# UNMASKED

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NT
NINERTIMES

Vol. 34, Issue 19
Feb. 22, 2022
NINERTIMES.COM



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# NEW MASK PROTOCOLS STARTING FEB. 26

## Niner Notice announces new COVID-19 protocols after mask mandate lift in Mecklenburg County

by Kathryn Caudill
Staff Writer

A Niner Notice released Feb. 17, 2022, announces new protocols regarding COVID-19 after Mecklenburg county lifted the county's indoor mask mandate beginning Feb. 26. This is a result of the downward positive test rates of COVID-19.

"We will continue to evaluate our plans, based on evolving data and guidance from public health officials, and keep you updated through NinerNotices and on the Niner Nation Cares website," stated the notice.

Dick Beekman, Student Body President spoke with the Niner Times to discuss the mandate lift.

"In my experience there has been a mixed reaction to the lifting of the mandate," said Beekman.

Beekman expressed that faculty have also voiced concerns over the mask lift with some indicating that they would move their classes online if the mandate was completely lifted.

"With professors having a significant amount of academic freedom to provide course instruction as they see fit, it would be extremely difficult to provide recourse to students in these situations," added Beekman.

The decision to lift the mandate was made at the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners' weekly meeting on Feb. 16. The Board stated that high-risk individuals and isolated individuals should continue to wear masks in public places until infection rates reach a moderate level defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The Board has left businesses to decide how they wish to move forward regarding masks.

Governor Roy Cooper has encouraged lifting restrictions as vaccine availability has increased and positive case rates have decreased.

Federal regulations are still in place, meaning masks must still be worn in healthcare facilities, public transportation and airports.

The University will continue to require masks in specific locations such as classrooms, Atkins Library, the Student Health Center, on NinerTransit and other indoor gatherings.

Indoor gatherings can now have up to 50% of the room capacity but will require masks. Outdoor activities will not require a mask but encourage them.

Athletics will follow guidelines as set forth by Conference USA.

"The situation, as has been the case throughout the pandemic, continues to be monitored and evaluated on a daily basis," added Beekman.

Beekman explained that precautionary measures such as wastewater testing, contact tracing, and daily health checks will remain in place.

"Should the situation take a drastic change for either better or worse, appropriate adjustments to plans will continue to be made," stated Beekman.

Adjustments such as gatherings in dormitory halls are being discussed by Beekman, student government, and the administration.

"I believe it is in the best interest of the student body for the newly revised policy to be implemented and reevaluated should the COVID-19 situation hopefully improve," added Beekman.

The University encourages masks in more confined spaces such as hallways, elevators and lines.

Mecklenburg County still advises those who have tested positive in the past five days, are high-risk, unvaccinated, and those in a healthcare setting to continue to wear masks.

Masks will still be available at the Student Union, Atkins Library, Niner Central and the Advising Center.

As of Feb. 14, 83% of faculty and staff, 69% of residential students, and 61% of students in on-campus classes are fully up to date on vaccinations.

The number of new daily positive cases have been on a downward trend after a spike in cases on Feb. 7, from 10 cases to 42 of students and staff in the past 14 days.

Since July 1, 2020, there have been 7,445 positive confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the student body.

The notice also states that there will be mandatory spring break re-entry testing for all those not up to date on vaccinations. These tests must be completed between March 12-18 and must be provided by a pharmacy or other healthcare provider. Other testing protocols will remain the same.

Vaccines are available on campus each Thursday through Vax Van, and flu vaccines will be available on Feb. 23 and March 1 at the Student Health Center.

The Notice also indicates that it has been 755 days since the first Niner Notice about COVID-19 was released.

"As a President I would remind all students that Niner Nation remains in this together, and that many people have many differing opinions on the best course of action moving forward," concluded Beekman.

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# NINER TIMES SPEAKS WITH PRESIDENT OF PLANTS FOR PEOPLE

## Student organization responsible for the student, community and Jamil Niner Student Pantry gardens

by Jessica Ceballos
Asst. News Editor

Photo of Jamil Gardens
by Matt Lower

Plants for People is a student organization that promotes sustainability and the upkeep of gardens on the UNC Charlotte campus.

According to the Plants for People Niner Engage page, "Plants for People is a student organization rooted in promoting awareness of sustainability, community-based environment involvement and extending the benefits of horticulture to university students."

The organization was founded in October 2021. President Mark Mistretta is one of the founders of the organization. According to Mistretta, the idea started from a summer program built on leadership. As the group walked around the campus gardens, they asked, "Why do we have these spaces on campus that aren't being used?"

"Our main focus right now is the student gardens and the Jamil Student Niner Pantry gardens," said Mistretta.

The pantry gardens are used to grow fresh produce for the Jamil Student Niner Pantry. The organization is moving forward in submitting a proposal for using the student gardens for horticulture purposes.

"We took it upon ourselves to reach out to the entire pantry, and we have a coalition with [the Jamil Student Niner Pantry]," said Mistretta.

The organization is also partnered with Jes Dormady, the assistant director for the Leadership & Community Engagement office, to use the garden space behind the pantry. "Along with her help and guidance, she has really promoted us to start working in her space and to start getting this done," said Mistretta.

According to the Jamil Niner Student Pantry website, "Our mission at the Jamil Niner Student Pantry is to ensure food security, human dignity, and well-being on campus by providing in-need UNC Charlotte students with healthy, culturally appropriate emergency food. We desire to do our part in assuring that no person in the Niner community goes hungry and that every student has access to nutritious food."

In addition to the Jamil Student Niner Pantry coalition, Plants for People is associated with the Office of Sustainability. According to the Office of Sustainability website, "Sustainability is a balancing of concerns that are environmental, social and economic. Students interested in these issues team up in many clubs and organizations to learn and make an impact on our campus and in our community."

The organization's advisor is Tyler Sytsma, the University sustainability coordinator.

To promote sustainability, the organization attends the Student Sustainability Summit each semester. In the upcoming Sustainability Summit on Feb. 26, the Plants For People organization will discuss its new goals for this semester.

"Last summit was really about promoting useful techniques in the kitchen area for the food," said Mistretta. "[For example] Crown and SoVi and having them potentially switch over to a more effective means of getting these students their food."

This month, Plants For People is looking to provide food such as leafy greens and onions as well as start an herb garden to grow turmeric and other types of spices.

"So this growing season, we're focusing on something we call 'Cultural Appreciation,'" said Mistretta. "A lot of the students I visit the entire pantry are international students. So this semester, we're focusing a lot on Indian cooking."

According to Mistretta, "The way growing season works is it's usually split out into three general dates," said Mistretta. "The beginning date will be after frosting period, which would be around [early February] to [mid-February]. That's when we're really starting to plant these first plants. Then, you have another [growing season] around March and then another one around mid-April."

"We encourage all of the community to come out. We're going to be rebuilding some of the gardens around campus and taking care of those plants to get back to growing season," said Mistretta.

When the organization was created, the Plants For People organization was supplied by a grant from the CDG fund, a school appropriated fund that gives money to sustainability projects. The Plants for People organization used the funding to buy dirt and supplies to build the gardening beds.

According to the Plants for People constitution, the organization is open to any students, faculty or staff. Those interested can join through the Niner Engage page to express their interest.

Upcoming is the Student Garden Day on April 1 from 9 to 5 p.m., according to the Niner Engage website, for students interested in getting involved.

Before Plants for People was established, the Community Gardening Club student organization existed.

"[The Plants for People organization is] basically a reboot of an old org[anization] that initiated in 2014 that had unfortunately outgrown its exec[utive] board members," said Mistretta.

The Community Gardening Club was disbanded estimated in 2017, according to Mistretta. To move forward, Mistretta emphasized the need to utilize the gardens with a purpose.

"We really needed an [organization] that runs the gardens that is more than just playing [around] and more of efficiency," said Mistretta. "Because at the end of the day, it's important that we produce food, and it's important that students learn."

The community gardens, or student gardens, are located between the Rowe, Storrs and Robinson buildings. The pantry gardens are located behind the Jamil Niner Student Pantry building.



# UNMASKED

## Student response to updated mask requirements



by Isabella Perryman
Copy Editor

Graphic of a mask
courtesy of Pixaby

It's 2022 and we're still talking about COVID-19. Things have certainly changed since the start of the pandemic, but we still aren't back to normal. The recent update on UNC Charlotte's mask requirement has sparked a lot of conversation on campus-oriented social media accounts especially regarding the University's decision to only require masks in certain spaces instead of everywhere.

On the UNC Charlotte Reddit page, users quickly began to debate whether or not we should continue wearing masks. Some insisted that masks serve no purpose, while others remind them of their immunocompromised peers. A user named c10a22o97 commented: "They need to remove it everywhere on campus. There's no sense in having a mask mandate. I'm sick of being forced to wear one." To which a user under the name spikeandedd said, "People are sick of being sick… keep wearing your mask."

This debate appears to be a frequent one in most comment sections regarding the mask mandate. Some students have decided they're tired of wearing masks, so they shouldn't have to wear one. In contrast, others are seriously worried about their well-being and the well-being of immunocompromised students.

Those in the first group often lack an understanding that wearing a mask offers protection for those around them. The Cleveland Health Clinic states, "A face mask provides protection to those around you, as well as yourself. Face masks act as barriers for respiratory droplets. Whether you're coughing and the droplets catch in the inside of your own mask, or if you're near someone else coughing and their droplets hit the outside of your mask—it protects both people." They also explain that these droplets are spread through breathing and talking as well. Not to mention that you can still be asymptomatic and unknowingly spread the virus.

Several students commented that "having to wear a mask in classrooms is dumb" since you don't have to wear a mask when you go off-campus. The problem with this argument is that even if you were infected with COVID off-campus, wearing a mask on-campus will provide the people around you with some protection. Unfortunately, most of the responses against the continuation of mask-enforcement do not take this into account.

The good news is that per the Feb. 17 NinerNotice, masks are still required in classrooms, the Student Health Center, Atkins Library, NinerTransit, and indoor gatherings. This still gives a layer of protection to those who may be immunocompromised since sharing these spaces is a requirement—you have to go to class, study, travel around campus, and receive medical attention if you aren't feeling well. While it's great that these measures are being taken, there have been reports of professors not enforcing the mask requirement in classrooms, even before the requirements became more lenient.

A student who asked to remain anonymous told the Niner Times, "In one of my classes, there are multiple students with their masks below their noses and one student who doesn't wear one at all. The professor hasn't asked anyone to wear their masks correctly or even acknowledge the student who isn't wearing one at all." The same student explains that in another one of their classes, their professor took their mask off upon entering and left it off the entire class.

Similar stories have been shared on social media, like the following post from the Charlotte subreddit by user absorbfence2323: "In several of my classes, more than 20% of the class either doesn't wear a mask or wear it under their nose or chin. Some professors don't seem to care and even take off their own masks." They went on to explain that they felt like they could not address it with their professor out of fear that it would impact how they grade the student.

In response to this issue, Student Body President Dick Beekman posted a link to the Academic Complaint Form. Students can use this form to raise concerns to SGA confidentially—they then work with professors and department chairs to address those concerns. In the context of this issue, it is a safe way for students to report concerns they have about their professors not enforcing the mask requirement in classrooms.

These requirements are in place for a reason and are backed by CDC recommendations. It's important to remember that the pandemic is a public health issue—and not intended to be an infringement on your liberties.

I wouldn't say I enjoy wearing a mask, but scientific evidence shows us that wearing one helps prevent potential spread. I encourage those that wear their mask under their nose to remember that masks are much more effective when worn properly. You can absolutely choose to help the situation and those around you that cannot afford exposure but still need to go to class.

I also encourage those who think the mask mandate is a personal attack on their freedom to think about those with weakened immune systems. Those students also have the right to go to class, study in the library and use public transportation without having to worry about their personal health and safety. I know we've been in this since 2020, and the current case counts are encouraging, but if we've learned anything from this pandemic it's that things can change quickly; be considerate and show compassion to your fellow Niners.

# UREC'S DEMO KITCHEN

## Learn more about cooking and sustainability this semester

by Emily Kottak
Arts & Culture Editor

Photos of Demo Kitchen classes
by Loryn Hartbarger

Everyone was thrilled when UREC opened its doors in January 2020. While many people flock to UREC to work out, there are even more opportunities at the location aside from just exercising. One of these opportunities is the Demo Kitchen.

The Demo Kitchen is located on the main floor of UREC, across from the basketball courts. If you walk inside, you will notice a normal-looking kitchen equipped with tables, an island, a refrigerator, stovetops, ovens and more. Sessions in the Demo Kitchen are being offered all semester on a variety of topics.

I myself have attended two sessions and absolutely loved them. I went to the Homemade Oat Milk and Chocolate Chip Cookies session, which was super interesting and fun, especially for someone who only drinks milk substitutes like myself. All of the ingredients (provided by Dining Services) are ready and measured out, waiting to be prepared by students. While walking through the cooking process with you, Sustainability and Wellness Coordinator Allie Thies and Campus Dietitian for Dining Services Loryn Hartbarger (the main employees in charge of the Demo Kitchen) provide helpful tips and information.

"First of all, the Demo Kitchen is free," said Hartbarger. "It can be a fun activity after or in between classes where you can not only learn about cooking, but also sustainability."

Hartbarger and Thies plan the events and hope to have chefs from dining services come to these sessions. However, so far, Hartbarger and Thies, who started in September, have mostly been creating their own ideas and planning the sessions. At first, they had difficulty getting students to come, but with more marketing, there is almost a full class every time.

Some of the upcoming Demo Kitchen Events include Upgraded Ramen Noodles, Ginger Orange Chicken Stir Fry, Whole Grain Quinoa Salad and Spring Cake Pops. Aside from just cooking demonstrations, though, two sessions this semester will be focused on sustainable cleaning products. These products will be much more environmentally friendly and not contain such harsh chemicals that many of our everyday cleaning products contain.

That is one of the wonderful things about Demo Kitchen. Not only are cooking skills being learned and acquired but so is knowledge on sustainability and good environmental practices. For example, at the Oat Milk and Cookie session I attended, we discussed food waste and ways to reduce the amount of food we waste. We also discussed composting or freezing vegetables, so we have more time to use them or using vegetables that are going bad to make a stir fry. Also, with the campus dietitian helping out, students with food intolerances or food allergies can be sure they cook and eat what is safe for them.

I also attended the Valentine's Day Cake Pop session, where we got to decorate our own delicious cake pops. It was so much fun and definitely a great way to spend the day. Even if you are busy with classes or other obligations, the Demo Kitchen sessions do not take up too much time but still provide you with a wonderful experience and useful information.

The best way to hear about the Demo Kitchen's upcoming events is through social media using the Niner Diners handle. On the Niner Diners Instagram, there is a Linktree that provides all kinds of information. Sign up for sessions open a week in advance, so there is plenty of time to mark your calendar and sign up for a class.

We are open to feedback and want to hear from students about what they want to cook and things they would like to see," said Hartbarger. "Encourage people to come! It's fun and interactive. Even if you are alone and don't have a big group of friends with you."







# Tech Review: Surf Onn Gen 2

## A heck of a deal or bargain bin trash? The answer may surprise you

by Jake Pierce
Asst. Arts & Culture Editor




Photo of Surf Onn tablet
by Jake Pierce

Say what you will about them or their practices, but if there's one thing that's tough to beat about retail mega-chain Wal-Mart, it's their prices. Everything from food to clothing to tacky home decor can be found lining the shelves of your nearest supercenter, often for prices that may as well be considered highway robbery. Many of us are also likely familiar with the concept of a "store brand," which often provides cheaper and mostly equivalent alternatives to big-name brands. However, while these products are often an amazing value for money, I can't help but feel that there's a certain stigma surrounding these types of products. After all, what sounds better? A nice, hearty bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios, or a passable if somewhat unfulfilling bowl of Honey Toasted Oat Cereal?

Wal-Mart has had an in-house label known as Great Value for years now, offering a cheaper alternative to the prevailing brands in various categories, including food, hygiene products, cleaning supplies and more. However, in 2020 Wal-Mart launched a similarly budget-oriented and store-exclusive line of electronics under the moniker of Onn. While many of us (myself included) may be more than willing to switch our morning cereal to a more generic label if it means saving a few bucks, the idea of going all in on "off-brand" electronics, especially in a market dominated by the likes of Samsung, Google and Apple, may be a bit tougher to swallow.

After some skepticism, I eventually found the low, low prices of various Onn branded products simply too good to resist and made a handful of "low-risk" purchases. I needed a car charger for my phone, a replacement charger for my Fitbit and an electronics screen-cleaning kit, and so I turned to Onn. I can happily report that all of those products met or even exceeded my expectations, all while saving me a comparative fortune when put up against big-brand alternatives. So, after this initial success, I decided to put all my cards on the table and really test the Onn line of products with something a bit more major: a tablet.

This leads us to the hilariously named Surf Onn Gen 2 tablet, an Android-powered touchscreen slate that promises to fill all your web surfing, streaming and mobile gaming needs for a mere $69.99. Now, in a world where the latest tablets from the likes of Apple come in at over $300 and can go far beyond that depending on what extras are included, can a $70 device really serve its role as well as, for example, an iPad? The answer, perhaps somewhat predictably, is both yes and no.

First, let's talk raw data and specifications. Onn's tablet comes equipped with a 1280 x 800 resolution LCD screen, a 2.0 GHz Quad-core processor, 32 GB of storage, 2GB of RAM and a rechargeable battery reported to last around 9 hours on a single charge. For those who may not be familiar with the ins and outs of technical specs, I'll summarize by saying that none of these numbers are necessarily bad, but they aren't great either. 1280 x 800 can feel like a noticeably soft image in an age where most phones and tablets come equipped with either full 4K resolution support or at the very least 1920 x 1080 displays. 32GB of storage may also disappear fast for anyone who plans to take lots of pictures/videos or download full movies to the device. However, all of these numbers seem at the very least workable on paper, but what about when they're put into practice?

After testing a variety of different functions with a wide assortment of apps and services, I have to say there are quite a few areas in which this device managed to genuinely surprise me. After an initial setup and updating process (which admittedly took a bit longer than expected), the Surf Onn Gen 2 tablet proved itself quick and effective at basic tasks such as browsing Google, downloading apps, and navigating system settings. Moving into streaming, video platforms such as YouTube and Disney Plus are not only fully compatible but seem to work quite well on the device. Video quality is limited to 720p at maximum, but the actual streaming process has gone smoothly without major hitching or buffering, at least in my testing. The sound is admittedly terrible, as it is provided entirely through a tiny and pathetic speaker on the bottom of the tablet. However, this problem is somewhat easily mitigated with any set of headphones and serves as more of an annoyance overall than a complete deal-breaker. Even testing several games on the device led to mixed yet still favorable results. Complex, 3D apps such as "Pokémon Go" or "Mario Kart Tour" are perfectly playable, though this comes with the caveat of some occasional severe stuttering and slowdown (thanks a lot, 2GB of RAM.) That being said, simpler games like "Candy Crush Saga" or "Clash Royale" work much better, being practically on-par with any other device.

So, while there are many aspects of the Surf Onn Gen 2 tablet that are perfectly acceptable, there are one or two areas in which things take a turn for the worst. Most notably, the cameras are absolutely horrible. It doesn't matter if you're looking outward or inward, taking videos or photographs; the cameras produce some of the worst, most low-res images I've ever seen from a smart device. Though I don't often find myself snapping pictures, I am aware that photos are a very big deal for many users out there, and something like an awful camera does carry the potential to be a deal-breaker.

Also, perhaps more broadly, the touchscreen itself can seem a tad unresponsive sometimes. Ordinarily, it does perfectly fine, but there are times when it may take three or four attempts to have the device actually recognize a gesture, which has probably served as the single biggest annoyance during my use so far. Ultimately, neither of these issues have proved detrimental to my enjoyment of the device as a whole, but they are worth mentioning as potentially massive stumbling blocks.

It's a bit tough to say whether I would actually recommend you rush out to buy one of these tablets. On the one hand, the price point is literally hundreds less than the competition. It handles many basic tasks without issue and offers perfectly serviceable ways of accessing popular streaming services like Netflix and Disney Plus. However, the occasionally slow performance, unresponsive touch screen, lackluster gaming and terrible cameras might be enough to steer you away, even at $69.99. If you want a premium tablet experience, you will not, I repeat, will not find it here. However, if you're just looking for a way to surf the web, do some streaming or explore the App Store, the Surf Onn Gen 2 tablet provides a passable way of doing so with an incredibly low financial barrier to entry.




# DEAR NINER TIMES,

# How do I DO LAUNDRY?

by Kelsey Burgess
Staff Writer

The worst feeling is taking a brand new clothing article out of the dryer only to see it's been picked, discolored or tattered. To avoid this sickening feeling, follow these tips. While it may seem exhausting, separating your laundry into specific categories allows your clothing to stay new-looking much longer. It's very important to put all pink and red-colored clothing in a load all by themselves. These colors bleed dye even after being washed multiple times. Keeping them all together allows them to stay vibrant and avoid turning your white tee shirt into a blush. Underwear, socks and sweaty clothes should be washed together in a warm to hot setting to kill bacteria and avoid skin irritation. Be sure not to continuously wash clothing in hot water unless necessary, as it makes the color of the fabric fade quickly. A cold wash is normally ideal for most clothing articles.

Another way to keep your clothing looking its best is by hanging to dry rather than throwing them in the dryer. Drying racks allow clothes to keep their shape and are much more gentle on fabric. They also help keep necklines sharp instead of droopy as the dryer often causes them to become. Cheap drying racks can be purchased from Amazon, Walmart, and many other locations. For college students, it's best to buy a drying rack that can be compactly stored. Many fold up into a very thin shape and can be slid into closets, under beds or in cabinets. The most important items to ensure are dried on the rack are athletic or moisture-wicking clothing as they easily stretch and lose shape.

In addition, fabric softener or dryer sheets can leave a residue on clothing that is often difficult to rid of. Using white vinegar in a Downy ball will help prevent the residue from forming while leaving the same fresh smell. An alternative is using a laundry sanitizer. Many popular brands such as Lysol and Clorox sell laundry sanitizer, and there are many other brands to choose from. It removes odors that clothing can obtain from a hard workout, a soccer game and much more. Often, washing machines have a specific compartment to pour in laundry sanitizer.

If you have space, purchase a compartment laundry basket, so it is easier to separate darks, colors, reds, underwear and whites into their own loads. While it may seem overwhelming, it is very doable and allows your clothing to stay looking brand new for years to come. By taking these precautions and tips, it is easy to save hundreds of dollars on new clothes by keeping your current wardrobe in its best condition.

PLAYLIST OF THE WEEK:

# Black Excellence



JUWAN WATSON
STAFF WRITER


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# BLOCK PARTY

## How Keke McKinney has become a defensive star for the 49ers

by Cameron Williams
Staff Writer




Charlotte's Keke McKinney looks to make a play
by Bethany Ivan

There's no question Head Coach Cara Consuegra demands excellence on the defensive end of the court. This is easily found in the stats; the 49ers are only giving up a season total of 60.4 points per game to their opponents. The centerpiece of the defensive unit is none other than Kentucky Wildcat transfer KeKe McKinney.

"KeKe is the defensive player of the year," said Consuegra about McKinney. "We need to start saying that, and we need to start pushing that."

McKinney leads Conference USA in blocks per game this season with two per contest. Her presence is felt by opposing teams anytime they try to get anything going towards the basket. McKinney's best block is arguably the game-sealing block at Old Dominion on Jan. 26, not allowing an easy layup for the Monarchs.

With Jazmin Harris transferring this past off-season, the 49ers hit the transfer portal hard to bring in talented players. One of the major factors in McKinney's decision to come here was the fact that a former teammate from Kentucky, Kameron Roach, had already committed to transfer to Charlotte.

"Kam was really the biggest thing," said McKinney. "I talked to Kam, and they had my major here, and that was one of the biggest things when I was looking at schools was to find if they had my major or not. Kam told me how the team was, how the coaches were, and the environment."

Standing at 6'1, McKinney feels as though she was undersized at Kentucky with a lot of her competition being taller than she is, but it made her better having to guard players like South Carolina star turned Las Vegas Aces star A'Ja Wilson.

McKinney had some of her best games during her freshman year against Wilson of South Carolina, where she scored 12 points against the Gamecocks and had two blocks.

"Obviously, at Kentucky in the SEC, there are a lot bigger girls," said McKinney. "I was always undersized, so I always had to play smart. It was more physical at Kentucky, so I guess that gives me a little bit of an advantage here."

With the absence of Harris on this year's team, the coaching staff knew they needed a post player to come in. McKinney stepped right into that role and has lived up to expectations.

"I didn't really know that I was coming here to start," McKinney said. "Maybe I guess, but I still knew that I had to come in here, work just as hard as everyone else."

She led the Wildcats in 2020-21 with 42 blocked shots on the season, and she also leads not just Charlotte in blocks but also the entire conference.

McKinney accredits her passion on the defensive side of the ball to her mother.

"Growing up, my mama said it was all about defense," McKinney emphasized. "She would say that everything else would come, but the one thing that you have to stand on is your defense. Over time I just perfected my craft. I was always longer than other people, not as quick but long. So, I think that is where it starts, with my mom."

Now that McKinney is in her fifth year, she feels as if she has matured and got her game to a point she is happy with, although she tries to improve every day.

"Now I am a fifth year, I know how to use my body well, time my jumping and all that good stuff," McKinney said. "Also, Cara (Consuegra), defense wins games, so I feel like I just buy into my role."

McKinney has been doing it all for Charlotte all season. Her season-high in blocks this season was eight against Rice on Jan. 22. She is definitely the catalyst on the defensive side of the ball for the 49ers, and her success will drive the team's success down the latter part of the year.

"There is no better defender in this league," Consuegra said of McKinney. "Her ability to change the game on the defensive end gives our team confidence because they know if they make mistakes, she will be back there in the paint. It's her rebounding and her activity defensively and her presence overall."

The 49ers sit atop of C-USA with five games left before the conference tournament that will take place the second week of March. McKinney is primed to be a vital part of a 49er push to an NCAA tournament berth.

# FRESH FACES

## Greg Brown, Kap DeDe and Tyler Chadwick will join the football staff in new roles for 2022

by Cameron Williams
Staff Writer

Photos of Greg Brown, Kap DeDe, and Tyler Chadwick courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

The Charlotte 49er football program fourth-year head coach Will Healy announced the additions of Greg Brown, Kap DeDe and Tyler Chadwick to the coaching staff. Chadwick was already on staff as an offensive assistant but was promoted to tight ends coach.

Here is a look into all of their accomplishments and former positions.

**Greg Brown: Co-defensive coordinator**

Brown has been around the block as he has had a career spanning five decades with a few different stops. He coached in the NFL before coming back down to the collegiate level.

His NFL career consisted of 15 seasons with various positions. He was at Purdue for two seasons as the cornerback coach, and he spent two seasons as the secondary coach at Auburn before that. His most recent stop was at Colorado, as a defensive assistant.

He has been a part of 12 bowl teams and three conference championship teams. Having been in the business for so long, it was a good fit for the 49ers as they needed to bring in someone with experience to get the defense where it needs to be.

**Kapp DeDe: Safeties and cornerbacks coach**

Having someone with recent playing experience and coaching experience will be good for the 49ers defensive back unit, which returns several starters. Kap DeDe comes into the Charlotte program after spending two years as the linebackers coach at Colorado State. As a former defensive back at Auburn, DeDe knows what it is like to be in a position of high scrutiny.

"Kap comes highly-regarded with a strong pedigree as both a player and a coach," Healy added. "He's a tremendous person and extremely knowledgeable. He can really impact our young men."

With the return of Trey Creamer and Tank Robinson to the defensive back room, DeDe has two reliable players to build his unit around.

**Tyler Chadwick: Tight ends coach**

Formerly a graduate assistant with the 49ers, Chadwick was promoted to tight ends coach with the recent vacancy opening. Chadwick was a former baseball player with the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers. He was also an assistant with their football program before being added to the roster in 2016.

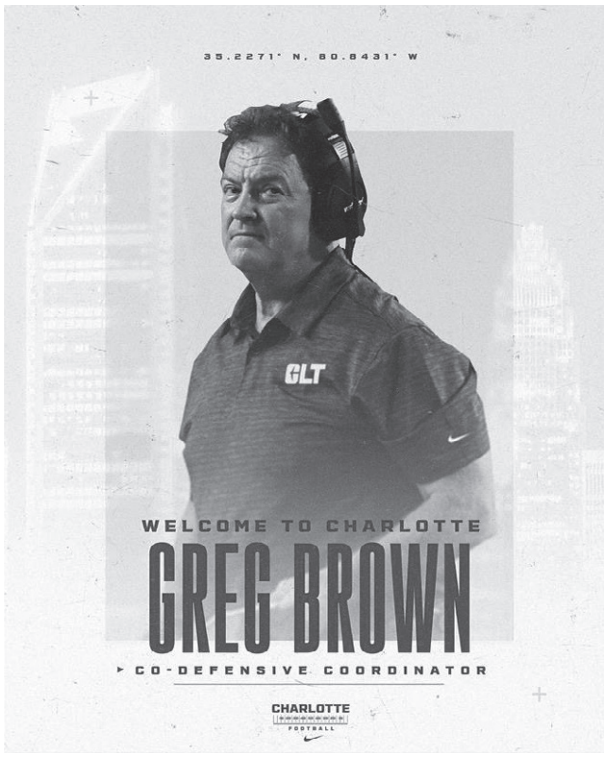
Taylor Thompson will likely lead the tight end room next season as the junior will be coming back from an injury. Thompson had surgery to repair a knee injury that he sustained midway through the past season.

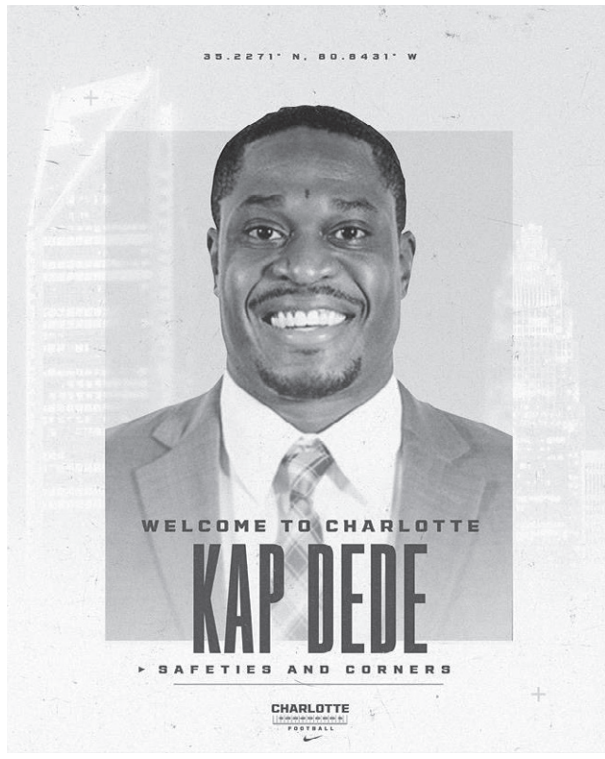
"Tyler continues to impress. He's made big strides within our program," Healy said. "He loves this place and will also do a great job in recruiting for us. He's from this area and will be able to develop strong relationships with high school coaches."

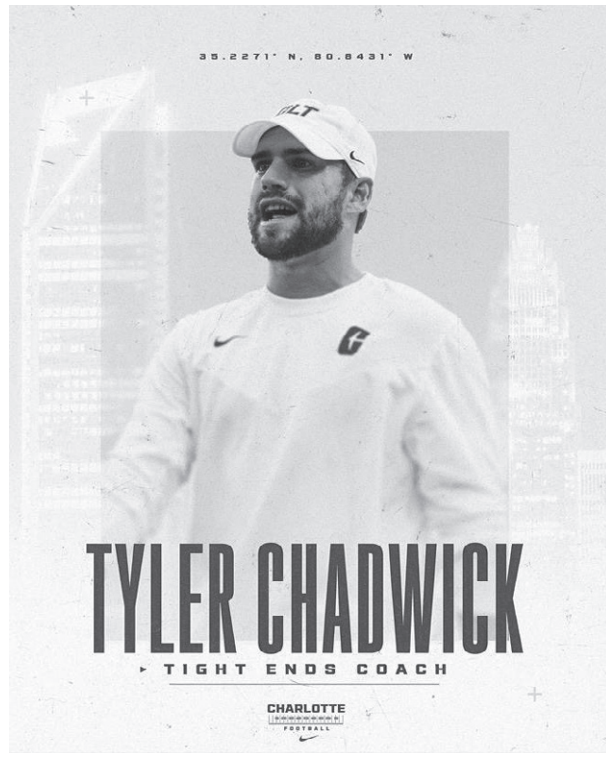
**Other news**

The plan for the 49ers was to bring in Greg Brown to coach alongside the Co-defensive coordinator Marcus West. It was announced on Feb. 17 that West would be accepting a defensive line coaching position with the Buffalo Bills of the NFL.

This leaves questions for the 49ers as to Brown's position and whether he will solely take the defensive coordinator title.



# ORDER ON THE COURT



## Charlotte women's tennis continues to serve it up in the spring season

by Bryson Foster
Asst. Sports Editor

The Charlotte women's tennis team in the huddle before a match
courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

The Charlotte women's tennis team is off to a great start in the spring season. The 49ers have one of the most talented rosters in team history and look to take the program to new heights. The expectations are high as the second half of the season quickly approaches.

The 49ers have an impressive 7-2 record, and a five-game winning streak has given the team newfound confidence. The team boasts victories over multiple power five opponents in Oregon, Virginia Tech and Boston College while being selected to the ITA 2022 Kick-Off weekend for the first time in program history. Head Coach Anthony Davison commented on the 49ers' progression.

"We are a hard team to beat right now as we are bringing it to every practice by working on that competitive piece," said Davison. "We have emphasized our fitness, strength and toughness on the court, and these pieces over the whole year have improved the most."

The 49ers have players ranked in both singles and doubles categories. Junior Margaux Maquet, ranked 79 in singles play, has been the flagship player for the 49ers so far. Davison is pleased with Maquet's play and praises her commitment to her craft.

"Maquet is putting it together in every match," said Davison. "She has improved a lot from training over the summer in Belgium and playing events there over the break, and she has come back physically stronger."

The duo of Ruxi Schech and Lucia Quiterio is ranked 55 in the ITA doubles standings, and they finished 10-0 at the Kitty Harrison in the fall. The juniors bring veteran leadership to the squad by mentoring the underclassmen on the team. Davison reflected on what they mean to the 49ers program.

"We can rely on them to play any time," said Davison. "They are role models for the younger players and are fun to watch because they truly enjoy playing together."

Schech, hailing from Frankfurt, Germany, is 6-3 in her last nine singles matches and has four wins in doubles. She burst onto the scene when she was voted to the All-Conference USA Singles First Team last year. Even though both players have switched doubles partners, Schech's bond with Quiterio has helped both players and the team reach the next level.

"We randomly played one tournament together, and it worked out well," said Schech. "As a team, it is better for us to play the way we are right now, and we are implementing ourselves in every game."

Quiterio, the Texas A&M transfer from Benedita, Portugal, has found a home since joining the 49ers. She is 5-2 in her last seven singles matches and has picked up six doubles wins with Maquet in the spring. Quiterio shared her thoughts on the season so far.

"I was rusty in the beginning, but I am doing a good job in doubles, and I know the things I have to improve," said Quiterio. "The team has won some big matches on the road, which is never easy, and I am looking forward to competing in more matches coming up."

Everybody brings something to the table from their different backgrounds and experiences. The team has a plethora of international representation from all around the world. Charlotte has become a global destination as six players are from countries outside the United States, such as India, Spain and the Czech Republic.




"The different experience brings us together as a whole," said Davison. "Everybody's background is unique and makes us better as a whole"

Davison has high expectations for his team and is confident that they can accomplish great things this season. He is ready to get back out on the court in upcoming matchups as the group becomes the best version of itself.

"My expectations are internal with the team," said Davison. "I expect us to work hard and meet the standards that we have set every single day, and it comes down to meeting our expectations which is realistic that this team will be the best that the school has ever had."

Schech and Quiterio have set goals for themselves and the team as they head into the rest of the season.

"One of my goals for the team is to make it to the NCAA tournament," said Quiterio. "I hope that we all keep being energetic and positive because if we can keep doing that, we are going to reach our goals."

Schech added, "This is one of the best teams that we have ever had, so I think we can be in the top 42, and we can win the conference by winning as many matches as we can."

The Charlotte women's tennis team will be back in action on Friday, Feb. 25, and Sunday, Feb. 27, as they host Coastal Carolina and Liberty at Halton-Wagner Tennis Complex.