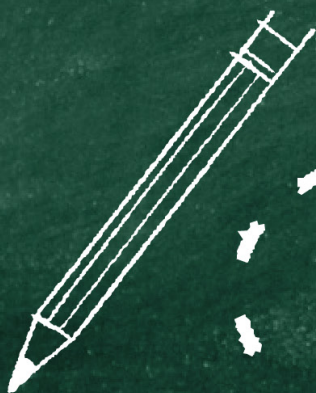


WELCOME



BACK

a niner times publication



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Emmanuel Perkins
editor@ninertimes.com

MANAGERIAL BOARD

Wes Packham WRITING MANAGING
Megan Khor MULTIMEDIA MANAGING

EDITORIAL

Kyle Boucher NEWS
Emsley Jackson OPINION
Tre Holland SPORTS
Ahmed Ahmed PHOTO
Ava Weaver DESIGN

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Emily Schenkel ASST. NEWS
Ava Harris ASST. OPINION
Shane Reese ASST. SPORTS
Rex Stauss ASST. COPY
Kaitlyn Fankboner ASST. PHOTO
Ali Thiam ASST. DESIGN

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

TJ Carter, Miguel Peña, Bayan Ammar,
Hayden Herr, Kanousa Thapa, Ivory
Galloway, Lauren Steventon, Megan
Bentley, Gavin Binkley, Shamari Davis,
Wyatt Bullock, Kelli Blackburn, Caitlin
Hanson, Blaise Uy, Crawford Anderson,
Bryan Chen, Delaney Crowder, Lauren
Simendinger, Tanisha Sharma

LAYOUTS

Welcome Back graphic by Ava Weaver
Interior layouts by Ava Weaver
and Camila Surinach

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Itziar Carrasco Gomez
mktdirector@charlotte.edu

NINER MEDIA STAFF

Kelly Merges MEDIA ADVISER
Laurie Cuddy BUSINESS MANAGER
Bianca Fruscello ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

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

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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



Chris Crews/Niner Times file

Events to watch for on campus

Back to School Bash
Aug. 26, 5-8 p.m.
Harris Alumni Center

Pop the Balloon
Sept. 3, 6-9 p.m.
Popp Martin Student Union,
Room 340

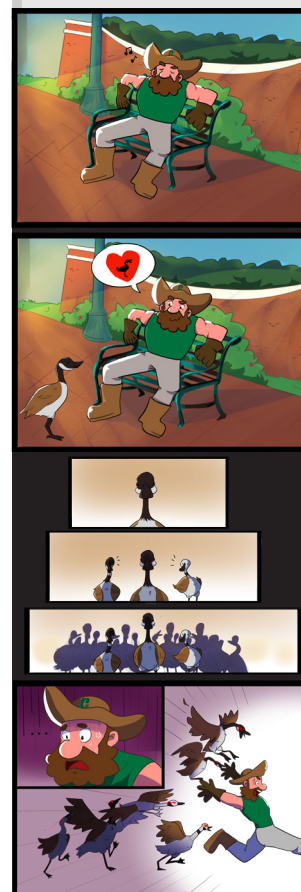
Football vs. The Citadel
Sept. 5, 3:30 p.m.
Jerry Richardson Stadium

DGC Picnic
Aug. 26, 6-8 p.m.
Star Quad

College Colors Day
Sept. 4, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Barnes & Noble Charlotte,
Popp Martin Student Union

Niner's Comics: Flabbergasting flock

TJ Carter | Staff Illustrator



NOTES FROM THE NEWSROOM:

Know when to say no

Ava Weaver | Design Editor



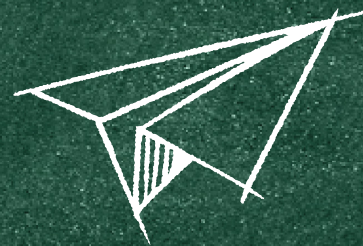
“Yes I can do that, it’s no problem!” is something many of us often say, even when it is a problem. Whether you’re a perfectionist, a people pleaser or just someone who always wants to do more, it’s easy to want to commit to every opportunity that comes your way. I would be lying if I said I was not guilty of this exact thing. While the “say yes

to everything” mindset is valuable to have, you also must know when to say no. If you overload yourself with every opportunity, you risk spreading yourself too thin. Ask yourself, what is the point of having all of the clubs, extracurriculars, projects, etc., if you can’t put any real effort or time into them? Are you signing yourself up for more because you are passionate

about it, or are you just trying to add lines to your resume? College is more than just a resume builder; make sure you are leaving time to live. The work will always be there, but the people and experiences around you right now are temporary. Still say yes to opportunities, but make sure you’re doing it for you, not just to add something else to the list.

Letter from the editor:

Today's worry, tomorrow's lesson



Emmanuel Perkins | Editor-In-Chief



When students think about college, they often think about the moments that define the experience, such as making new friends, joining student organizations, preparing for exams and wondering what comes next. Along with those exciting moments comes something almost every college student experiences: uncertainty.

As an incoming freshman, one of my biggest worries was whether I was making the right decision by changing my major from music education to communication studies.

I had always imagined my college journey following a carefully planned path. I liked having everything organized, every hour scheduled and every goal mapped out before taking the next step. College had other plans.

Now, as I enter my third year at UNC Charlotte, I've learned that some of the most meaningful experiences happen when life doesn't go according to plan. Some of the moments I cherish most are the ones I didn't perfectly organize. They're the moments that pushed me outside my comfort zone and

taught me lessons I couldn't have learned otherwise.

Changing my major felt like stepping into the unknown, something I don't usually do. I questioned whether I had made the right choice and worried about how it would shape my future. Looking back, that worry led to one of the best decisions I've ever made.

It led me to opportunities I never expected, including joining the Niner Times. Through this publication, I've had the chance to meet incredible people, photograph major events and experience opportunities I might never have found if I had stayed on the path I originally planned. One of those experiences was driving to Greenville, North Carolina, and back in one night to photograph our football team playing East Carolina University. It was a long day, but it reminded me that some of the best opportunities come when we're willing to step outside our comfort zones. None of those experiences would have happened if I had waited until I had everything figured out.

That doesn't mean you should spend every day worrying. It means you shouldn't be afraid of uncertainty. A little uncertainty reminds us that we're growing. It encourages us to ask questions, try something new and become comfortable without having every answer.

One piece of advice I'd give every new student is this: Don't be afraid to make mistakes, but don't waste them either.

Whether it's choosing to stay inside instead of meeting new people, skipping a class you should have attended or realizing a club wasn't the right fit for you, every decision has something to teach you. The important part isn't avoiding every mistake but learning from each one.

Those lessons don't stop after your first year. Even now, I still laugh about some of the

things I once worried about, like paying for a meal plan that didn't fit my needs or not being able to remember what I spent my financial aid refund on. At the time, those felt like big mistakes. Today, they're simply lessons that have helped me make better decisions moving forward.

As we begin another school year, remember that everyone around you is carrying worries of their own. Some are obvious, while others you'll never see. Be kind to yourself, extend that same kindness to others and don't compare your journey to someone else's. Instead, ask yourself what you've learned and how those lessons have shaped the person you're becoming.

There is so much to experience at UNC Charlotte. You may not find the perfect friend group during your first semester. You may change your major, discover a new passion or realize your original plans weren't the right ones after all. That's OK. College isn't about having every answer; it's about discovering who you are through the experiences, successes and setbacks along the way.

My hope for you this academic year isn't that everything goes perfectly. It's that you embrace both the highs and the challenges, because each one has something to teach you.

If your journey leads you to the Niner Times, stop by and introduce yourself. Whether you're interested in writing, photography, design or simply want to learn more about what we do, we'd love to meet you. College is built on trying new things, and you never know where one opportunity might lead.

As you begin this year, remember that today's worry can become tomorrow's lesson. The question isn't whether you'll make mistakes, because you will. The question is what you'll choose to learn from them.

Letter from the vice chancellor for student affairs

Kevin W. Bailey



Dear Niners,

There's nothing quite like the start of a new semester at UNC Charlotte. As I step into my 10th year as your vice chancellor for student affairs, I want you to know this: You belong here, and Niner Nation is ready to help you find your place.

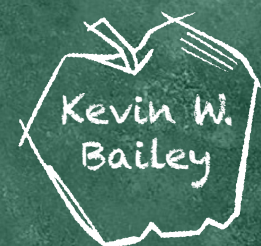
One of the best ways to make this big University feel like home is to jump in. Explore one of our more than 450 student organizations, join a fraternity or sorority or try out a sports club. These communities give you more than activities — they give you people.

I hope to see you wearing green on Wednesdays around campus and cheering in the stands at our Charlotte Athletics events! Football season kicks off with a home game against The Citadel on Sept. 5. And don't miss Niner Nation Week, leading up to this year's Homecoming matchup against Memphis on Oct. 3.

College life is busy — there are so many opportunities. Remember to take care of yourself. Well-being is more than just physical or mental health. It includes how we build relationships, grow intellectually, care for our environment, navigate finances, explore purpose and prepare for careers. You'll hear more about these "Dimensions of Wellness" throughout the year.

We also have a new ninernationcares.charlotte.edu website, a great place to find resources to help you succeed at Charlotte.

Your journey here is uniquely yours, but you never have to walk it alone. Make time for friends, rest, reflection and, yes, studying. Work hard, stay curious and make this year unforgettable!



Letter from the 2026-27 student body president and vice president

Madison Brown and Paul Hensler

As we welcome students back to campus, our administration is excited to begin a year centered around one simple principle: execution. Throughout our campaign, we promised students that we would be visible, organized and results-driven. Now that we have taken office, it is time to turn those commitments into meaningful change that students can see throughout their daily campus experience.

Our administration is focused on three priorities: campus improvements, access and support, and transparency and accountability. Throughout the summer, our team has worked to build the foundation necessary to begin the semester ready to deliver results for every Niner.

Improving the student experience remains one of our highest priorities. Parking and transportation continue to be major concerns, which is why we established a Parking and Transportation Liaison and committee within our executive cabinet. This committee will provide students with a direct avenue to share concerns while allowing us to continue advocating for expanded parking opportunities, particularly for commuter students. Information on joining our new advisory boards will be shared on our Instagram.

We have also heard concerns from engineering and STEM students regarding limited dining options. We are excited that Waterbean Coffee will open in EPIC, providing another convenient option for students. At the same time, we have established a Dining Services Committee to gather student feedback and work alongside Dining Services to advocate for

expanded dining options, improved accessibility and better resources across campus.

Supporting student organizations is another key priority. We are creating a Student Organization Advisory Board to strengthen communication between student leaders and SGA while working with University administration to simplify the CRES reservation process. We are also partnering with the Finance Committee to improve the event grant funding process by creating clear guides and instructional resources that make funding more transparent and accessible.

Student well-being remains central to our mission. We are working with University partners to increase the visibility of mental health resources in residence halls while planning wellness initiatives that encourage students to prioritize their physical and mental health and reduce the stigma surrounding seeking help.

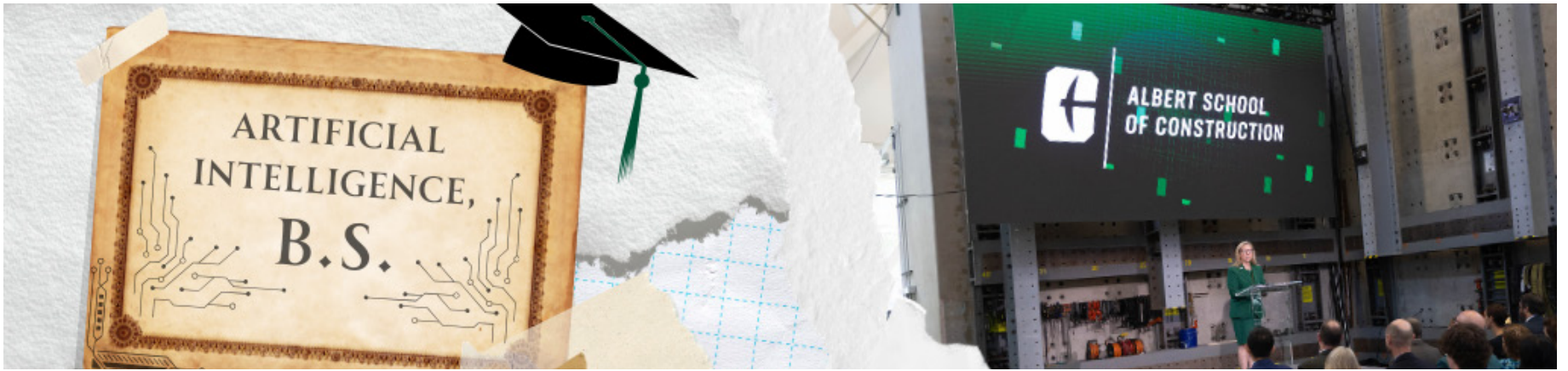
Finally, students deserve to know what their student government is accomplishing. This semester, our new media and communications team will provide regular updates on meetings, initiatives, advocacy efforts and progress toward our goals. We believe transparency builds trust, and we welcome students to engage with us and hold us accountable.

Our focus now shifts from preparation to execution. We are committed to working alongside students, organizations, faculty, staff and University leadership to create meaningful improvements throughout the academic year. This administration is ready to listen, ready to lead and ready to deliver for every Niner.



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times





Bayan Ammar | Staff Writer
Ali Thiam/Niner Times & Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

Campus changes for 2026-27



With a new start to the academic school year comes new programs, schools and campus changes. Here's a look at some of the major changes on campus starting this year.

New degree programs

This fall, UNC Charlotte is kicking off the semester by launching brand new bachelor's and master's programs in Artificial Intelligence. This decision comes with the fast development of AI and the high demand for AI-focused education.

Following approval from the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors, UNC Charlotte will be the first North Carolina school to host these Master of Science (M.S.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.) programs. Applications for these degree programs are open now.

The University is also addressing these AI-related industry changes by offering an

M.S. in Financial Engineering — originally recognized in the Belk College of Business as an M.S. in Mathematical Finance.

The updated program offers a curriculum built around learning and managing AI applications, predictive modeling and risk analysis. This reflects the rapid change in modern finance, as well as the pace at which UNC Charlotte prepares students for an AI-adapting financial industry.

Another addition is UNC Charlotte's Albert School of Construction. This is the first dedicated construction school in North Carolina. Alumni Craig and Darla Albert established the school as a leadership gift to UNC Charlotte in the hopes of inspiring students to chase their ambitions.

The program will begin in the fall and give construction management students an academic home to strengthen their skills in the field and better prepare for their futures.

Campus changes

UNC Charlotte and Honeywell have announced an ongoing expansion project transforming Burson Hall into a new STEM research lab, backed by over \$10 million invested in equipment, technology and even scholarships for undergraduates to use.

This project, which was a gift to the University, will introduce brand-new, project-based engineering labs, industry-grade technology and plenty of research spaces to help ensure students have prior hands-on knowledge before entering the field.

Honeywell plans to use more of its funding to give 48 STEM scholarships to students and offer other expanded support, such as senior capstone projects supported by Honeywell engineers and extra funding for research.

The 155,000 square-foot expansion is set to be completed by fall 2027; however, stu-

dents can already see and receive benefits.

Not every change this fall is something being incorporated into campus, however. Some of these changes involve saying goodbye to a friendly face. After several years on campus, UNC Charlotte's Starship food-delivering robots have been discontinued.

This decision comes after Starship Technologies reduced its university partnerships worldwide in hopes of adapting its business model to larger commercial markets.

UNC Charlotte is working to implement another solution in fall 2026, aiming to keep the convenient delivery option available for students. Students can anticipate a new delivery system to touch down on campus in the near future.

From new degrees and program launches to campus transformations, UNC Charlotte will experience many changes this year as both academic programs and campus infrastructure continue to expand.

Guide to the CATS Light Rail System

Miguel Peña | Staff Writer

Getting around as a college student can be challenging, especially without access to a car. Luckily, UNC Charlotte has access to plenty of public transit, including a light rail station located directly on campus. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) light rail gives students an additional transportation option for commuting and traveling around Charlotte.

The LYNX Blue Line connects UNC Charlotte's campus to I-485/South Boulevard, totaling 26 stops across the city. It arrives every 7.5 minutes during peak hours, and it takes a total of 22 minutes from campus to Uptown.

Charlotte students can ride the light rail at no additional cost through the CATS-Pass program, which is included as part of the University's transportation benefits.

Before the train

Students can board the light rail at two stations serving the main campus: the UNC Charlotte Main station, located near North Village, and the JW Clay Blvd/UNC Charlotte station, located next to the Engineering Campus.

To ride, students will need to download the CATS-Pass app and create an account with their UNC Charlotte email. To access the free pass, tap "Wallet" in the bottom menu of the app and select "All-Access Pass" from the "Current" list.

Once a student's account is set up, they need to tap their pass and scan the code when boarding a CATS bus or show their pass to a fare inspector.

Students can ride the train Monday through Saturday from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.

and on Sundays from 6:15 a.m. until midnight. For more details, check the CATS Rail Routes and Schedules.

Travel around the city

Some light rail stations include parking lots for riders. Depending on the station they stop at, students can access different parts of Charlotte and the experiences they have to offer.

The 36th Street Station stop is in the North Davidson (NoDa) neighborhood, Charlotte's historic arts district. The area has many restaurants, breweries, bakeries and live music venues, with murals decorating the outside walls.

The 9th Street Station is the Dubois Center stop, the University's Uptown location that houses "25+ academic programs from across

the University and the School of Professional Studies."

The 9th Street Station also serves Uptown's First Ward and First Ward Park.

The Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC/Arena) station is the closest to the Spectrum Center, home of the Charlotte Hornets and big concerts, featuring artists like J. Cole, Joji and Olivia Rodrigo.

The CTC/Arena station is also walking distance from many restaurants, shopping areas and study spots like Monarch Market, Insomnia Cookies and the Midnight Diner.

The light rail offers bike racks inside the train cars to take bikes into the city and take advantage of the bike-friendly roads.

The official CATS website offers a trip planner tool, allowing students to discover their favorite part of the city with the reliability of public transportation.



Ava Weaver/Niner Times

EXPERIENCE THE WORLD WITH UNC CHARLOTTE

.....
global.charlotte.edu | international@charlotte.edu

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE GLOBAL

Fall 2026 Events

International Festival

September 19

edabroad.charlotte.edu

Study Abroad Fair

October

International Education Week

November 16-20

global.charlotte.edu/IEW

Connecting Charlotte With The World

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**

Attend **International Coffee Hour**

Study Abroad 101

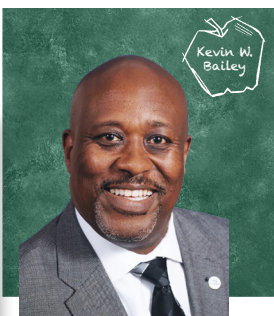
Explore opportunities to go abroad! All UNC Charlotte students going abroad are required to complete Study Abroad 101 before meeting with an Education Abroad advisor or starting an application.

edabroad.charlotte.edu/getstarted

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.



Meet the Leaders shaping UNC Charlotte

Niner Times File
Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

While students are usually at UNC Charlotte for only a few years, the University's leaders often serve much longer. Knowing who leads the University helps students understand how decisions are made and who shapes Charlotte's future.

UNC Charlotte's senior leadership includes the chancellor, the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor's Cabinet. Here are some of the University leaders students should know.

Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber

The chancellor is the face of the University and leads its administration and operations. Sharon L. Gaber has served as UNC Charlotte's chancellor since 2020. She is the University's fifth chancellor and the second woman to hold the position.

Gaber has focused on expanding student access, increasing economic mobility and strengthening Charlotte's national reputation as a research university. Under her leadership, the University achieved Research 1 (R1) status, the highest Carnegie designation for research activity, and reached record enrollment.

Provost Jennifer Troyer (Academic Affairs)

Jennifer Troyer serves as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. She oversees the University's academic programs, faculty and academic policies while working closely with the deans of each college and the Graduate School.

The University's colleges and their deans include:

College of Arts + Architecture:

José Gámez

Belk College of Business:

Richard Buttimer

Cato College of Education:

Malcolm B. Butler

College of Computing and Informatics:

Bojan Cukic

College of Health and Human Services:

Yvette Huet

College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences:

Chris Boyer

Klein College of Science:

Bernadette T. Donovan-Merkert

William States Lee College of Engineering:

Robert Keynton

Graduate School:

William J. Tolone

Vice Chancellor Kevin W. Bailey (Student Affairs)

Kevin W. Bailey serves as vice chancellor for student affairs and leads UNC Charlotte's Division of Student Affairs. He oversees programs that support student success, leadership development, campus engagement and student well-being. Bailey also works with undergraduate and graduate student leaders and helps ensure student perspectives are considered in University decision-making.

Several senior leaders within Student Affairs oversee key areas of campus life, including:

Student Engagement:

Karen Shaffer

Housing and Residence Life:

Casey Tullos

Dean of Students:

Denise Balfour Simpson

Director of Athletics Kevin White

Kevin White became UNC Charlotte's eighth director of athletics on March 1, 2026. White oversees the University's 19 NCAA Division I athletics programs. His responsibilities include providing leadership for Charlotte Athletics, hiring and supervising coaches, ensuring NCAA and American Athletic Conference compliance, supporting student-athlete success and guiding the department's long-term strategic vision.

Since joining Charlotte, White has helped lead record fundraising efforts. During the 2026 Niner Nation Gives campaign, Charlotte Athletics raised more than \$2.2 million through 1,852 gifts during the 49-hour campaign, setting a new fundraising record for the department.

White joined Charlotte after serving as deputy director of athletics at Clemson University. He was hired as Charlotte Athletics continues to build its presence in the American Athletic Conference and invest in its athletic programs and facilities.

Vice Chancellor John Daniels (Research)

John Daniels serves as vice chancellor for research. He leads the Division of Research and supports the University's research enterprise, innovation initiatives and partnerships.

A member of the UNC Charlotte faculty since 2001, Daniels previously served as chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering before becoming vice chancellor.

Board of Trustees Chair Dontá L. Wilson

Dontá L. Wilson serves as chair of the Board of Trustees, the University's governing body. The board's 13 members include business leaders, community members and alumni who oversee the University's strategic direction. They approve major policies, select the chancellor, adopt the University's strategic plan and appoint key administrators.

A 1997 UNC Charlotte graduate, Wilson has remained actively involved with the University through philanthropy and service. In recognition of his support, the University named Wilson Residence Hall in his honor.

What is the Student Government Association?

Hayden Herr | Staff Writer

The Student Government Association (SGA) has been a part of UNC Charlotte since the University's beginning and works to promote student advocacy.

SGA regards itself as an association for student growth and experiential learning, as well as an important part of student life. Student government represents the undergraduate student body to the University administration and the Board of Trustees, both of which govern the school as a whole.

Student events and organizations are all overseen and approved by SGA. According to the J. Murrey Atkins Library, SGA has advocated for improvements in areas such as parking, dining, campus accessibility, athletic programs and technological advancements.

Some significant past SGA members include former Student Body President Karen Popp, the first female student body president of UNC Charlotte and in the entire UNC system, and Richard Hudson, former student body president and current United States congressman.

The 2026-2027 SGA

The current administration is under Student Body President Madison Brown and

Vice President Paul Hensler, elected in March of 2026 as the 63rd assembly.

They are focusing on some familiar issues as UNC Charlotte admits more students. This includes focusing on parking reform, expanding dining on the engineering side of campus and advocating for light rail safety and security.

When running for office, Brown and Hensler took to social media to promote their candidacy and values. The team's up-front values included campus improvement and advocacy, access and support, and clarity and transparency.

The SGA aims to address student concerns and arising issues through branches that mirror those of state and national governments. While Brown and Hensler sit in the executive branch, the senate, executive cabinet and campus committees work in their own respective branches to form a complete

student government.

Other notable positions in the executive branch are Senior Class President Meenakshi Nair, Junior Class President Emma Savage and Sophomore Class President Dashawn Ervin. These presidents oversee their respective classes.

Legislative and executive meetings are open to the public, along with events hosted by SGA. According to the official SGA Instagram, meetings will be held every other Thursday at 5:30 in the Popp Martin Student Union, Room 200.

The legislative branch includes two senators from the Belk College of Business, the Klein College of Science, the College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences, and the William States Lee College of Engineering, along with one senator from the Col-

lege of Health and Human Services, the College of Computing

and Informatics and the upperclassmen at large. These senators represent and advocate for their respective colleges.

The judicial branch of SGA remains active to settle disputes, often within the student government itself, and follows the Constitution of the Student Body.

SGA terms and elections

SGA members are elected in both fall and spring elections, with positions such as freshman class president and upperclassmen at-large senators being filled in the fall, and all others in the spring.

Terms last one school year, with all enrolled undergraduate and graduate students able to vote. While some positions are competitive, others in the senate often run unopposed.

Most recently, in the spring 2026 semester, the Brown-Hensler administration ran against Omar Pasha and Devorah Henry and won by 783 votes.

To get involved with SGA, students should attend general body meetings and stay up to date with SGA's social media and Niner Engage.



YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us as we celebrate the grand opening of **Half Moon Empanadas**, UNC Charlotte's newest dining destination, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and Café Bustelo coffee and empanada samples.

 Popp Martin Student Union | 1st Floor

 Tuesday, August 25, 2026

 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

ENJOY A FREE SAMPLE!
FROM 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM*

*Available while supplies last. One empanada per guest.

Monday

24

Tuesday

25

GRAND OPENING!

Wednesday

26

HALF MOON
★ EMPANADAS ★

FIRST 49 STUDENTS
= 1 FREE EMPANADA

Don't miss it!

PMSU!

AVAILABLE FALL 2026 SEMESTER

ONE PURCHASE. ENJOY ALL SEMESTER

NINER GRIND
PASS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE | DINING SERVICES

\$154.99
ONE-TIME PURCHASE

COLD PASS

24 Oz Straw Tumbler
UNLIMITED
Iced Coffee*
+
25% OFF
Handcrafted
Beverages

\$94.99
ONE-TIME PURCHASE

HOT PASS

15 Oz Insulated Mug
UNLIMITED
Hot Drip Coffee*

Thoughtful Cup

*Niner Grind Pass is a semester-long coffee subscription open to every student, faculty, and staff member. Redeemable at Thoughtful Cup and both campus Starbucks. Cups sold only at Thoughtful Cup. Cold Pass excludes nitro and cold brew.

DIRTY SODAS

NOW AVAILABLE AT

The **OASIS** Cafe

Niner Dr. Delight
Dr. Pepper, Raspberry Syrup, Chocolate Syrup

Golden Hour
Starry, Peach Syrup, Mango Syrup

49er Cream Soda
Dr. Pepper, Sweet Cream

Design your Dirty
Choose your soda, syrups and add-ins

ONLY \$5

Collect the Cup.
Discover the Flavor.

Four signature dirty sodas. One color-changing souvenir cup.

 CHANGES COLOR WHEN COLD

 LIMITED EDITION DESIGN

 MORE DESIGNS TO COME

Price includes drink and cup



Guide to Charlotte's 2026 Gold Rush

Kanousa Thapa | Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte's annual Gold Rush celebration returns Aug. 14 to Sept. 4, welcoming new and returning students with nearly three weeks of events designed to help Niners connect with campus life before and during the start of the fall semester.

Gold Rush features a variety of programs that introduce students to campus traditions, University resources and involvement opportunities. Throughout the celebration, students can attend organization fairs, meet University leaders and participate in social events.

The following are some of the featured Gold Rush events.

Aug. 14 - NinerFest

NinerFest will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at Field 14 A-R. The event will feature games, inflatables, giveaways and free UNC Char-

lotte merchandise. Students can meet fellow Niners and celebrate the start of the academic year.

Aug. 15 - CAB-chella

Hosted by the Campus Activities Board, CAB-chella will take place from 7 to 10 p.m. at the 49th Acre. The event will feature live music, activities and free food for new and returning students.

Aug. 16 - New Student Welcome and Student Organization Showcase

The New Student Welcome begins at 3 p.m. in Halton Arena. Incoming students will hear remarks from University leaders, including the chancellor, provost, vice chancellor for student affairs and student government president.

Following the welcome, the Student Organization Showcase will take place from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on the Cauble Quad and surrounding outdoor areas. More than 250 student organizations are expected to participate, giving students an opportunity to learn about campus organizations, meet student leaders and explore ways to get involved.

Aug. 17 - Student Athletics Pep Rally

The Student Athletics Pep Rally will be held from 8 to 9 p.m. at Jerry Richardson Stadium. Hosted by the Athletics Department and Student Affairs, the event will introduce students to football game traditions ahead of the upcoming season. Students also will receive a free Norm Storm T-shirt, while supplies last, and participate in the annual class photo.

Aug. 20 - First-Gen Meet & Greet

First-generation students are invited to attend the First-Gen Meet & Greet from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in the Lucas Room of the Cone Center. Hosted by Transition and Belonging, the event provides first-generation students an opportunity to connect through games, conversation and community-building activities.

Aug. 22 - Cheer Nation Back-to-School Pep Rally

The Cheer Nation Back-to-School Pep Rally will be held from 7 to 10 p.m. at the 49th Acre. Hosted by Cheer Nation, the event will feature performances by the organization and other student groups as part of Gold Rush programming.

Guide to course registration

Kyle Boucher | News Editor

Twice a year, UNC Charlotte students must register for classes, and there are several rules for making a course schedule. This is a guide to course registration and planning.

Class registration for the spring 2027 semester will open on Oct. 27; however, students' specific registration times will depend on their completed credit hours.

The number of completed credit hours can be found in Degree Works, which is accessible through the MyCharlotte home page under the "Student Quick Links" tab.

Before registration day, a message will be sent out to all students via the MyCharlotte home page showing when each student will be eligible to begin course registration.

All courses offered at UNC Charlotte, along with course descriptions, can be found in the Academic Catalog.

Making an academic plan

Selecting "Registration, Add / Drop" in MyCharlotte will take students to the course registration portal. In the portal, students can select "Plan Ahead" to create up to five plans for a semester.

Within these plans, courses can be added, and when registration opens, the plan can be submitted. All courses in the plan that have open seats will be immediately added to the student's schedule.

If students want to meet with an academic advisor, an appointment can be scheduled on the Navigate 360 website, accessible via the Connect link in MyCharlotte under "Student Quick Links."

First-year students are required to meet with an academic advisor when registering for their first semester at Charlotte.

Once in Navigate 360, click "Appointments" and then select your academic advisor. From there, choose an available time.

Academic advisors can help students plan their classes through graduation, provide more information about academic programs and answer any other questions about course registration.

Another method for making an academic plan is to use Degree Works, accessible via "Student Quick Links" on MyCharlotte.

Degree Works shows information such as a student's current major, academic advisor and completed courses.

The program lists all courses required to complete a degree, including general education courses and major-required courses. Every major has different rules for required courses; checking with an academic advisor may help students understand the intended course sequence.

Students must complete at least 120 credit hours to graduate; this can be achieved by taking elective classes alongside major courses or by picking up an additional major or minor.

Accessing course registration

On registration day, students can log in to MyCharlotte and select "Registration, Add / Drop" under "Student Quick Links." On the registration page, click "Register for Classes" and select the desired term. This will bring students to a menu where they can search for

classes using various criteria.

The top search bar is used to find classes by subject. The full name of the subject or the course code can be entered. For example, if a student wants to take a statistics class, they can either enter the word "statistics" or the course code "STAT." All course codes are four-letter codes and can be found in the Academic Catalog.

The second search bar is used for the four-digit course number, which identifies each specific class within a subject. The course level search bar is used to determine whether a course is a graduate, undergraduate or continuing education class.

Undergraduate courses are those taken before a student obtains their initial bachelor's degree, commonly completed within a student's first four years of college. Graduate courses are taken after getting a bachelor's degree.

Continuing education courses are taken by graduate students who aren't pursuing a postgraduate degree. These courses are usually taken for professional certifications and license renewal.

Selecting and dropping courses

Once the desired course has been found, students must select a specific section; these sections are indicated by three-digit numbers found after the course number, often starting with two zeros.

Every section will have a different time and professor, and students can see a graphic of their current semester schedule at the bottom of the screen. If a student clicks "Add"

next to a specific class, it will appear on the schedule.

To officially register for the course, students must go to the dropdown next to the class name in the summary tab and click "Add," followed by "Submit." This will officially put the class on the student's schedule.

Courses can be dropped by selecting "Drop Course" in the "Action" dropdown and clicking "Submit."

The deadline to drop a class for fall 2026 is Aug. 24, and Jan. 19 for spring 2027.

Rate My Professors is a website used to publicly rate professors and leave feedback on course experiences. Students often visit the site during registration to see which professors get the highest ratings.

Credit hours and requesting extensions

Undergraduate students are limited to a maximum of 18 credit hours in the spring and fall terms, and 14 in the summer. Graduate students are limited to 12 credit hours, or 9 in the summer term.

Students can request to exceed the credit hour limit with the approval of the dean of their college. Each semester will require separate approval from the dean.

A credit hour extension can be requested either by meeting with an assigned academic advisor or online by going to "Student Self-Service" in MyCharlotte and clicking "Academic Petition" under "Student Additional Links." After logging in, choose the "Registration Hour Overload" petition and fill out the form.



20

COURSE
REGISTRATION



21



22

Ali Thiam/Niner Times

A NINERTIMES PUBLICATION | 13

Big campus events

Emily Schenkel | Asst. News Editor

There are many things to do on campus and in the Charlotte area. The challenge is knowing what is happening and when. This guide covers some of the larger events available to Niners during their time at Charlotte.

Student Organization Showcase

One of the best ways to get involved on campus is through the Student Organizations Showcase, featuring over 250 campus organizations, food, multiple DJs, performances and more. The fall showcase is Sunday, Aug. 16, from 4 to 6:30 p.m., located in the Cauble Quad, Star Quad and surrounding areas outside. Some organizations that will be present at the showcase include the UNC Charlotte Debate Team, the Black Student Union, Student Niner Media, Habitat for Humanity, Charlotte Climbing Club and more.

To view all of the participating student organizations, check out the showcase website.

If you are unable to attend the fall showcase, there is also one every spring semester in Halton Arena. The exact date and time are

yet to be announced, but will most likely be within the first week of classes during the spring semester in the evening.

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

Greek life events

UNC Charlotte's various Greek councils and organizations host many events throughout the academic year to showcase their organization, philanthropy and long histories. The following are some of the larger events hosted in Greek life that are open to all students, even those who are not a part of Greek life.

NPHC Yard Show: Hosted in August, members of the Black fraternities and sororities under the National Pan-Hellenic Council showcase their organizations' history and pride. Chapters take turns performing synchronized stepping, strolling and other choreography at Star Quad.

NPHC Strolling Competition: Taking place in October during Homecoming weekend, each chapter prepares a routine, and judges evaluate each performance. Tickets are typically required for entry and are sold a few weeks in advance.

More information about these events can be found on the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Instagram (@cltgo-greek) or on their website.

Norm's Vintage Market

Norm's Vintage Market brings thrifting culture to life on campus, as the event pops up multiple times throughout the academic year. Dozens of vendors are present at each pop-up, selling clothing, jewelry and more. It typically takes place in the Cauble Quad.

The first market is normally in September, but dates have not been announced yet. Check for fliers posted around campus or stay up to date with their Instagram (@normsvintagemarket).

Niner Nation Week

Niner Nation Week is the perfect time to show all of your Niner and Charlotte pride. The University hosts many events on campus and in Uptown Charlotte, like the Homecoming Palooza and Alumni Tailgate. The week closes out with the homecoming football game against Memphis.

This year, Niner Nation Week will be from Sept. 27 to Oct. 4.

International Festival

The International Festival is UNC Charlotte's longest-running cultural event, attracting thousands of people, typically held in late September or early October. Over 35 nations are represented at the festival each year. The festival includes many booths representing each nation, performances, activities and food items for purchase.

Further information about the festival can be found on the festival's website.

Late Night Breakfast

On the last day of class in the fall and spring semesters, the South Village Dining Hall (SoVi) hosts Late Night Breakfast, a free breakfast meal for all students, even those without a meal plan. This event is a way to celebrate the end of the semester before final exams begin.

Family Weekend

UNC Charlotte hosts families for Family Weekend during both the fall and spring semesters. The weekend often features campus activities and a home football game.

The Fall Family Weekend is scheduled for Sept. 25 through Sept. 27. More information regarding specific events throughout the weekend can be found on the Family Weekend website.

Campus Activities Board events

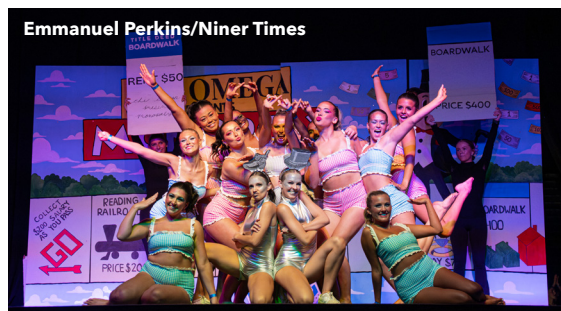
The Campus Activities Board is UNC Charlotte's largest programming organization for students and continuously has events throughout the academic year.

Stay up to date with CAB events on their Instagram (@cabunccharlotte) or on their website.

Looking for more?

There are plenty of other events hosted on campus that are not mentioned in this guide. In addition to campus events, the city of Charlotte also hosts many festivals and larger-scale events for students looking to go off campus.

The best way to learn about other events is by continually checking posts from UNC Charlotte's social media pages, looking at fliers posted around campus, reading from local news sources and staying up to date with the Niner Times (ninertimes.com or @niner_times).



How to adapt to Charlotte

Lauren Simendinger | Staff Writer

When a student attends UNC Charlotte, they are not just joining a school; they are joining a community — one that does not require them to assimilate, but to shine.

An overview of Charlotte

Like any community, UNC Charlotte does have its staples. Green is worn on Wednesdays, 4/9 is a big deal, and the geese are important members of the community. Our mascot, Norm the Niner, is as iconic as the Charlotte skyline, and YikYak is essential for keeping up with campus gossip. This does not mean that if a student does all these things, they are automatically a Niner, and if they do not, they are not.

The perfect Niner

What makes someone a Niner then? Surely it cannot just be enrolling. No, there must be something more, some secret ritual that guarantees a student will finally belong.

I am sorry, dear reader. I wish I could tell you there was some guaranteed way to feel like a Niner. That would be so much easier. But college, like adulthood, is complicated.

The many colors of Charlotte

Like its home city, UNC Charlotte is as diverse as it is big. It is home to over 32,000 students across 50 states and 128 countries. Campus culture reflects this with no one person looking alike.

Diversity is valued at Charlotte. The International Festival features student and community member representatives from nations around the world, sharing their native languages, foods and other cultural aspects like dress and dance. This melting pot ensures a unique campus experience for everyone.

Beyond cultural organizations, UNC Charlotte also of-

fers sports teams, club sports and clubs dedicated to hobbies from reading to gaming. There are plenty of opportunities to score a job on campus, including here at the Niner Times.

There are plenty of things to do outside of school, too.

Charlotte hosts a football, basketball, NA-SCAR and baseball team, along with many other sports. Uptown is filled with restaurants, bars and stores. Blumenthal Performing Arts is a popular attraction, as is the Charlotte Motor Speedway. There are many different paths to choose from in Charlotte.

But how does one choose which path to take? What if they are drawn to many different ones? What if the paths overlap, intersect and contradict each other?

The secret

Here is the truth: there is no path. There is no map to guide you. If you want to adapt to Charlotte, to feel like you belong here, you are going to have to figure it out yourself. It will not be easy. You may feel frustrated, lonely and miserable. But you will figure it out.

This does not have to be done alone. There are plenty of other freshman and transfer students feeling

just as scared and lonely. Do not be afraid to be vulnerable and share your feelings. Express your feelings and ask for advice.

Take the advice if you feel it will work; ignore it if it will not. Join a club, drop it if it is not interesting and join another one. Introduce yourself in class. Join a study group, have a lunch date.

To adapt to Charlotte, all a student has to do is be themselves. With a culture this diverse, there is a place for everyone. Yes, it can be overwhelming — even terrifying.

Belonging seems to be the key to success, but really has nothing to do with it. Success is about you and yourself only,

not anyone else. If you have achieved your goals — if you are happy — then you have succeeded.

Belonging is not about being accepted by others. It is about accepting yourself. When a student comes into their own, then they have successfully adapted to Charlotte. Welcome to UNC Charlotte, readers, and enjoy your time.



Lease Your Dream Apartment Today!

Call 704-946-5396
or scan the QR
code for more info:



NOVEL

UNIVERSITY PLACE

BY CRESCENT COMMUNITIES

**NOVEL University Place has
refined spaces to fit any
lifestyle.**

**Less than 5 minutes away
from UNC Charlotte, NOVEL
University Place offers a
diverse collection of cozy
studios, carriage homes,
and 1, 2 and 3-bedroom floor
plans with lake views and
luxury finishes.**





NOVEL

MALLARD CREEK



Unwind

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

At NOVEL Mallard Creek, our homes put the serenity of nature right outside your door. So whether you choose a spacious studio or a one-or-two bedroom layout, you'll find a relaxing retreat inside and out.

COME VISIT US

9132 Senator Royall Drive,
Charlotte, NC 28262

FIND OUT MORE



FEATURES



Studio, 1
Bed, 2 Bed



7 Minutes to
UNCC



Indoor & outdoor
workout spaces



Pool

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:



(980) 372-3327



novellmallardcreek.com



novel_mallardcreek





Charlotte, North Carolina, is home to nearly 965,000 voices. Among them are countless aspiring musicians searching for a place to perform, connect and grow.

For those who own a guitar, a piano or simply have a song to share or a voice that wants to be heard, open mic nights offer an accessible place to start. Better yet, they're free.

Open mics are typically hosted by music venues, bars or other public venues with space to perform on designated nights each week. All performers have to do is sign up, wait for their name to be called and take the stage. Depending on the venue, musicians may bring backing tracks and/or perform with an instrument.

Many of the world's most famous artists, including Ed Sheeran, Lady Gaga, Adele, John Legend and Chance the Rapper, were all found performing at open mics early in their careers.

All of the venues listed below are located in the Charlotte area and do not charge performers to participate.

The Evening Muse

This venue hosts one of Charlotte's longest-running open mic nights every Monday (apart from special occasions). The doors open at 7 p.m., sign-ups begin at 7:15 p.m., and performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Musicians are allowed to perform up to two songs or for up to 10 minutes.

Common Market South End

Real Artists Real Entertainment (R.A.R.E.) is an open mic event hosted every Thursday

from 6 to 10 p.m. in Common Market South End. There is a six-minute limit for performances, welcoming up to two songs. Performers are expected to bring their own USB and aux cords if backing tracks are needed. This event also has live music performances from local and featured artists, interactive games and raffles.

Common Market Plaza Midwood

Flow Open Mic hosts a hip-hop themed open mic event at Common Market Plaza Midwood every Friday from 7 to 10 p.m. Sign-ups open at 7 p.m. and close between 7:20 and 7:30 p.m.

Starlight on 22nd

Starlight hosts its weekly Starlight Jams open mics every Wednesday from 7 to 11 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m., sign-ups begin at 7:30 p.m., and the show starts at 8 p.m.

Jambox

Jambox recently launched a monthly open mic on the third Wednesday of each month. Sign-ups begin at 6:30 p.m., and performances start at 7 p.m. Each participant is allowed two songs, and both originals and covers are welcome.

Sync Showroom

Insynction Productions hosts the Sync704Live open mic every Tuesday from 8 to 11:45 p.m. in the Sync Showroom. Original work is recommended for this event.

Even if performing isn't your thing, open mics are a great way to discover local musicians, hear new music and meet people in Charlotte's creative community.



49

things to do as a UNC Charlotte student

Kanousa Thapa & Niner Times Archive

There is an abundance of things to do as a UNC Charlotte student, and it can feel overwhelming to experience everything the University has to offer. Whether you're a first-year student or preparing to graduate, here are 49 fun and memorable experiences to add to your college bucket list.

- ☐ Toss a coin into the 49er Miner statue.
- ☐ Visit the Student Union Art Gallery.
- ☐ Walk through the Botanical Gardens.
- ☐ Go stargazing from the top of a parking deck.
- ☐ Attend a homecoming football game.
- ☐ Grab a late-night breakfast at SoVi.
- ☐ Go thrifting at Norm's Vintage Market.
- ☐ Check out the graffiti in the Toby Creek Greenway tunnel.
- ☐ Ride every Niner Transit bus route: Green, Gold and Silver.
- ☐ Take a dip in the UREC pool.
- ☐ Give a friend or family member a campus tour.
- ☐ Get featured on UNC Charlotte's Instagram.
- ☐ Meet Norm the Niner.
- ☐ Ride an e-scooter to class.
- ☐ Study in Klein Hall and grab an Auntie Anne's pretzel.
- ☐ Take the light rail to Uptown Charlotte.
- ☐ Attend a College of Arts + Architecture

- ☐ Watch a movie at the Student Union theater.
- ☐ Stand in the center of Star Quad.
- ☐ Try one of the campus food trucks.
- ☐ Pick up a copy of the Niner Times.
- ☐ Relax in a hammock between classes.
- ☐ Visit the second- and third-floor social study spaces in Atkins Library.
- ☐ Grab a snack from the vending machines in EPIC.
- ☐ Explore Area 49 in Atkins Library.
- ☐ Attend a residence hall event.
- ☐ Find the underground tunnel connecting CHHS and COED.
- ☐ Visit the campus greenhouse.
- ☐ Try every dining location on campus.
- ☐ Pet the therapy puppies between COED and CHHS.
- ☐ Try the high ropes course or rock climbing through Venture Outdoor Leadership.
- ☐ Tailgate before a football game.
- ☐ Visit every academic building.
- ☐ Buy a gift at the Barnes & Noble campus bookstore.

- ☐ Apply for an on-campus job.
- ☐ Score some free merchandise or a t-shirt.
- ☐ Attend Airband.
- ☐ Get your face painted before the first big game.
- ☐ Attend the annual International Festival.
- ☐ Take a group fitness class at UREC.
- ☐ Visit the Niner Times newsroom in the Student Union.
- ☐ Join a club or organization that fits your interests.
- ☐ Attend an intramural sports game.
- ☐ Volunteer at the Jamil Niner Student Pantry.
- ☐ Take a photo with the UNC Charlotte sign at the main entrance.
- ☐ Attend a Campus Activities Board event.
- ☐ Learn to cook a new favorite meal.
- ☐ Make five friends from different majors.
- ☐ Attend a career fair.



VISIT US AT THE

career center!

AS SEEN AT
UNC
CHARLOTTE

CALL
TODAY

704-049-1946

*not a real number, website below!



career.charlotte.edu

Guide to setting up your dorm on campus

Kyle Boucher | News Editor
Lauren Steventon/Niner Times File

College is a significant change for many students. An essential part of becoming more comfortable in college is ensuring your dorm room is cozy and to your liking, so the transition goes smoothly.

While dorm life may not be the most glamorous part of college, here are some tips to help you get set up for the upcoming school year, ensuring your dorm is the go-to spot for hanging out with friends and classmates.

able in their own dorm room.

Some of the go-to places to get affordable dorm supplies near the University include Walmart, Target and the Concord Mills Mall.

How to keep your area clean

A clean dorm is important so that you and your roommates have a clean shared space, as well as a clean individual space. Try splitting chores, such as taking turns with tasks like taking out the garbage or vacuuming.

Keep a trash can in your room for smaller pieces of trash that do not require disposal in the communal trash can. Ensure your room remains tidy, even if no one else sees it except the Resident Advisors during room checks. A tidy space will make you want to come back to your room and make you feel more comfortable.

It is also important to keep your dorm room and communal space clean. Make sure to bring a small vacuum or a broom to keep the floors clean. Shared decorations can also be fun for the space you and your roommates share.



How to make your room your own

Here are some suggestions on how to maximize space in your room while also making it personalized:

- Use bed risers that you can buy on campus or online for more storage space.
- Put your dresser under your bed to maximize space.
- Get dresser organizers so things do not get cluttered.
- Make sure you and your roommate(s) have talked before moving in so you know what vibe each of you is bringing to the room.
- Buy extra hangers to account for breaking in case you accumulate more clothes throughout the year.
- Do not forget to get a duster; it helps, especially during peak cold season on campus.
- Use decorations that match your personality, such as favorite band posters, fake or real plants, string lights or maybe just some printed pictures.

Your dorm room should be a safe place for you to go when you are not studying or out with friends. It could also be a safe place for someone who might not feel comfort-

Roommates and communication

It is essential to establish clear boundaries with your roommates or a set schedule. If one of you does not have class on certain days, take that opportunity to clean up the shared space so it is nice and tidy when your roommates come home.

Communication is key when having roommates, whether it is one roommate or multiple. Communicate on almost everything, whether it is how to rotate laundry tasks, when one of you will be in the room or if you end up having friends over for multiple hours in the evening or during the week, especially since your roommates might be studying. It is essential to be considerate of your roommates' study habits or just considerate in general, if you bring friends home and they stay for multiple hours.

College is a big step for anyone, no matter what stage of life you are in. Make sure to remain positive and try to make new friends; consider joining clubs if possible. Make college your own experience and remember that everyone else, at some point, likely felt the same uneasiness you might be feeling.



Camila Surinach/Niner Times & Courtesy of Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, the Mint Museum, Snug Harbor & The Milestone Club

Guide: Getting to know Charlotte's culture

Wes Packham | Writing Managing Editor

Far from being a prime tourist destination, it might seem that Charlotte has little to offer as a cultural hotspot. While Charlotte is one of the country's oldest cities, founded in 1768, it is still rapidly evolving today.

Due to Charlotte's rapid growth over the past years, the local population has struggled to assert a distinct cultural identity.

But Charlotte has plenty to offer. Between its dozens of neighborhoods, skyscrapers in Uptown and historic arts districts, it might be surprising to find a bigger sense of community than some might be ready to admit.

Neighborhoods

You will not get to know Charlotte's culture by staying in University City. Exploring Charlotte's neighborhoods is the way to get a sense of community and understand Charlotte's culture.

NoDa, short for North Davidson, is Charlotte's historic arts district, and it is home to many attractions and businesses popular among residents. Several bars, restaurants and music venues can be found here, and it is one of the most popular spots to head to for a fun night out.

Uptown, of course, is filled with high-rise skyscrapers interweaved between higher-end restaurants, cozy parks and performing arts venues.

But even beyond the popular spots of NoDa and Uptown, Plaza Midwood, South End, Wesley Heights and Camp North End each offer something unique to Charlotte's community.

Walking through these neighborhoods is where you can get a true sense of the culture that Charlotte has to offer and become famil-

iar with the community you are a part of.

Music and nightlife

Charlotte offers dozens of music venues of various sizes throughout the city, fit for any music performance. Big-name acts fill up the Spectrum Center or the PNC Music Pavilion while up-and-coming artists take the stage at The Fillmore or The Underground at the AvidXchange Music Factory.

For smaller indie and punk acts, the Milestone Club in Enderly Park and Snug Harbor in Plaza Midwood host several shows each week, and The Spoke Easy is a bike shop, bar and local music venue all in one.

For jazz, Middle C Jazz and The Jazz Room in Uptown are both well-reviewed options, offering a slower pace compared to punk shows and pop acts.

Charlotte's got everything between dives and luxury rooftop bars. Jackbeagle's NoDa and Triple C Brewing Company are both recommended options.

Arts and design

The independent art scene does have a solid footing in Charlotte's cityscape. Goodyear Arts at Camp North End offers a residency for nine artists each year, and Dilworth Artisan Station in South End hosts over 30 artists in its now-repurposed industrial building.

The Queen City Zine Fest offers an annual event for those interested in homemade publications.

The Mint Museum is one of North Carolina's largest art museums, and it has two locations in Charlotte: one in Randolph and one in Uptown.

Charlotte Symphony, Opera Carolina and Charlotte Ballet can all be seen regularly in

performances at the Belk Theater at Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Food and drink

For barbecue, The Smoke Pit and Midwood Smokehouse each offer their unique regional styles of barbecue, and Midwood Smokehouse is located just outside of Uptown in Plaza Midwood.

Charlotte also features many global food options. Optimist Hall hosts over 20 unique food vendors representing several different regions and cultures, including Indian, Italian, Ethiopian, East Asian, Spanish and Latin, among others.

For those over 21, Charlotte has over 30 local breweries featuring local handcrafted flavors. Burial Beer Co., hailing from Asheville, North Carolina, has a local brewery in Plaza Midwood. Other local favorites include Sycamore Brewing, located in South End, and NoDa Brewing Company in NoDa. And with over 30 breweries local to the area and an even higher number of dive and local bars, Charlotte offers a lot for IPA enthusiasts.

Sports and outdoors

Reedy Creek Park is a popular park in Northeast Charlotte, with creekside trails, fishing and a disc golf course. Kilborne Park is another local park with a DIY skatepark funded by community donations.

Charlotte is often considered the best city for NASCAR, due to its deep roots in the sport and housing the Charlotte Motor Speedway and the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Charlotte is also home to the Charlotte Hornets, Carolina Panthers, Charlotte FC and the Charlotte Knights. While many of these teams hold inconsistent win-loss re-

cords, attending games at the Bank of America Stadium or the Spectrum Center can be electric.

Media and pop culture

The Independent Picture House is a community arthouse cinema dedicated to screening independent, foreign and arthouse films, and it is a great spot for finding a community of film lovers.

Charlotte also offers plenty of local record shops for physical media enthusiasts. Local record shops include Lunchbox Records, Repo Record in Commonwealth Park and Hardy Boys Records and Comics in Camp North End.

How to get the most out of Charlotte

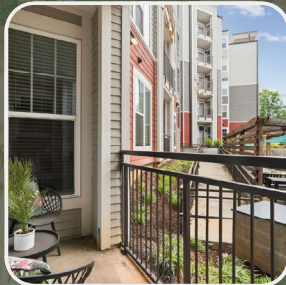
Charlotte shines in its combination of Southern culture with a melting pot of cultures, a result of Charlotte's massive growth throughout the 21st century. Though this unprecedented growth has made finding a distinct cultural footing difficult, the Queen City still holds plenty of appeal for a Southeastern city.

A true sense of a city's culture can only be found through its people. Getting connected with all parts of the city, within each of the neighborhoods, is how you can get a connection to the culture and community that Charlotte holds.

Charlotte has just about the same attractions as any other city. There are bars, breweries, restaurants, parks, live music, museums and street festivals. There is everything for a fulfilling community and culture; people just need to go out and find it.

THE DRAKE
STUDENT LIVING

Where Niner life happens.
NINER NATION



**BUILT FOR YOUR
COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.**

**Steps from campus.
Miles from ordinary.**

- Resort-Style Pool
- Fitness Center
- Study Lounge + Computer Stations
- Free Printing
- Wi-Fi Included
- Outdoor Kitchen, Fire Pit & Games
- Controlled Access Community
- Package Lockers
- Fully Furnished Apartments
- Full-Size Washer & Dryer
- Private Campus Shuttle (Coming Soon)



View Our Full List of Amenities
TheDrakeCharlotte.com

 **(980) 431-6495**



The Dimensions of Wellness is our shared framework for Health and Wellbeing at UNC Charlotte.

Wellness is multi-dimensional and includes how we manage our emotions, build relationships, grow intellectually, care for our environment, navigate finances, explore purpose, prepare for careers, and take care of our bodies.

The Dimensions are: Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Social, and Spiritual Wellness.



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 topics including mental health, sexual health, interpersonal violence prevention, substance use prevention & recovery support, and holistic wellness.



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

OUR FOCUS IS HEALTH CARE

We are committed to providing comprehensive medical care, disease prevention, and health education services to all registered UNC Charlotte students, regardless of their health insurance status. In addition, Student Health offers a full-service, on-site pharmacy to support students' healthcare needs.



UREC (University Recreation)

OUR FOCUS IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Our team provides access to facilities and programs such as intramural sports, sport clubs, and fitness programs, to help students move their bodies and achieve wellbeing.

Scan to learn more about the HWB Unit and all department services



WELLBEING IS THE NORM at Charlotte

@clt_wellbeing @clt_urec • wellbeing@charlotte.edu

A new era for Charlotte basketball

Shane Reese | Asst. Sports Editor

Charlotte basketball ended last season unsure of what the next season's team would look like. Just a few months later, a newly hired head coach and athletic director completely altered the program's foundation.

Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber announced on Feb. 23 that Kevin White would become Charlotte's next director of athletics. When White officially assumed the role on March 1, he spent his time managing the sport most

familiar to him: basketball.

White understood that the 49ers needed a change at head coach. Even after making an impressive run in the conference tournament last season, former head coach Aaron Fearne rarely achieved meaningful postseason success.

Gaber and White officially announced a leadership change on March 17 and hired former University of Cincinnati head coach Wes Miller as the 49ers' head coach on March 23. Since then, White and Miller have been thoroughly reshaping Charlotte basketball.

Who left, stayed and joined?

Charlotte lost its entire roster from last year, due to eligibility rules and the transfer portal. The 49ers' starting point guard, shooting guard, power forward and center from last season's team are no longer on the roster.

The only starter that remains on the roster from last year is redshirt junior forward Arden Conyers.

Last season, Conyers started 26

games and appeared in 32. He averaged 7.5 points, 1.6 rebounds and 0.5 assists per game. He shot 41.3% from the field and 35.8% from three-point range.

When the college basketball transfer portal closed on April 21, more than half of the players listed on the 49ers' roster were transfers and freshmen. Four of the transfers previously played for Miller at Cincinnati.

Cincinnati transfers include redshirt sophomore forward Tyler McKinley, sophomore guard Keyshuan Tillery, sophomore guard Jordi Rodriguez and senior guard Edgerrin 'Jizzle' James.

James played his first three years under Miller, while Rodriguez and Tillery both played their freshman season under him. James started 21 of the 23 games he appeared in, started all 35 games of his sophomore season and was the team's scoring leader, which later earned him an All-Big 12 honorable mention.

Other transfers came from schools all over the country. Schools include Rutgers University, Georgetown University, Georgia Tech, Gaston College and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Though the spotlight is on Miller and the players that followed from Cincinnati, White and Miller also worked together to build an experienced coaching staff. Many of the coaches hired to be on Miller's staff are former players and head coaches who have coached and developed

several NBA players.

Assistant coach Marcus Paige is the most notable of the group. As a player, Paige spent his entire collegiate career at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and became one of the most accomplished guards in school history.

Before joining Miller's staff, Paige served as an assistant coach with the Tar Heels' former head coach, Hubert Davis. During his time at UNC-Chapel Hill, he helped develop former players Harrison Ingram and Drake Powell, who are now in the NBA.

Assistant coach Chad Dollar worked with Miller in Cincinnati before joining his inaugural staff. The rest of his supporting staff includes assistant coaches Claude Pardue, Trent Brown and Brian Boyle, who helped the Greensboro Swarm win the 2025-2026 G League championship.

A revamped depth chart

Charlotte's offense heavily relied on size last season. The 49ers used multiple players who were 7 feet or taller to compete on the boards, at the rim and from three-point range.

This season, only one player is listed as 7-foot tall on the roster, and no other players are 6-foot-10 or taller. Junior center Peyton Marshall is 7 feet and spent time at the University of Missouri and Georgia Tech before transferring to Charlotte.

The 49ers retain a veteran guard in James and redshirt senior Dorian Finister. James brings veteran knowledge of Miller's coaching style, plays, rotation patterns and formations.

Additionally, Rodriguez and Tillery bring one year of experience playing for Miller, providing a semi-experienced backcourt rotation for Charlotte this season.

When will the 49ers take the court?

As of June 24, Charlotte has not announced the date or time of its season opener, but college basketball typically begins play in the first week of November.

The 49ers have traditionally played non-conference opponents to open their season, with last season's opener being against Indiana State University.

Until then, students, alumni and fans across the Queen City eagerly await the debut of Miller's Charlotte 49ers.



Megan Bentley/
Niner Times



Kaitlyn Frankboner/Niner Times

Hornets make major roster changes ahead of the 2026-27 NBA season

Shane Reese | Asst. Sports Editor

Courtesy of Charlotte Hornets



The Charlotte Hornets built on their near-playoff roster in the first round of the NBA draft, selecting Hannes Steinbach and Christian Anderson Jr. with the No. 14 and 18 picks two months after falling just short of the NBA playoffs.

During the final picks of the NBA draft,

however, ESPN Senior NBA Insider Shams Charania announced on X that the Hornets were engaged in trade talks about star guard LaMelo Ball.

Charlotte accepted the Minnesota Timberwolves' offer less than 24 hours later, sending Ball and Josh Green to Minnesota in exchange for Naz Reid and future draft compensation.

After trading Ball and Green, Coby White and the Hornets agreed to terms for a three-year, \$74 million contract extension, allowing him to remain in Charlotte from next season until 2029.

Both moves significantly reshaped the future of the roster, but they were far from the only moves the Hornets front office made during the NBA offseason.

duction during the 2019-20 COVID-altered season.

Bridges and Ball were both a part of Charlotte's core, as they both led the team in multiple categories last season. Additionally, players like Kon Knueppel and Ryan Kalkbrenner viewed them as veteran leaders. With both players traded, young players now look to the new faces on the team to improve their game.

Bringing in veterans

On July 3, Charlotte completed a trade with Houston that sent Dorian Finney-Smith and three second-round picks to the Hornets. Finney-Smith is 33 and will be playing his 11th season in the NBA this year.

As mentioned earlier, Charlotte acquired an experienced floor stretcher by trading Ball and Green; that floor-stretching forward would be Reid.

During his time in Minnesota, Reid built a reputation as one of the most valuable rotation players in the league, providing space and bench relief for Anthony Edwards, Jaden McDaniels and other Timberwolves starters.

Reid averaged 13.6 points, 6.2 rebounds and 2.2 assists per game last season, and helped lead the Timberwolves to the Western Conference semifinals. Reid also shot 45.6% from the field and 36.2% from three-point range, further solidifying his role as a two-way, floor-stretching rotation player.

The Hornets acquired more veteran experience in Allen and O'Neale after trading Bridges. Allen brings extensive playoff experience to the team, as he contributed to the Milwaukee Bucks' 2021 championship and won an NCAA men's basketball championship in 2015 with the Duke Blue Devils. Allen

and O'Neale came off the bench to help the Phoenix Suns reach the playoffs last season.

Upgrade or downgrade?

While the Hornets retained Pat Connaughton, Grant Williams and Xavier Tillman, there was still a need for spacing and veteran leadership. To meet this need, the Hornets phoned the Houston Rockets.

Fans have criticized Charlotte's front office for dismantling the team's core and believe that trading Bridges and Ball will harm team chemistry.

Both players were heavily committed to the city and showed up to play hard, even when the Hornets were consistently last in league standings. Bridges and Ball were seen by many as "culture changers" as they brought Charlotte its first glimpse of playing playoff basketball in years.

When he was drafted, Ball's crafty, unique playstyle as a 6-foot-7 guard ushered in an era of energetic offense that revolved around his one-leg jumpers, flashy passes and athletic finishes. It was his athletic finishing that put the Hornets over the Miami Heat in the final moments of their 2025-26 play-in tournament win.

And on the other end, it was the Hornets' former defensive anchor who sealed the game. Bridges rose to block a layup that would have knocked Charlotte out of the tournament.

Fans speculate whether the acquired players and draft compensation will be helpful or detrimental to franchise development. The Hornets' official schedule will be released soon, with the 2026-27 NBA season starting in October.



Gavin Binkley/Niner Times

Another fan favorite departs

Just three days after trading Ball and Green, Charlotte's front office worked with the Phoenix Suns to complete a trade that sent Miles Bridges to the Suns in exchange for Grayson Allen, Royce O'Neale and a 2033 first-round pick.

This trade sent one of the Hornets' top defenders to Phoenix to compensate for Ball and Green's absence. In addition to his two-way impact, Bridges helped secure the Hornets' first NBA play-in tournament win since the tournament's intro-

Charlotte Crown brings women's basketball back

Shane Reese | Asst. Sports Editor

Boangles Coliseum, home of the Charlotte Checkers and Charlotte Copperheads, is now also home to the Charlotte Crown, a professional women's basketball team competing in the inaugural UPSHOT League. The league aims to serve as a talent pipeline to the WNBA and currently features three other teams: the Greensboro Groove, Jacksonville Waves and Savannah Steel.

Meet the team

The Crown are currently 19-10, with the Jacksonville Waves standing between Charlotte and first place. Several Crown players rank among the league leaders in points, rebounds and assists.

Crown star starting point guard Deja Kelly is the league scoring and assist leader so far this season, averaging 17.8 points per game.

Kelly has shown up in big moments game after game this season, proving herself as the key difference maker for Charlotte.

Kelly played at UNC before transferring to Oregon for her final season. At UNC, she

earned three first-team All-ACC selections and helped the Tar Heels reach four consecutive NCAA tournaments.

Crown forward Schaquilla Nunn, a 6-foot-3 Fayetteville, Georgia, native, played at Winthrop before being drafted by the San Antonio Stars in the third round of the 2017 WNBA draft.

Nunn and forward Ugonne Onyiah rank among the league's top three rebounders, averaging 10.4 and 6.9 rebounds, respectively. The starting forwards also lead the league in blocks, with Nunn averaging 1.7 and Onyiah averaging 1. Onyiah played at California and signed a training camp contract with the New York Liberty before joining the Crown in May.

But as all teams do, they still look to the sidelines for a game plan and mid-game adjustments. Crown head coach Trisha Stafford-Odom leads the Crown as a veteran WNBA player and collegiate coach.

Meet their leader

Stafford-Odom has coached at North Car-

olina Central University and Concordia University Irvine, with assistant coaching stops at UNC-Chapel Hill and Duke. As a player at California, she was a two-time All-PAC-10 selection before playing professionally for the WNBA's Houston Comets and Miami Sol and overseas.

Stafford-Odom is known for recruiting elite talent and building programs, having coached several All-Americans and WNBA draft picks.

Upcoming schedule

The Crown's summer-long regular season concludes with consecutive home games against the Greensboro Groove on Aug. 22 and 23.

There will be no playoffs; instead, the league will hold a first-place title game at VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena in Jacksonville, Florida.

If Charlotte maintains its position, the Crown will travel to Jacksonville to challenge the Waves for the title Aug. 29.



For careers in Education, Environmental Science, Org Development and more!

VENTURE into your future with an
**ADVENTURE
EDUCATION AND
LEADERSHIP
MINOR**



VENTURE OUTDOOR
LEADERSHIP

VENTURE.CHARLOTTE.EDU

@CLTVENTUREOUTDOOR



Charlotte athletics 2026 fall scouting

Tre Holland | Sports Editor

Excitement is building in Charlotte as the athletic program enters a new era under the new director of athletics, Kevin White. Charlotte seeks to build on the successes of the past year while strengthening the areas of the program that need attention. Heading into fall 2026, there are five sports to highlight with unique coaching situations, all united by one goal: to win.

Football

The 1-11 finish in year one under head coach Tim Albin was disappointing; it was the former Ohio University coach's worst record as a head coach. White emphasized the importance of a successful football program as the anchor to a successful athletic program. A major roster overhaul and a year of experience for Albin's staff should instill some confidence in Charlotte football heading into 2026.

Charlotte hit the transfer portal hard, signing 21 transfers, including receivers Cam Pedro and Jaden Barnes, quarterback Cole Gonzales and several players on both sides of the ball. In addition to 22 high school commits, the new-look Charlotte 49ers have plenty of new faces.

Among the returners, six were starters, including American Conference Preseason All-Conference kick returner/receiver Derrick Eley and safeties Dy'Lon Womack and Collin Gill. Other valuable returners include linebacker Kadin Schmitz, defensive back CJ Clinkscapes Jr., and running backs Henry Rutledge and Jariel Cobb. Quarterbacks Grayson Loftis and Conner Harrell enter the 2026 season in a position battle.

The three-person race at quarterback between Harrell, Loftis and Gonzales remains unanswered. Harrell, who tore his ACL last season, is working his way back to full health to take a stab at the starter again. Loftis, who took over throwing for 1,415 yards, eight touchdowns and eight interceptions in Harrell's absence, has an argument for the starting spot as well. Gonzales is the most experienced and has a history of high-level performances from his time at Western Carolina University. Whoever starts at quarterback will have plenty of help from a receiving corps headlined by Barnes and Pedro, along with new additions Zyheem Collick, Tank Boston and tight end Logan Mauldin.

Coach Albin's first season is behind him, and expectations are high for a bounce-back season. Another season like 2025 could raise questions about his future in Charlotte. However, with an influx of experienced transfers

and promising returners, the 49ers have reasons for optimism.

Season two in the Tim Albin era begins at home against FCS opponent The Citadel amid renovations to Jerry Richardson Stadium. Other notable opponents include the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), Appalachian State University and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Women's volleyball

In year one under head coach Benavia Jenkins, the 49ers won 17 games, including eight in conference play. Charlotte fell to USF in the first round of the American Conference Championship, its first postseason appearance since 2022.

Jenkins helped Annika Thompson, Kristen Birmingham and Jessica Ricks earn First-Team All-Conference honors, with Thompson also named American Libero of the Year. All three graduated after the season.

In July, Jenkins announced Charlotte's fourth power-conference transfer addition, Mariam Mushkudiani from Miami. The 49ers also added Harper Hall, Sara Marinkovic and Gia McGrew, who join seven returners from last year's 17-12 squad.

Jenkins' inaugural season was a great step toward consistent winning. Following an impressive transfer class, the 49ers' 2026 women's volleyball squad looks ready to improve upon the prior season's 17 wins and first-round exit in the conference tournament. After two exhibition matches, the 49ers host the Charlotte Invitational beginning on Aug. 28.

Women's soccer

In April 2025, Sinead Byrne was elevated to interim head coach. In Byrne's first season at the helm, Charlotte finished as the No. 2 seed in the American Conference with a 10-6-2 record in 2025. Despite losing 3-0 in the opening round of the conference tournament to USF, the 49ers notched their highest postseason tournament ranking in over 10 years.

Byrne's leadership helped six players earn American Conference postseason honors. Megan Bradley made First-Team All-Conference; Amelia Brown and Evie Craven made the Second Team; Naroa Domenech and Harlee Head made the Third Team. Rory Brown also made the All-Freshman team.

Byrne announced 11 signees to the 2026 roster, including six transfers, three international freshmen and two American signees. Transfers Millie Jones, Lucie Bertrand and Kathleen Ngulefac participated in spring action, along with Charlotte natives Liz Bigala, McKenna Sylvester and Macy Chambers.

The American signees include goalkeeper Anna Ford from Wake Forest, North Carolina, and midfielder Tyler Seay from Orlando, Florida. International signees include midfielders Sorchia Melia and Marlies Pison and defender Holly Robins. This brings the total number of international players to six.

Byrne enters her first full season as head coach. After two exhibition matches, the 49ers open the season against Furman on Thursday, Aug. 13, at 7 p.m.

Men's soccer

Kevin Langan, one of the longest tenured coaches at Charlotte, enters year 15 as the men's soccer head coach. Last season, Langan guided Charlotte to its first conference title in the American Conference and the first regular-season title since 2016, with an 8-4-4 record. Charlotte collected 11 postseason conference honors — a program record — and two NCAA All-East Region selections.

Charlotte earned three American Player of the Year awards, five First-Team All-Conference honors, one Second-Team honor and two All-Freshman honors. Leonard Stritter, Ben Fisher and Samuel Manufor earned Player of the Year honors, while Denis Krioutchenkov and Natsuki Ogata also earned First-Team honors. Jemone Barclay earned Second-Team honors, and James Nyandjo made the All-Freshman team. Fisher and Krioutchenkov also earned NCAA All-East Region honors.

Charlotte's success helped attract three transfers: forward Larry Noel, defender Luc Lavielle and midfielder Samuel Francou. With Stritter, Barclay and Krioutchenkov signing professional contracts, the transfers will help fill their losses.

Charlotte opens the season at home against West Virginia on Aug. 20, seeking to defend its American Conference regular-season title.

Cross country

The cross country team is under new leadership following Joseph Lynn's departure and the hiring of Riley Macon. Macon joins Charlotte after a successful stint at MIT.

The 49ers hope to build on the women's third-place and men's fourth-place finishes at the American Conference Championship. At the NCAA Southeast Regionals, the women finished 15th out of 36 teams, and the men finished 11th out of 33. The 49ers await the release of the upcoming season's schedule.



Shamari Davis/Niner Times File



Wyatt Bullock/Niner Times File



Megan Bentley/Niner Times File

Carolina Panthers 2026 season preview

Kelli Blackburn | Staff Writer

After a heartbreaking Wild Card loss to the Los Angeles Rams in January, the Carolina Panthers enter the 2026 season looking to build on the momentum they created throughout the 2025 campaign.

Despite finishing the regular season with an 8-9 record, Carolina captured its first NFC South title since 2015 and returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2017. Now, the Panthers look to turn last season's breakthrough into sustained success in 2026.

Offseason changes

The Panthers have continued building around quarterback Bryce Young, who enters his fourth season, alongside 2025 AP NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year Tetairoa McMillan. To keep the offensive core intact, General Manager Dan Morgan re-signed wide receiver Jalen Coker to a three-year, \$35 million contract extension through the 2029 season.

Although Carolina saw the departure of running back Rico Dowdle to the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Panthers added veteran running back AJ Dillon to a backfield that also includes Chuba Hubbard and second-year

running back Trevor Etienne. Jonathan Brooks, who was selected in the second round of the 2024 NFL Draft, also remains part of the team's plans as he continues his recovery and development.

The Panthers also made several moves to strengthen the roster around Young. Carolina added receiver John Metchie III, linebacker Devin Lloyd, edge rusher Jaelan Phillips and offensive tackle Rasheed Walker through free agency, among other additions.

Young was solidified as the starter for the 2026 season after the Panthers sent quarterback Andy Dalton to the Philadelphia Eagles in exchange for a 2027 seventh-round draft pick on March 24.

The offseason moves prove the team is working to take the next step in the right direction. Rather than relying solely on the roster that became NFC South champs in 2025, Carolina addressed the areas of need and added depth across the board.

The 2026 NFL Draft additions

With seven selections in the 2026 NFL Draft, the Panthers utilized their picks to add depth and young talent on both sides of the ball.

Carolina held the No. 19 overall pick in the first round, selecting University of Georgia offensive tackle Monroe Freeling. The Charleston, South Carolina native provides additional depth along the offensive line as Ikem "Ickey" Ekwonu continues his recovery from a ruptured patellar tendon. As announced on July 21, right tackle Taylor Moton was diagnosed with blood clots in his lung and will miss the start of the upcoming season.

In the second round, Carolina added Texas Tech University defensive tackle Lee Hunter for another interior presence with Derrick Brown. University of Tennessee wide receiver Chris Brazzell II was another playmaker added to Young's weaponry from the third round and cornerback Will Lee III, was selected for the opposite side of the field.

The Panthers finished up their draft with picks of center Sam Hecht, safety Zakee Wheatley and linebacker Jackson Kuwatch, solidifying a mix of young players who can contribute immediately or develop into long-term pieces.

Freeling, Hunter and Brazzell headline a class that could help strengthen the team's

areas of need while pushing a team looking to make its return to the playoffs.

Major free agency signings

The additions of veterans Phillips, Lloyd, and Walker immediately pushed Carolina back into headlines. The Panthers' activity flashed signs of improvement on both sides of the ball, especially benefiting the offensive line and defense.

Particularly, Phillips becomes another difference-maker for Carolina on the edge. The 27-year-old California native spent time with both the Philadelphia Eagles and the Miami Dolphins in 2025, recording 29 tackles, five sacks, and one forced fumble. At 6-foot-6, 266lbs, Phillips is added to a Carolina defense that could consistently keep pace with the NFC's top offenses.

The Panthers also added quarterback Kenny Pickett, center Luke Fortner and offensive tackle Stone Forsythe. As Young enters another year, Carolina's offensive approach has emphasized surrounding him with enough talent to continue his progression.

Training camp woes

Carolina headed into training camp full of optimism, but the early stages of preparation have already brought their challenges.

The Panthers reported earlier than most NFL teams due to their appearance in the annual Pro Football Hall of Fame Game on Aug. 6 in Canton, Ohio. Veterans reported July 22, giving the team a chance to prepare ahead of the preseason opener against the Arizona Cardinals at Tom Benson Stadium.

However, some injuries have already raised questions for the offensive line and the secondary. Moton and cornerback Jaycee Horn are expected to miss time with offseason medical issues, though Horn's was reported as stitches in his foot that may be temporary.

Second-year linebacker Nic Scourton, who recorded five sacks in 2025, was also injured during the first day of training camp. He will miss the entirety of the 2026 season with a torn ACL.

The NFLPA is investigating Scourton's injury given it happened during the mandatory five-day acclimation period. The investigation will include a review of the injury video, detailing whether Scourton did anything that the CBA prohibits in the opening days of camp.

As veterans work their way back to the field, other corners and younger stars like Lee and cornerback Corey Thornton will have the opportunity to make their mark and establish their presence. With an extra

week of preseason preparation, the Panthers will need to take advantage and build team chemistry. Additionally, they will prioritize finalizing the depth chart and preparing for the regular season.

Regular season schedule challenges

The Panthers' path back to the playoffs will come with its challenges, as they are set to face several difficult matchups outside of the division. Those matchups include the Cincinnati Bengals, reigning Super Bowl LX champions the Seattle Seahawks and the Chicago Bears, who the Panthers open with in Week 1.

Within the NFC South, the Panthers will have some competition, but the absence of Mike Evans from Tampa Bay and the quarterback duel between Michael Penix Jr. and Tua Tagovailoa in Atlanta could give Carolina its advantage to step up and take over. The Panthers will have to play their cards wisely to defend their division title and return to the postseason for a second consecutive season.

The 2026 schedule also has a late-season stretch for Carolina that could ultimately determine how their luck lies. Competition against Pittsburgh, the Seahawks, the Atlanta Falcons and the Cincinnati Bengals will be tough, but the Panthers' strategy and mentality could keep them fighting for a playoff position.

Headed to the Hall

Before the regular season begins, the Panthers will have a historic weekend in Canton.

Carolina will face off with the Cardinals in the 2026 Hall of Fame game on Aug. 6 to kick off the NFL's preseason schedule. The game will also serve as the beginning of a celebration weekend for Panthers legend Luke Kuechly, who is set to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday, Aug. 8.

For a franchise turning a new leaf, the timing feels fitting. Although legendary wide receiver Steve Smith Sr. still waits for his name to be called, Kuechly also represents one of the greatest eras in Panthers history while Carolina attempts to create a new one.

The 2026 season will be full of questions and anticipation considering whether last season was the foundation toward something bigger or just a one-year breakthrough.

Young's development with a revamped roster creates higher expectations than in previous years. The Panthers have already proven that they should not be counted out. Now, the challenge is proving they can stay there.





Open to all majors. Earn your **Master's in Accountancy (MSA)** in as little as 2 semesters.

Love Problem-Solving? Driven By The Details?

UNCC BUILT THE FOUNDATION. TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP WITH THE WAKE FOREST MSA PROGRAM.



FROM UNCC TO WAKE FOREST

"The Wake Forest MSA program really boosted my confidence in my skills and prepared me to go into the workforce. Now I'm excited to start as a Tax Associate at EY in Charlotte."

Natalie

UNC CHARLOTTE '24,
WAKE FOREST MSA '26
TAX ASSOCIATE AT EY

**#1 in JOB
PLACEMENT**

at Big 4 Accounting Firms

**#1 CPA
PASS
RATE**

**CUSTOMIZABLE
CAREER TRACKS**

*Financial Markets & Transactions
(exclusive to Wake Forest),
Assurance Services, and Tax Consulting*

SEE YOURSELF AT WAKE FOREST MSA



WELCOME HOME

WE ARE YOUR CAMPUS LIVING ROOMS!



STUDENT CENTERS

Discover everything you need at the **Popp Martin Student Union** and **Cone University Center**. Enjoy delicious food from Social 704, Subway, Bojangles and more, get involved with Fraternity and Sorority Life, join student organizations, develop your leadership potential, and access essential services like NinerTech and Niner Central. Plus, find perfect meeting spots, lounges, and gathering spaces to relax and connect.

NOW INTRODUCING... ESPORTS & GAMING LOUNGE

Located in the Student Union Mezzanine



THE CENTERS OF CAMPUS LIFE ARE NOW HIRING!
USE YOUR FEDERAL WORK STUDY AWARD AND
COME WORK WITH US! SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
MORE INFORMATION

STUDENTCENTERS.CHARLOTTE.EDU



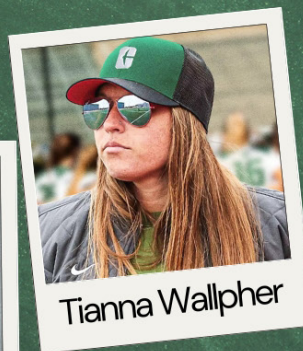
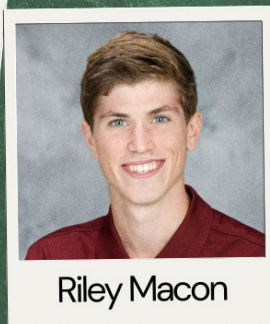
cltstudentcenters



Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

New coaches

across Charlotte Athletics



Tre Holland | Sports Editor

Heading into the 2026-27 athletic year, Charlotte's new director of athletics, Kevin White, has made considerable coaching changes across the athletic department, from women's lacrosse to men's basketball.

Leadership changes have occurred in both men's and women's sports, from head coaches to assistant coaches.

Men's basketball completes staff turnover

White's past experience includes time at Clemson University, Northwestern University, Southern Methodist University and Georgia State University. In those roles, he supported each athletic department, especially football and basketball. In a phone interview with The Charlotte Observer, White further emphasized the importance of both sports.

"Football and men's basketball have to be good," White said. "We've just got to make sure we put the resources around them in order for them to be successful."

White immediately did just that by moving on from former head coach Aaron Fearn and hiring former Cincinnati head coach Wes Miller. The Greensboro native averaged 22.5 wins per season over 10 seasons at Cincinnati and was named SoCon Coach of the Year in 2012 and 2018 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Along with Miller, former UNC Chapel Hill basketball standout Marcus Paige joins the staff as an assistant coach, and former University of Georgia staff member Chad Dollar joins as an associate head coach.

Paige was a four-year starter at Chapel Hill before eventually joining the staff in 2023 as the director of team and player development, later becoming an assistant coach. Dollar reunites with Miller after being a part of Miller's staff at Cincinnati. Dollar's previ-

ous coaching experience includes roles at the University of Georgia and Auburn University in recruiting and evaluation.

Other staff additions include former Tulane University coach Claude Pardue, former NBA and NBA G League coach Brian Boyle and former Baylor University graduate assistant Trent Brown.

New women's lacrosse head coach

In July 2026, White made Tianna Wallpher the second head coach in Charlotte women's lacrosse history. She was an assistant coach at Ohio State University for the past three seasons before coming to Charlotte. Wallpher's prior coaching experience includes roles at East Carolina University, Towson University and Johns Hopkins University.

Wallpher is known for her defensive philosophy that emphasizes forcing turnovers and fast-paced transition play. In 2023, she helped lead ECU to the No. 21 nationally ranked scoring defense and No. 11 in save percentage. Her defensive philosophy is rooted in her career as a lacrosse player.

Wallpher began her collegiate career in 2015 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where she was named to the America East All-Rookie Team. She finished her career at Towson as a defender, earning multiple First Team All-CAA selections, First Team All-Mid-Atlantic Region selections and a Third Team All-America selection in 2018. She also helped Towson appear in the NCAA Tournament in each of her seasons.

Wallpher played professionally in Athletes Unlimited and the Women's Professional Lacrosse League, where she earned All-Star honors and helped lead the Baltimore Braves to the 2019 league championship.

Cross Country adds a new coaching duo

On July 26, Director of Track and Field and cross country Bob Olesen announced former MIT cross country head coach Riley Macon would be Charlotte's next Cross Country head coach. Macon has coached five NCAA Division III National Championship squads in both cross country and track and field. Most recently, he guided both MIT's women's indoor and outdoor track and field teams to a national championship.

In his stint at MIT, Macon coached 88 All-Americans, six NCAA Individual National titleholders, and three standing national records at the Division III level. His efforts have earned him eight NCAA Division III East Region Cross Country Coach of the Year nominations and a Men's Indoor Track and Field Assistant of the Year in 2023. Macon's resume entering Charlotte is highly impressive.

Macon's wife, Whitney Macon, will also join the staff as a volunteer assistant. She followed her husband from MIT as an assistant coach. She brings experience as a coach and former athlete. She competed in two Olympic Marathon Trials and was ranked among the top 25 American marathoners in 2020 and 2022.

Four more assistant coaches added across the program

White also added assistant coaches in football, baseball, women's soccer and men's tennis to round out his inaugural season.

In January 2026, Victor Cabral joined the 49ers as the defensive ends coach. Before a 2025 hiatus, Cabral coached for 20 years at various universities, including West Virginia University, Appalachian State University, Samford University, Georgia Military College, and multiple stints at his alma mater,

Georgia Southern. Cabral served as a defensive line coach, linebackers coach, recruiting coordinator and director of player personnel in his previous coaching stints.

Will Kaufman comes to Charlotte as an assistant hitting coach. Prior to joining Charlotte, Kaufman was an assistant coach and recruiting coordinator at Bryant University for two seasons, where he helped lead the Bulldogs to two consecutive seasons of 35+ wins. Kaufman's prior stops include four seasons at Erskine College, two seasons at the University of Pennsylvania, two seasons at Arcadia University and one season at Birmingham-Southern College, where he began his coaching career in 2015.

In February, women's soccer added former Michigan State University assistant coach, Allison Mack. Mack helped guide the Spartans to 29-7-11 record over two seasons and their first ever Elite Eight appearance in the NCAA Tournament in 2025. Before her stint at Michigan State, she spent four years as an assistant at North Dakota State University and three years at Division II Bloomsburg University, where she began her collegiate coaching career.

Thomas Brown is the final addition, joining the men's tennis staff in July 2026. Brown played at the University of South Carolina before transferring to Charlotte for his graduate season, where he was named First Team All-Conference USA and the conference Newcomer of the Year. Brown's prior coaching experience includes a volunteer assistant coach position at South Carolina and one season at Louisiana State University (LSU) before joining the 49ers.

As White said in his introductory press conference, he will be very hands-on with Charlotte's athletic program. As promised, White has made several changes in his first summer as the Athletic Director in hopes of making the 49ers a household name.

A Panthers game day guide

Kelli Blackburn | Staff Writer

Courtesy of the Carolina Panthers



Whether you are going to your first-ever NFL game or looking for ways to make your day at Bank of America Stadium more convenient and enjoyable, I'm here to help.

Going into my fifth season as a season ticket holder for the Carolina Panthers, nothing makes me more passionate than helping people make their Sunday experience better. Here are the dos, the don'ts and everything in between.

Tickets and entry

The biggest question for most fans is how to find the best seats at the best value. While ticket prices normally spike when the official schedule is released in late May, the closer each game gets, the more prices tend to drop.

For nationally broadcast games or matchups against more popular teams, you should be prepared to spend a little extra cash for any seat. Divisional games are usually when you can get better pricing, but my best suggestion for any matchup is waiting until the week or even the day of to catch the best prices.

Although Ticketmaster is my go-to recommendation because it's the NFL's official ticketing partner, I also strongly recommend Gametime for fans looking to find affordable last-minute deals.

There is no bad view in the stadium, but to stay out of the sun, make sure you purchase tickets on the Uptown side (any seats along East Gate).

More information on stadium policies, including the bag policy, can be found on the Panthers' website. The stadium enforces a clear bag policy but also allows smaller clutches and bags no bigger than 4.5 inches by 6.5 inches.

Parking and transportation

Gates open two hours before kickoff, ensuring fans are able to make their way inside, enjoy the food and activities on the concourse and find their seats.

It is always best to arrive at least an hour before; that way, you can explore and visit the team store before the pregame activities begin. Driving into the stadium through Uptown can get more congested as kickoff approaches, so be aware of your ETA.

There are multiple ways fans can make their way to the stadium. For starters, Char-

lotte's light rail is a convenient way to get to Uptown, as it has a stop right by the Spectrum Center. While the light rail is perfect for getting to a Hornets game, it's about a 20-minute walk to Bank of America Stadium, so parking may be a better option in some cases.

Plenty of parking lots are open around the stadium on game days, with prices ranging depending on opponents. If you are seeing the Panthers while they have a higher-ranked or more popular team in town, for example, the Seattle Seahawks, parking prices tend to increase. Meanwhile, division games normally provide more affordable options that are closer to the stadium.

Personally, I park right off of Exit 10A to W. Morehead Street in the lots where local businesses normally sell out prepaid spots. They are easily accessible and are more affordable — some fans also tailgate around there, but it is a more laid-back area.

Tailgating

Speaking of tailgates, McNinch Street and the Wesley Heights Greenway are two spots that can be a bit more crowded with fans on game day. Clutch Kitchen & Pour House is a more active bar on game days, which sits right across from the Panthers' practice fields and is another great spot to grab food or beverages before or after the game.

The WFNZ Dog House is also another spot on W. Morehead Street that gives fans close to the East and South Gates a way to tailgate or hang out before and after the games.

Gear

One of my favorite parts of gameday is dressing up and seeing thousands of fans decked out in black and blue.

Jerseys are by far the most popular choice of what to wear, but Panthers t-shirts, hats and sweatshirts are all common throughout the stadium.

If you are attending an early-season game, be prepared for Charlotte's heat. Lightweight clothing, sunscreen and a hat can make a

huge difference, especially if you are sitting on the sunny side of the stadium. For the late-season games, weather can vary, so bringing a hoodie or raincoat is never a bad idea.

If you forget your Panthers gear or simply want to add to your collection, the Team Store inside Bank of America Stadium offers everything from jerseys and sideline apparel to collectibles. It is noteworthy that the line tends to be the longest before kickoff.

Dining

Bank of America Stadium offers much more than traditional stadium food. You will still find the classics of hot dogs, nachos, popcorn and stadium staples like Bojangles and Domino's, but there are also other favorites throughout the concourse.

Carolina also allows guests to bring in two sealed 16.9-oz bottles of water per person, but purchasing souvenir drinks allows for unlimited refills of soda at stations along the concourse.

If you are looking to save money, eating before or after games is always the safest option. Uptown Charlotte has plenty of restaurants and bars within walking distance, and many fans stop for food or drinks before making their way through the gates.

Inside the stadium, food and beverage prices are what you would expect at an NFL venue, if not more costly, so budgeting ahead of time can provide a stress-free day.

What to expect

Even if it is your first NFL or Panthers game, you will quickly realize that game day is about much more than football.

Before kickoff, the concourse is filled with fans shopping, grabbing food and watching warm-ups. If you are hoping to watch them, get to your seat early. Security will not allow fans to linger by the tunnel unless their seats are directly in that area, but you can always

walk around the lower bowl to see some of the action up close before sitting down.

Pregame activities always include the official parachute team, the All Veteran Group, who perform flag jumps and stadium entrances before kickoff. In the past, there have also been meet-and-greets with Panthers legends every week, which normally occur in the 500s bowl.

During game breaks, expect contests on the video boards, fan recognition moments and performances from the TopCats and Panthers mascot Sir Purr that help keep the energy high throughout the event.

Halftime usually features different acts or special recognitions rather than full concerts, so it is a good chance to get up and stretch, grab food or use the restroom before the second half begins.

Traditions

Every NFL stadium has its own traditions, and Bank of America Stadium is no different.

One of the biggest moments comes during player introductions, when the crowd erupts as the Panthers take the field. Throughout the game, fans proudly join in on stadium chants after big plays and touchdowns.

After the National Anthem, you will also hear the famous "Keep Pounding" drum, the organization's most recognizable tradition. The ceremony honors former Panthers linebacker Sam Mills and serves as a reminder of the team's motto and the resilience it represents. Each week, a special guest pounds the drum four times to fire up the crowd before kickoff.

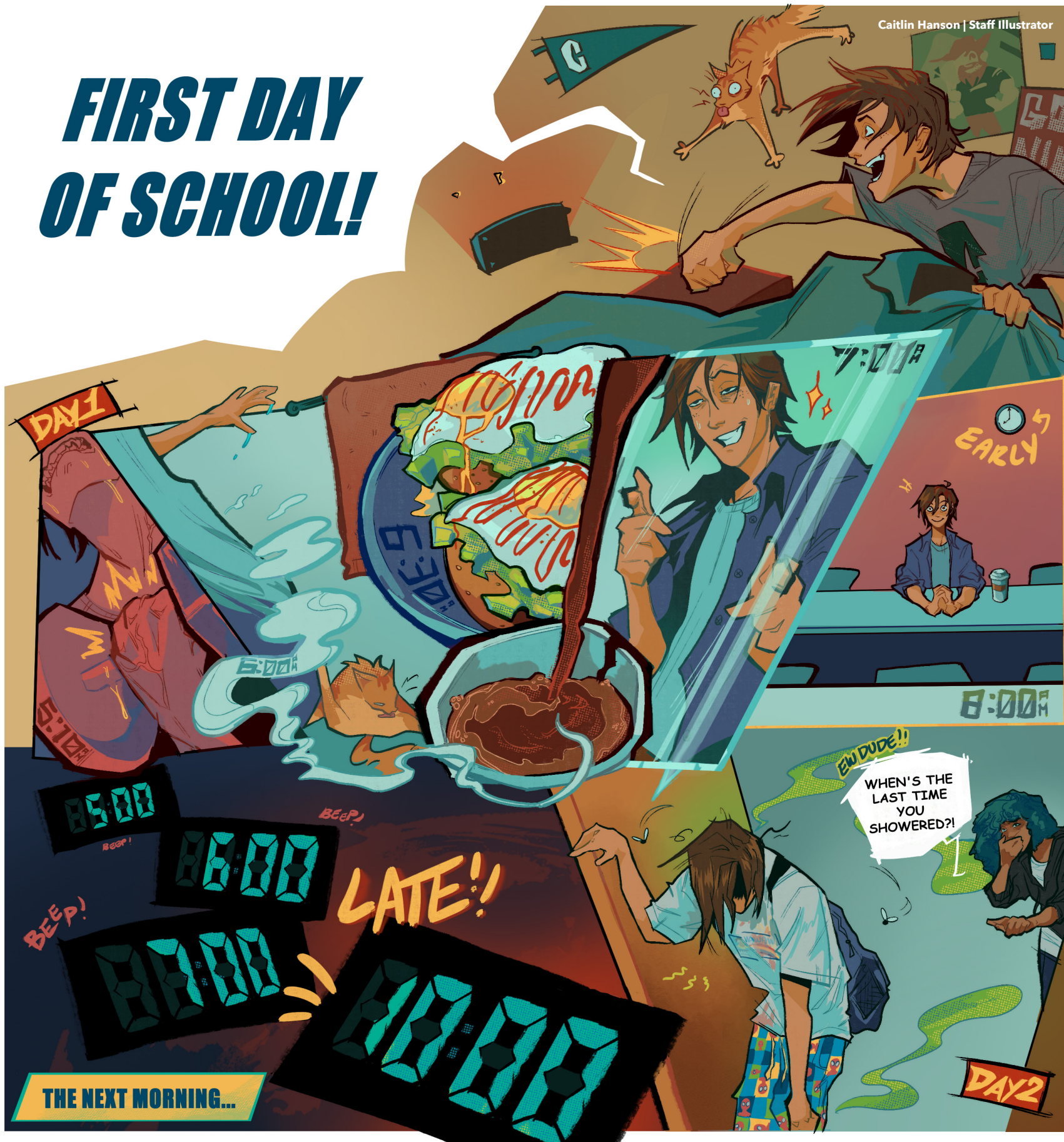
Postgame, if guests are able to witness a win, Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" always plays, which is fun to sing along to if you feel like soaking in the atmosphere before making your way out.

Whether it is your first Panthers game or your 50th, every game day at Bank of America Stadium offers a unique experience. Planning, arriving early and taking time to enjoy everything the stadium has to offer can make your experience even more memorable. Hopefully, these tips help you spend less time stressing over the logistics and more time cheering on the Panthers.

There is nothing quite like football in Charlotte; I hope to see you at a game this season. Keep Pounding!



***FIRST DAY
OF SCHOOL!***



Opinion: College is for everyone

Emsley Jackson | Opinion Editor

Whether you are here to build lifelong friendships, feed your curiosity or find your calling, college offers a space for everyone to grow. It may not be for everyone in practice, but it is designed for everyone in spirit.

College is the melting pot where all of the jock, indie, geek, artistic, preppy, emo and straight-edge lunch tables are put together in never-before-seen combinations. People from all walks of life intersecting at the same time in the same place is what makes the college experience so unique. No matter your desired outcome, you can find enclaves of peeps to connect with. Trust: College is truly for everyone.

Social butterflies

Cue the “college is the best four years of your life!” montages of frat parties, college football victories and dorm decoration that are often the dancing sugar-plums of choice for the college-bound nestled snugly in their beds. The American dream has been portrayed to us through film and popular culture, but it is not a reality for everyone.

You do not need to go Greek or live in a triple with two strangers to find community. You are gifted with the freedom to engage with whomever you please, untethered from previous social ties. Humans share 99.9% of the same DNA. Race is an arbitrary construct, sexuality is a form of expression and religion is confidence, or lack thereof, in something greater than yourself. Any barriers between people regarding these aspects are man-made, so a little anonymity goes a

long way in terms of confidence to break free from preexisting cliques. Some could argue that it is harder to ignore social prospects on a college campus than it is to engage with them.

“The freedom that you enjoy throughout college is a gift, but it is also a gift that comes with great responsibility ... Distractions will present themselves on an hourly basis and for the first time in your life it is entirely on you to decide which of these distractions will dictate your collegiate experience,” The College Confidence Coach wrote, in a blog post ironically titled ‘Why college is the best time of your life.’

For anyone looking to create new connections, college is rife with opportunities to expand your crew. The key is being open to these opportunities and looking in places you may not expect a beautiful friendship to bloom from.

Bookworms

Another important aspect of college life is learning, duh. This means learning in the traditional sense, getting your degree and learning in the way that we humans are lifelong learners, through becoming familiar with new things.

In the French language, there are two different verbs to describe knowing something. ‘Savoir’ is to know a fact, a piece of information or how to do something, textbook knowledge accumulation. ‘Connaître’ is to know a person, place or concept with

confidence or familiarity. True info dweebs and learning nerds seek both forms of this growth, and seeking higher education can feed both birds with one bagel.

A Reddit user posted on the thread ‘r/unpopularopinion’ that “College is not for learning, it is for the diploma. If I wanted to learn, I [could] go buy the same exact textbook my math classes are currently using for \$60 on Amazon and just read and do the problems... It is hard to put worth on the diploma for various reasons, but the worth of actually going to college is far far far from the price.”

While true, it is hard to put a price on a diploma, and the price of higher education in America is a can of worms; college is for learning. That is the basis on which universities were founded. College is the pursuit of in-depth knowledge in the field or fields you are focusing on. If you did not have to learn a single thing to obtain a degree, they would be as readily available as marriage licenses are. Weddings are expensive too, but the matrimony between you and the diploma you earned is always until death do you part.

Moral of the story: learn, grow and change in college. There is no better time to expand your horizons in traditional and non-traditional ways.

Busy bees

Last and definitely not least, college is a primo stepping stone to the rest of your career. Discovering what you are passionate about, what you are good at and where you see yourself is game-changing.

College gives you the space to experiment by joining clubs, getting internships, changing your major, maybe more than once, where you can fail safely. These experiences build your resume and sharpen your self-awareness simultaneously. And when you hit a wall, which you probably will, you will find built-in support systems ready to help. Advisors, professors, classmates and counselors make up the college ecosystem that promotes growth.

Maybe your major gives you a direct placement into a field of work. Maybe your major helps you learn where in your field you want to be placed. Maybe your major is a field of work you are interested in. Maybe you picked a major because it sounded interesting. Maybe you just picked a major.

This four-year process is not linear, as life certainly never is. For some, college is more or less than four years, done earlier or later in life than usual or possibly completed without ever setting foot on campus. The ‘real world’ may be around the corner, but college is aimed at giving you the time and tools to meet it with direction and confidence. Everyone deserves and can benefit from that.



Blaise Uy/Niner Times

IKEA Family offer, verified college students receive 15% off their qualifying purchase with valid coupon code*



Are you a college student?
Scan the QR code now
and get verified.
Don't miss this great offer!

*Offer valid 5/26-9/30/26. Not valid on previous purchases. To obtain coupon code, you must (i) have an IKEA Family account, (ii) sign-in via the IKEA student verification page ikea.us/student-discount, and (iii) upload your valid college ID, or other permissible documentation indicated. Must enter coupon code at online checkout or scan QR code in-store to receive discount. Discount applied before tax, shipping, and handling. Not valid on delivery, installation, assembly, or tax. Not valid on IKEA Gift Cards or payment of your IKEA credit card. Not valid on Kitchens purchases, including SEKTION/KNOK-HULT cabinets, door fronts, kitchen components, custom counter tops, or appliances (except for TILLREDA products and LAGAN mini fridge). Offer excludes Kitchen Planning or other IKEA services and third party products/services. Not valid in IKEA Swedish Restaurant, Bistro or As-is. Limit: one coupon code per verified student. Offer cannot be combined with other IKEA offers or coupon. Coupon code is only valid for 30 days from verification. For single item transactions, the net purchase price after application of the discount will be reflected on the sales receipt. For multiple item transaction, discount applied proportionally across items purchased, as shown on receipt. On returns, only the net purchase price as shown on receipt is refunded. Other restrictions may apply. See store or [IKEA-USA.com](https://ikea-usa.com) for complete terms and limitations.



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



Join Here



Column:

How to pay for college;

student loans 101



Crawford Anderson | Staff Writer

Welcome to college: Parties, dining hall food that is much more fun than home, at least for the first few weeks and new friends and experiences, and one last thing ... permanent loans you will be paying back till you are older than your parents.

Student loans are scary, yet not feared enough for how much they can damage your future financial security. But investing in yourself by furthering your education can be the best investment you ever make in your life, not just from the salary increase you will make in your career, but also the relationships and connections you will make on campus.

The Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) is the centerpiece of paying for college. Your student aid index (SAI) score will determine the grants and scholarships you will be eligible for and will influence your loan offerings and potential interest rates.

Direct federal loans to undergraduate students

The first two opportunities for debt you will come across are federal direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans. These are loans made to you straight from the federal government to help you pay for college.

Both feature lower interest rates, or the amount you have to pay per year for the privilege of borrowing money, than most private lenders, including your own bank. However, loans of this type are need-based and are not available to all students.

Subsidized loans have the interest paid on your behalf by the federal government until six months after you graduate from school. You do not have to make any principal payments on your original loan balance until then, either.

Unsubsidized loans do not require you to make monthly interest payments while in school, but interest accrues and will capitalize, adding onto your principal balance when payment begins. You do not have to make payments until six months after you graduate.

If you use an unsubsidized loan, I encourage you to make optional interest payments to prevent it from snowballing into a larger debt load down the road. A \$10k unsubsidized loan costs roughly \$50/month in interest, which could be paid while enrolled with a campus job or side hustle.

Both loan types currently have an interest rate of about 6.4%. For the 2026 and 2027 school years, interest rates are likely to be .25% lower, pending the annual reset on July 1. Actual rates will vary for the upcoming school year.

Direct federal loans to parents

Direct PLUS Loans are another federal student loan option for parents of dependent undergraduate students. They are intended to supplement other types of aid, including grants and direct federal student loans. Parents of new students as of the '26-'27 academic year can sign up for up to \$20,000 in loans per year and a total of \$65,000 over the course of their student's education.

Interest rates on these loans are higher, currently sitting around 9%. I also expect them to fall by .25% for the upcoming school year. There is also a fee for parent-plus loans of roughly 4.2%, which is deducted from the total loan amount before it's disbursed to the borrower.

You may request a payment deferment while enrolled at least half-time and for six months after graduation, but this is not automatically granted.

Parents are legally responsible for Direct PLUS Loans, and they cannot be transferred to the child. Before a parent begins the approval process for a loan of this type, they should have a serious conversation with their child about completing college, to avoid wasting tens of thousands of dollars and potentially thousands more in interest on an incomplete degree.

Private loans cosigned with a student and a parent

Private student loans are another beast entirely, and although they advertise rates as low as 3%, that is a marketing tactic that will almost certainly not apply to you. Based on my reasonably strong credit profile, albeit with a limited repayment history, I would likely be approved for a \$10,000 loan for my senior year at a rate of 9% to 14%.

That is about \$1,200 per year in interest, an amount that would compound quickly over time if I didn't make significant progress on repayment, since I would be paying interest on top of interest.

Private student loans are a last-ditch option and offer less flexibility than federal loans. There is much more to be written about every loan type discussed, and if you require debt to graduate, starting with federal direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans is probably your best bet.

They have lower interest rates and favorable benefits, like automatic deferment of payments until six months after you graduate and, in the case of subsidized loans, no interest payments until then.

You could also pay your tuition by credit card. UNC Charlotte, for instance, does not even have a fee for doing so. But credit card interest rates are extremely high.

I was recently approved for a Citi card with

a 27.5% interest rate, which is astronomically high. It would mean I would have to pay more than my total tuition and interest in roughly three years of having the debt. You should never pay for your tuition on a credit card.

When to use debt

Debt can be helpful, but you must have a plan for after school and recognize the long-term burden you are taking on, as loans cannot be discharged in bankruptcy.

The same compounding math that makes you a millionaire if you invest \$25 a week also works against you if interest is building up in the background.

With an average student loan currently at 7% to 8% interest, your loan balance can double or even triple if you let loans take over your financial life. Take the long view and plan ahead.

If the degree you are pursuing is less lucrative, exploring secondary opportunities, such as attending community college, taking a gap year to work or other options may be worth considering. And as always, do not be afraid to discuss with your parents or other family members who may be supporting you, as good communication is essential.

So go have fun at college, but not so much that you forget to pay for your loans!

Got questions, disagreements, or a money topic you want broken down next?

Shoot me an email at crawford@awmfinancial.net or visit awmfinancial.net

This content is for educational purposes only and is not investment advice. Markets are risky, outcomes vary, and you should always make decisions based on your own situation.

Column: Comparison is the thief of joy, especially when it comes to colleges

Delaney Crowder | Staff Writer

When I was in the midst of applying to colleges only a year ago, I was shocked to see all of the amazing in-state schools North Carolina had to offer. My friends and I spent hours browsing college websites, deciding which schools we would go to. By the time decisions were made, I could not help but notice different reactions when I told people that I was going to UNC Charlotte.

'Charlotte? But that's so far away!'

'You're too smart for Charlotte; you should go to NC State or Chapel Hill.'

'No one can drive in Charlotte.'

'You'll never find a strong community at such a commuter-heavy school.'

While some of those statements were fairly true, especially the fact that the drivers in Charlotte are horrendous, I was upset and confused about what was so wrong with my college choice.

When talking about colleges in North Carolina, the same three seem to always come up: UNC-Chapel Hill, NC State and Duke. Whenever basketball season rolls around, you make your allegiance to one of these schools, and you will be severely judged no matter which one you pick. Because of the state and nationwide respect these schools have, when you are a student in North Carolina and share that you are going to a school that is not one of the 'big three,' you can't help but compare yourself and feel less than.

At my first-year orientation earlier this year, we had to share why we chose Charlotte as our college in our small groups. I was shocked by the number of students who said they were only going here because they

did not get into NC State or Chapel Hill. So many people seemed almost embarrassed to be here instead of a more respected school.

I could not exactly blame them for their embarrassment. After all, I had applied to NC State and Chapel Hill, but got into neither. I was very excited to begin my journey at Charlotte, but there was still a hint of embarrassment hiding under the surface that I was not going to a more respected school.

As a first-year college student, I have a bit of a unique situation when it comes to my family dynamics. Because I am a triplet, my sisters and I all began college at the same time. However, instead of going to the same college like so many people expected us to do, we chose to go to three separate schools, one of us even outside of North Carolina.

It has definitely been an adjustment for three sisters who have been together since birth, but we find different ways to connect and spend time together online or occasionally in person. However, when we do have a group FaceTime call, it is hard not to compare our different collegiate experiences.

The same complaints tend to come up over and over again, like the horrors of communal bathrooms and mediocre dining hall food. We talk about how much we love the friends we have made and the professors who help us thrive. But the one thing that seems to connect all three of us is that we are happy with the college we chose. We each have found the many strengths and flaws embedded in our respective schools, and we have realized that we need to stop comparing our schools, but instead take pride in where we are.

Comparison is the thief of joy. It is a predator hiding in the shadows of our mind, forcing us to stop taking pride in what we do have because what someone else has is better. We need to steal back the joy that comparison has taken from us, and the only way we can do that is by taking pride in the here and now.

My sisters and I have different plans for our career paths, and each of our respective colleges will help us thrive in our separate fields. My sister at NC State is surrounded by resources that will make her a fantastic middle school science teacher; my sister at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is at one of the best nursing schools in the country that will make her an amazing future midwife and here at Charlotte, I have made connections and resources at this school and all around this amazing city to make me a successful journalist.

I have grown to realize that each of our colleges is perfect in its own way, because each of them fits my sister's and my needs. Most importantly, they help us thrive as people. There is no need for me to compare my school to my sisters', but I still notice that so many students at Charlotte continue to mask their envy with hatred.

When I started here, I quickly learned that a Charlotte student's favorite hobby was making fun of other colleges. Common phrases like "NC state has the ugliest campus" and "everyone at Chapel Hill is so snobby" are popularly thrown around in hallways and even classrooms. I happily joined in on the collegiate trash-talking until I realized that I had friends and family mem-

bers who attended the schools we were making fun of.

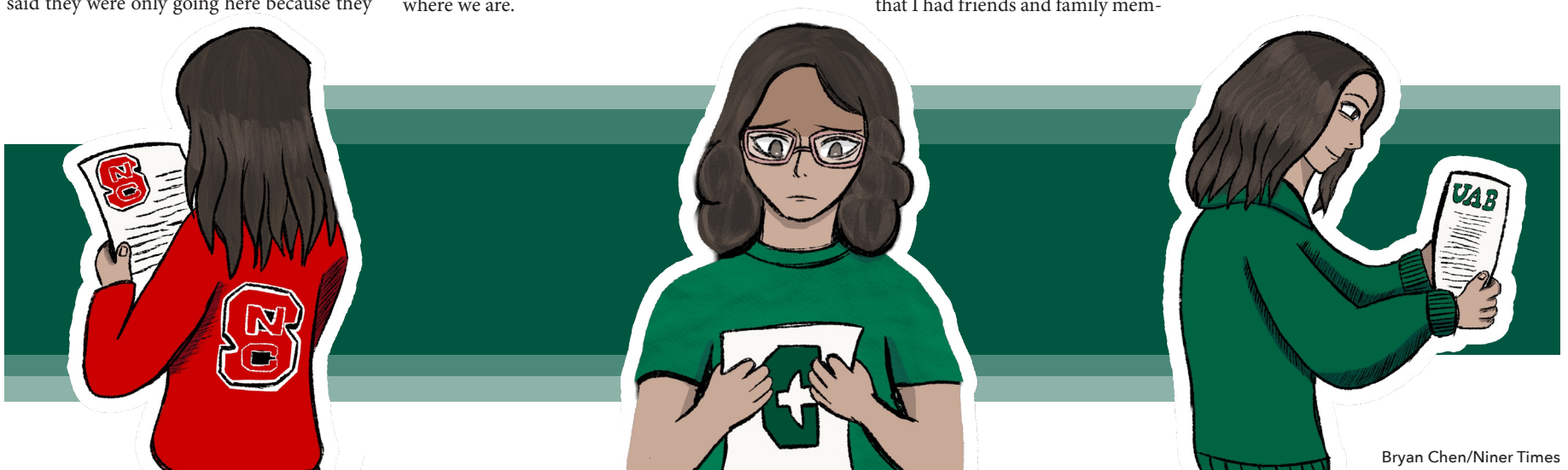
I also realize that Charlotte has its own flaws. There is no real need for us to hate other schools; instead, we need to take pride in being a state with so many well-respected and great universities with their own strengths and flaws to compare ourselves to. It's a privilege.

Now my embarrassment has gone away and been replaced with another, stronger emotion: pride.

I love going to the events the Campus Activities Board plans, even when the line wraps around the entire Popp-Martin Student Union. I have grown to love watching the Charlotte sunsets and seeing the colorful leaves that come with fall. I even smile when I see the famous campus geese waddling around on my way to classes. Everyone should feel this pride for our campus.

Charlotte is a school that has so many great qualities. So many other schools in North Carolina do, too. We should not compare ourselves to the colleges that are more established in our state, and there is no need to hate other schools just because of arbitrary rivalries.

Comparison being the thief of joy is a difficult lesson we all have to learn at some point in our lives. In order to be truly happy as a student here at Charlotte, you have to realize that we attend an amazing school that we must take pride in and joy in. Every college has something to offer, but joy comes from loving where you are.



Bryan Chen/Niner Times

JOIN THE FUTURE ALUMNI NETWORK

Perks of ~~\$19~~ \$35 one-time membership fee:

- Premier swag pack when you sign-up, including a FAN member-only shirt, belt bag, goose stress ball, stickers, and more!
- Invitations to exclusive social and networking gatherings with Charlotte alumni and community leaders.
- Special admittance to select athletic and alumni events.
- Access to limited edition shirts and swag at campus-wide events.
- Join a group of students who love UNC Charlotte!



🌐 alumni.charlotte.edu/future-alumni-network

📷 @CLT.FutureAlumni

✉️ futurealumni@charlotte.edu



HAIR & CAREER GOALS


Couronnée

Work or get your hair done at a premium hair salon and beauty bar!



Send your CV to



+1 310-991-0707



infocouronnee@gmail.com



HIRING CREATIVES :

Open Positions:

- ☒ Content Creators
- ☒ Videographers
- ☒ Makeup Artists

Internship & personal portfolio building with competitive compensation

STRUGGLING WITH FOOD, BODY IMAGE, OR AN EATING DISORDER?

**You don't have to choose
between your education
and your recovery.**

At The Renfrew Center, we understand the challenges of balancing recovery with academics. That's why we offer:

- Academic support and coordination
- Virtual and in-person treatment options
- Care designed for the unique needs of college students
- No medical leave required in many cases

**Get the support you need while staying
connected to what matters most.**

Charlotte, NC • Virtual Treatment Available

📞 1-800-RENFREW (736-3739)

🌐 www.renfrewcenter.com

✉️ info@renfrewcenter.com



Opinion: Newspapers are cool, especially the student ones

Lauren Simendinger | Staff Writer

Journalism has been dying for years. Digital papers have replaced print, social media is the new news source and the Trump administration has sued news stations and newspapers alike for alleged defamation and libel. Yet, student newspapers persist.

News is important. It is new, it is captivating and most importantly, it lets you know what is going on. Without the news, we would be lost. Accessing the news is even more important as a college student.

You have to balance a lot of information as a college student. Dorm assignments, classroom assignments, homework, dining hall schedules, staying on top of your laundry, when campus events are, etc. Social media can tell you some, but what about things slipping under the radar? What if you are curious about how all this works? Look no further than the campus newspaper.

There is some debate around when the first college newspaper was founded. The Dartmouth has claimed to be the oldest,

with a founding in 1799, but it did not become a publication by and for students until 1839. It was not weekly until 1904, and The Cornell Daily Sun says it is the oldest continuous student publication, with a founding date in 1880.

The Niner Times was founded in 1947, then known as the Charlotte Center of the University of North Carolina News. Regardless of which student newspaper is the oldest, all play a valuable role in college life.

The college newspaper reads no differently than any other newspaper. It features sections for news, opinion, sports, arts & culture and more. It has a comics section. It has letters to the editor. It even has advertisements. So what makes the student newspaper so special? The student newspaper is catered more directly to you, the students.

It is essential to stay informed about the broader community around you. The Charlotte Observer, local news stations and social media will all tell you that. But the Niner

Times will tell you what is happening on this very campus, and what is important to its students.

It will share the score of the latest football game and break down what went right and what went wrong. It will tell you who joined the school board, who is running for student government elections and what their policies are. It will tell you how state and national policies affect the Charlotte campus. Like any good newspaper, it will not just provide information, but answers.

The student newspaper is run by students, for students. Its loyalty is to them and them alone. What interests the population, and what is important to them? What do they need to know, and why? It is not afraid to hold its institution accountable. The student newspaper will do anything for its students.

College can be a very busy time. Reading an article, especially a long one, can take a few minutes out of your precious time. The students behind a college newspaper

know this, especially as they take time out of their busy schedules to write and pursue these stories. They do it because these stories matter, and you matter. You deserve to be a part of the conversation.

Newspapers cannot exist without readers. Words turn into action when people take them in. The Niner Times is one small community in a larger one, and every single student is a part of it. Communities cannot exist without communication. So please, pick up a copy of the Niner Times on the way to class. There is always something to be said and read.

