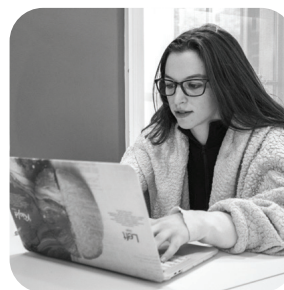
Get a Library card

Book a Study Room (1-10 people)

Use career resources like mock interviews & résumé help

Take a break from studying with our unique programs & clubs

... and it's all FREE



## University City Regional Library

5528 Waters Edge Village Dr. Charlotte, NC 28262

(behind Applebee's on J.W. Clay Blvd)

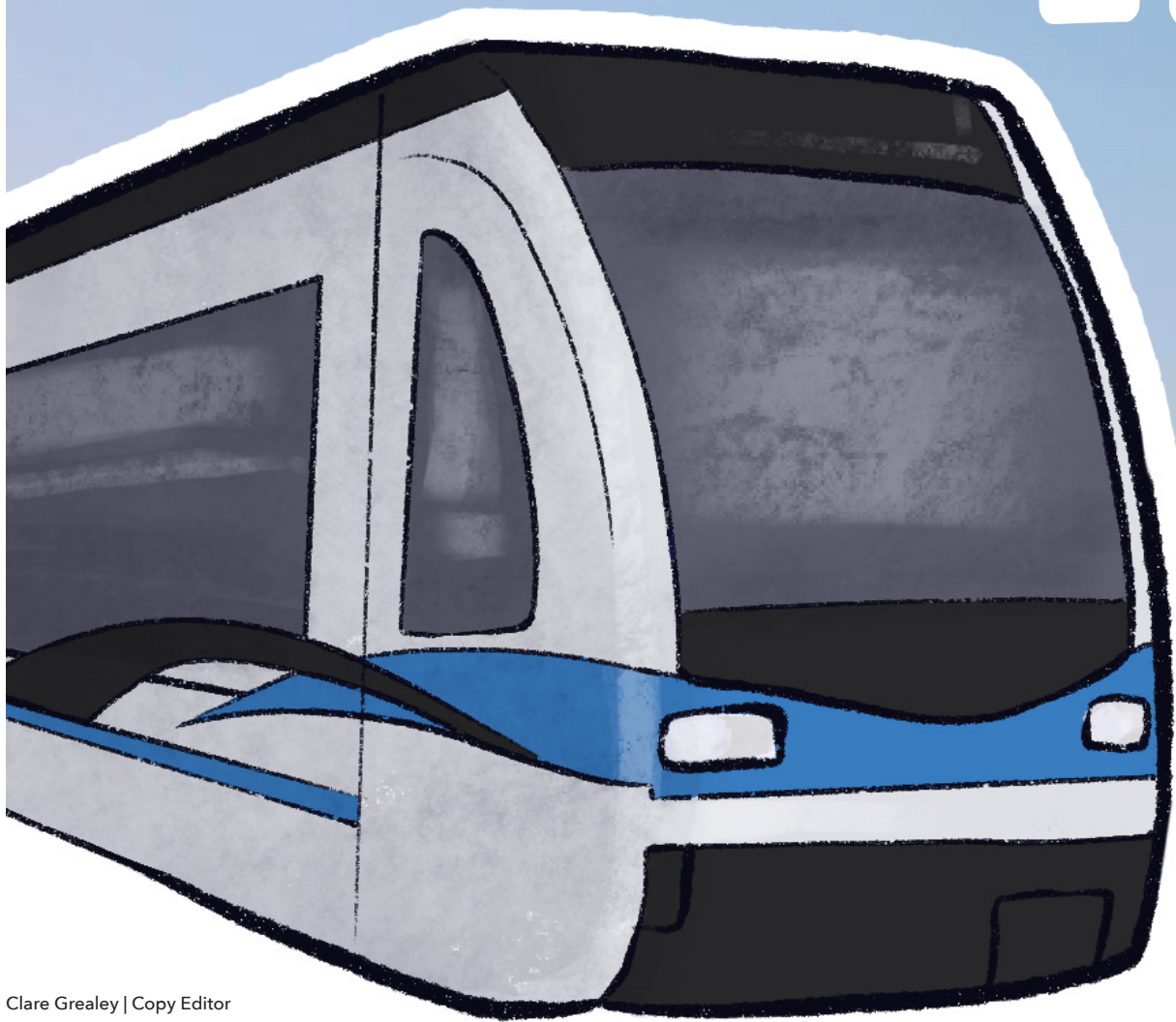
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Learn more by scanning our QR  
code or visiting [cmlibrary.org](https://cmlibrary.org)





# A college student's guide to the LIGHT RAIL



Ava Weaver/Niner Times  
Richard Nuzzo/Niner Times File

Clare Grealey | Copy Editor

For students wanting to navigate Charlotte and Uptown without a car, the Lynx Blue Line is the perfect option. Running from UNC Charlotte's main campus to I-485/South Boulevard, the light rail is accessible and easy to use.

Running from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 6:15 a.m. to midnight Sundays, the light rail is reliable and quick transportation. Trains arrive at a given station every 20-30 minutes and generally linger at stations for a minute or two. However, the trains stay at the UNC Charlotte Main Station for around 10 minutes to allow students to get on.

Beginning in the fall of 2024, students must switch from using their Charlotte IDs to the CATS-Pass app to use their All-Access Pass. To do so, sign in with your NinerNET email address and create an account, and you will be able to see your All-Access Pass in the app.

While the light rail serves 26 stations, here are a few notable ones for those new to Charlotte.

## **UNC Charlotte Main Station and JW Clay Station**

These two stations serve the UNC Charlotte main campus: the Main Station just outside of

North Village residence halls and the JW Clay Station near the engineering side of campus. On-campus students can board these stations to reach Uptown and the greater Charlotte area.

## **36th Street Station**

This light rail stop covers the North Davidson (NoDa) neighborhood, an area brimming with cultural wealth. There are bakeries, restaurants, parks, live music venues and much more at this stop that are worth a trip out there.

## **9th Street Station**

The 9th Street Station connects UNC Charlotte's main campus to the Dubois Center, an extension of the Charlotte campus. The Dubois Center offers 23 academic programs and is home to the School of Professional Studies.

## **Spectrum Center/Arena**

This station is aptly named, as it lets out right across from the Spectrum Center, home to the Charlotte Hornets and host to many musical artists, including Aerosmith, Nicki Minaj, Billie Eilish, Travis Scott and many more. On the other side of the station are shopping areas and restaurants such as the RedEye Diner and Insomnia Cookies.





# Mentorship

*Social Integration*

*Academic Support*

SAFE supports the transition of students to Charlotte by providing you a peer mentor your entire first year at Charlotte. Our program helps minimize academic, social, and emotional challenges by encouraging students to actively utilize and participate in Charlotte support services, peer to peer support, and raising awareness of various campus resources.

Two ways to get involved:

SAFE Voyage - A week-long program held the week before classes to get students acclimated to campus.

SAFE Academic Year Program - Students who do not participate in Voyage can still join for the year.



CLT\_SAFE



704.687.0363



SAFE.CHARLOTTE.EDU



SAFE\_PROGRAM@CHARLOTTE.EDU