

NINERTIMES

Student-driven news since 1947 Oct. 7, 2026



— HOMECOMING 2026 —

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North Carolina

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Upcoming UNC Charlotte events

Baseball vs. Davidson
Oct. 9, 6 p.m.
Robert and Mariam Hayes Stadium

Men's Soccer vs. South Florida
Oct. 11, 6 p.m.
Jen Gaber Field

Transportation Fair
Oct. 14, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Cauble Quad

Student Sustainability Summit
Oct. 10, 1-4 p.m.
Cone University Center, 210

Student Recess - No Classes
Oct. 12-13

Actors from the London Stage present Much Ado About Nothing
Oct. 15-17, 7:30 p.m.
Robinson Hall, Black Box Theater

NOTES FROM THE NEWSROOM:

Sweater weather (or not)

Emsley Jackson | Opinion Editor



It's fall, y'all. It may not feel like it every second of the day quite yet, but if you crack your window open once the sun has gone down or actually dare to walk to your 8 a.m., you might notice it. In North Carolina, fall is the watched pot that never boils. We get excited for pumpkin spice lattes and Halloween in July, but our pools are still open in October. This doesn't mean that autumn isn't real, but if

you think too hard, you'll miss it.

Fall is a state of mind. There's the physical: school is back in session, dropping temperatures, falling leaves, shortening days and all things seasonal. But what really makes the season real is its mental aspect. Your soul seeks out that communal warmth; your heart wants to find meaning in the apple spice and blustery days; your mind invites the idea of wearing

that sweater. Fall is about balancing mind and matter in our lives to find a golden-brown center. Something like that anyways, perhaps I'm thinking too much about apple pie.

Keeping this in mind, I invite you to remember this sentiment the next time you complain about it being 75 degrees in October, because while that may be our reality, the true reason for the season is always in our hearts.

From the Charlotte police logs (9/20 - 10/3)

Kyle Boucher | News Editor

Sept. 26 - Investigate

Officers were dispatched to the courtyard of Holshouser Hall in reference to two people in clown costumes scaring students in the area. Officers met with the students and told them to remove the costumes and go back to their dorms.

Sept. 28 - Suspicious Persons

Dispatch received a call from a Resident Advisor in Greek Village reporting two suspicious males walking around in Greek Village. The suspicious individuals were described as black males with dreadlocks, wearing hoodies. Officers checked the area but did not see anyone who matched the provided description.

Sept. 30 - Investigate/ Sex Offense

Officers responded to Scott Hall around 4 a.m. in reference to a reported sex offense. The incident remains under investigation.

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

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

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Dacien Montford named 2026 Golden Niner

Kyle Boucher & Emily Schenkel | News Editor & Asst. News Editor

Dacien Montford was named the 2026 Golden Niner during halftime at UNC Charlotte's Homecoming football game against the University of Memphis on Oct. 3.

Throughout Niner Nation Week, students cast votes for one of the Niner 9 to become the Golden Niner.

The student chosen as the Golden Niner portrays true Niner Pride and strong involvement in the Charlotte community.

As the winner, Montford will receive a \$500 reward and the Golden Niner Pickaxe, passed down from 2025's Golden Niner, Abby Grace Bagent.

Montford is a third-year student majoring in exercise science and minoring in biology. He is currently working to become an anesthesiologist assistant and has worked as a medical assistant in a cardiology office.

On campus, Montford serves as president and founding member of Brothers in Medicine and the at-large coordinator of the

Black Organization Alliance Board. He is the president and co-founder of The Purpose Project, which he considers to be his highest achievement at UNC Charlotte.

Going forward, Montford will be able to design a Golden Niner-themed jacket or blazer and be featured in future UNC Charlotte promotional and storytelling campaigns.

"From the first time I visited, I knew I was going to come here," Montford said. "The community I saw, the diversity, the inclusion and all the different involvements I had seen drew me in. I was seeing clubs for people that looked just like me, doing all different types of things."



Emmanuel Perkins/Niner Times



Niner Nation Week 2026

Emmanuel Perkins, Mei Podvojsky & Kendall Maye/Niner Times

Sept. 27 to Oct. 4 was Niner Nation Week on campus, where students experienced a week filled with Niner Pride. The Homecoming Carnival brought rides and games to the 49th Acre and the National Pan-Hellenic Council held its annual Stroll Off. The 49ers had their conference opener against the Memphis Tigers for the Homecoming football game, where the Golden Niner was announced during halftime.





Flock Safety faces protest at Charlotte press conference

Annie Waskey & Kyle Boucher | Staff Writer & News Editor

Since July 2026, UNC Charlotte's campus and surrounding areas have been monitored by several dozen Flock Safety cameras, leading students to question the cameras' purpose and how they are used.

Flock Safety, the company behind Flock cameras, was founded in 2017 by Garrett Langley, Matt Feury and Paige Todd. Since the initial production of Flock cameras, the company has grown from a small prototype project into a surveillance network used by thousands of communities nationwide.

Flock cameras are automated license plate readers (ALPRs) that use AI and motion sensors to obtain vehicle data. They are primarily used by law enforcement to monitor vehicles and enhance security.

According to their website, Flock Safety aims to build technology that helps communities respond to incidents faster, investigate more effectively and collaborate on the same platform.

Flock's technology has been used in kidnapping cases, homicides, stolen vehicles, missing persons and more. With real-time alerts from Flock, officers can respond to incidents more quickly than before.

Since the cameras were installed on campus, Charlotte students have raised concerns about the ethics of these Flock cameras. Many remain concerned about data ownership, who can access that data, how long the data is retained and whether Flock uses facial recognition.

Flock Safety comes to Charlotte

On Sept. 29, Jalen Johnson, a public affairs manager for Flock Safety, held a press conference at Charlotte's Independence Regional Library. The conference was organized by ARISE Group Inc., a third-party company that connects client corporations with community audiences.

At the press conference, Johnson addressed how Flock Safety plans to respond to several major criticisms raised by the audience.

"We are a transparent company. We want to talk to the community, hear people's thoughts and answer any questions they may have," Johnson said.

During the conference, Johnson stated

that Flock does not sell data, does not use facial recognition and has no access to people's personal data. He also said that Flock only takes still images of cars and license plates as they pass one of the cameras.

Johnson then talked about how Flock Safety reduced its data retention period from 30 days to seven days in response to community feedback.

He also mentioned the proactive lockdown feature, a new component in Flock systems that will make it harder for law enforcement to misuse information gathered by Flock cameras.

"For officers, if they're searching in the system and the system is flagging an anomaly, it's going to lock them out until their administrator reviews it," Johnson said.

Anomalies include searching for information unrelated to a specific assigned case or trying to look at information an officer is not authorized to access. Johnson also said Flock systems will require all law enforcement personnel to enter the specific case number and information before accessing Flock's system.

During the press conference, a "Get The Flock Out of Charlotte" protest began outside the library. Protesters held signs saying "Surveillance is not safety" and "Privacy is a right."

When asked what he thought about the protest, Johnson said, "We welcome that. We want to hear feedback from folks on how they feel about our company, and we want to answer the questions."

Student opinions on Flock cameras

The Flock cameras installed throughout Charlotte's campus are placed in areas with a high volume of vehicle traffic, such as Popp-Martin Student Union, North Deck, East Deck and the southern entrance to campus.

"These cameras have been set up under the veil of safety, but I don't feel like they make campus safer," Caleb Collison, a third-year student, said. "I feel as though they infringe on students' civil rights."

Students have had many conversations about privacy, who has access to Flock information and what it is used for.

"In my eyes, it's being used for mass sur-

veillance," Eddie McGaughnea, a third-year student, said. "I don't fully trust our government, and I would say Flock cameras are very unconstitutional."

Many students are suspicious of the cameras' ability to photograph personal vehicles and log information into a database that thousands of agencies can access. Many believe Flock Safety is violating their constitutional right to privacy.

Third-year student Anthony Argudo has raised another concern: law enforcement ethics.

"Flock is an evident demonstration that under the facade of [catching criminals], we forget the fundamental necessity of having privacy, ethical police enforcement and public oversight," Argudo said.

Many commuter students, like Collison and McGaughnea, are worried about Flock's ability to track their vehicles.

"The commuters that drive to class every day are involuntarily being a part of that data," McGaughnea said. "It's just the persistent tracking; they know where you are, where you have been and when you left. What else do they keep bookmarks on?"

While many understand that Flock cameras were implemented to increase campus safety, students question whether their presence effectively reduces crime.

Andre Phelps is a second-year student at Charlotte concerned about the effectiveness of Flock cameras.

"If there are a lot of crimes that haven't been addressed, then cameras aren't doing what they need to do. If that's the case, I don't think we should have them," Phelps said.

Flock Safety's technology has helped investigations and sped up many crime-response processes, but a lack of improvement on Charlotte's campus has raised concerns about the benefits versus the costs; many feel they are trading their privacy for an ineffective surveillance system.

"I understand they were introduced as a way of security and have been marketed as that," McGaughnea said. "But I feel like the trade-off is a little steep to give away all this privacy."

Alexandria White/Niner Times

Charlotte City Council votes on police jurisdiction, I-77 expansion, youth curfews and data centers

Kyle Boucher & Annie Waskey | News Editor & Staff Writer

Within the voting chamber of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Charlotte's City Council is making several decisions that will impact city residents and UNC Charlotte students alike.

The City Council commonly makes decisions on public property, economic legislation, infrastructure expansion and county-wide laws. Its legal jurisdiction is organized into seven districts, which cover the city of Charlotte and its surrounding areas; UNC Charlotte is located in District 4.

UNC Charlotte police jurisdiction extension renewed

The Charlotte City Council renewed the jurisdiction expansion for UNC Charlotte's Police and Public Safety (PPS) on Monday, Sept. 14.

The expansion was enacted in 2006 and has been renewed every four years.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) permitted PPS to patrol and respond to incidents that reach off-campus neighborhoods where many UNC Charlotte students live. This describes what is called secondary jurisdiction, which gives an agency authority to respond to matters that are not its primary responsibility.

PPS has a different kind of relationship with Charlotte students than CMPD, and this is often more helpful for responding to student-related incidents. PPS can assist with outreach programs and presentations, which

isn't as easy for CMPD.

PPS works with CMPD as a conduit to keep students safe, addressing off-campus incidents and improving community safety.

"We want to enhance our ability to help students succeed," Jeffrey Baker, the chief of police at UNC Charlotte, said. "That's really what we're a part of."

I-77 South toll lane project renewed

On Sept. 21, the City Council voted to renew the I-77 expansion project, which was previously shut down on May 20 by a vote from the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO).

The North Carolina General Assembly stated that municipalities that voted against the expansion will be fined up to \$70 million to repay the design costs of the unused expansion plans.

As a result, the CRTPO held another election on Sept. 23, which finished with a 64-5 vote in favor of the expansion. With the City Council and CRTPO both voting in support of the project, the I-77 expansion is expected to begin construction in the early 2030s.

The project plans to add more toll lanes to I-77 South, which would cut through West Charlotte and require residents in those areas to leave their homes. The displacement of these predominantly Black neighborhoods sparked major debates about the expansion.

The City Council agreed to invest \$300 million into the local community where the I-77 expansion will be built. At least \$150

million will go toward the construction of buildings and spaces meant to reconnect communities that are divided by the expansion. Additionally, \$30 million will go to alleviating food insecurity in West Charlotte, \$35 million to rebuilding housing and small businesses and \$15 million to fix environmental issues.

City residents continue to debate the expansion, with many criticizing the project for its potential effects on local communities.

Upcoming vote: Data Center Moratorium Extension

Currently, the City Council is considering extending the data center moratorium, a temporary legal pause on the planning and construction of new data centers in Charlotte. As long as the moratorium is in effect, no new data centers can be built in Charlotte.

The current moratorium started on June 8 and was set to last 150 days. It was split into two 75-day phases: the first focused on researching how data centers would affect local communities, and the second focused on the best way to implement possible plans for data center construction.

The moratorium is set to end on Nov. 5, with the City Council currently debating plans to extend it. The City Council will hold a public hearing on Oct. 12, where community members can voice opinions on extending the moratorium.

Charlotte residents have expressed major controversy over the construction of data

centers. Residents have voiced concerns such as environmental impacts, electricity costs and land space.

There are several large data centers already in Charlotte, such as the Digital Realty CLT10 and Flexential North Data Center.

Youth curfew targets teenagers

Charlotte's City Council has enacted a tighter curfew law, which bars all people under 18 from being in public spaces and businesses between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

This new curfew will take effect as a 10-month test program running from Nov. 1, 2026, to Aug. 31, 2027.

The City Council enacted this law in response to recent "teen takeovers" that have occurred throughout Charlotte since the beginning of 2026.

These takeovers are often characterized by large groups of teenagers gathering in public places late at night, and frequently involve property damage, fighting, blocking roadways and other illegal activities.

Previously, Charlotte's curfew law prevented juveniles under 16 from being in public spaces or businesses after certain hours. The curfew times were 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. for children under 13, and 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. for teens between 13 and 15.

This new policy has already been met with some controversy, as parents and city residents alike debate how strictly teenagers should be monitored and whether the tighter curfew is necessary.



Niner Times File
Hailey Schenkweiler/Niner Times

LACE provides election and immigration support to UNC Charlotte's Hispanic community

Emily Schenkel | Asst. News Editor

Courtesy of LACE

With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, and lingering concerns about the Charlotte immigration enforcement activity in November 2025, UNC Charlotte's Latines for Action, Change, and Empowerment (LACE) is helping students navigate voting, immigration rights and community resources.

LACE centers its work and events around three pillars: education, empowerment and advocacy. The organization puts those pillars into action through educational events, partnerships with nonprofit organizations, and resources to help students navigate political and community issues.

"We focus on raising awareness of political issues that the community may be lacking certain knowledge about," LACE President Brianna Tirado Sánchez said.

Tirado Sánchez also said that the bulk of LACE's programming includes immigration education, voting education and connecting students with important resources.

LACE works with nonprofit organizations, like the Hispanic Federation and the Carolina Migrant Network, to provide students with resources such as legal assistance, medical services and other forms of support.

Immigration education

Immigration education has become a major part of LACE's programming, particularly following Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in Charlotte since November 2025.

One of LACE's larger educational events was "Know Your Rights," which focused on students' legal rights when interacting with ICE in settings including the home, workplace, school, church and general public spaces.

The event covered students' rights; what to do if stopped or arrested by ICE; contact information for local attorneys; special protections for vulnerable groups; ways documented people can help undocumented people; and other immigration-related resources.

Tirado Sánchez said this event had one of LACE's largest turnouts and attracted students from many different backgrounds.

LACE continues to make the information from this event readily available through a link in its Instagram bio.

"It's been kind of a big thing how little the University

put out, and we tailor the resources based on what we see people need the most."

Voter education and advocacy

With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, LACE's advocacy work is focusing on political education, voter education and encouraging students to vote.

dents think they can vote in Mecklenburg County without updating their voter registration. This is not true; students who wish to vote in Mecklenburg County must be registered to vote in that county. They also noticed many students do not fully understand what will appear on their ballots.

"A lot of people, they don't know what they're voting for," LACE Vice President Luis Licona-Nunez said. "It's very important to educate them."

The organization also shared that it will be holding a panel focused on the ballot and voter participation, and will provide rides to the nearest voting location during the early-voting period.

Building community

Beyond political education and advocacy, LACE provides a space for students who share similar backgrounds and experiences to connect with one another.

"Being a part of LACE gives students a way to share their experiences, cultures and feel safe with people who have gone through the same experiences," Licona-Nunez said.

For Tirado Sánchez, LACE has provided her with a sense of community while attending a university several hours from her hometown. She said the organization also made her more comfortable being involved on campus, as LACE was one of her first opportunities to establish a long-term community for herself after moving frequently as a child.

"If it weren't for LACE, I feel like I would still be a student who's too scared to get involved," Tirado Sánchez said.

LACE also provides members with financial assistance through its Luna Scholarship. Two LACE members, Sanders Zendejas Leon and Noemi Granillo Candia, were recently awarded \$500 each.

To qualify, applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5, be a Pell Grant recipient, a full-time student and a LACE general body member, and answer some short essay questions.

LACE also works to highlight various Latin American countries and cultures in its events and on its Instagram page, specifically throughout Hispanic Heritage Month.



has spoken on the immigration issues that we've seen so much activity around, especially just near campus within the last year," Tirado Sánchez said. "Especially with how little the University helps to intervene when someone does encounter ICE. This definitely changes the resources we

One of the organization's first events of the semester, "Pinta tu Voz," or "Paint Your Voice," combined arts and crafts with voter registration education and helped students register to vote.

Executive board members have noticed a common voting misconception: some stu-

‘The Distance of the Moon’ exhibition: Intertwining astronomy with the liminality of humans

Annie Waskey | Staff Writer

Soo Kim, Professor and Program Director of Photography at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, created “The Distance of the Moon,” an exhibition featuring abstract photographs of the Jantar Mantar observatories in India. Jantar Mantar is a collection of man-made astrological instruments built in the early 18th century, and Kim coupled images of it with photographs of headlights in traffic, meant to mimic the stars.

While the exhibition was on display in the Lambla Gallery in Storrs, it featured mural photographs depicting the sun and moon centered in each picture. Kim wanted to explore the liminal state of humans through the examination of astronomy, turning what she found in India into artwork rich with meaning.

Accuracy that has stood the test of time

“I was thinking about these instruments that were made for astronomers to understand ourselves and the world in which we are a very small part of better,” Kim said.

Jantar Mantar was constructed between 1724 and 1735 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur, India. Designed to measure time, track celestial objects and compile astronomical tables, the instruments allowed astronomers to predict and observe the events of the solar system.

Kim was interested in the specificity of the astronomers when Jantar Mantar was created. Centuries later, the instruments are accurate to within two seconds, and while they are no longer in use, they have been maintained by the Government of Rajasthan.

“I was interested in astronomers’ and scientists’ ability to look at the stars and their desire to measure the distance between the different parts of the solar system and us,” Kim said.

“I wanted to couple these really beautiful architectural instruments with something as everyday and common as traffic lights, because in a way, that surrounds us just as much as the stars now,” Kim said.

Kim found that being so often surrounded by these things shows how humans commune and think about the distances between one another. This is why she used pictures of traffic, cutting out the centers of the blurred headlights she photographed.

“I wanted to take something as mundane

and almost ugly as looking at traffic and connect it to the way humans commune,” Kim said. “I was trying to make a picture that kind of mimicked the stars, without directly taking photographs of the stars.”

To give the instruments greater definition, she cut out the background from their pictures and placed the photos of traffic behind them, making the instruments appear like they were floating among the traffic lights.

Exploring the passage of time

“I wanted to remove the contrived cliché of the sunset or the sunrise, because something is interesting in that we still think about what other dimensions are out there. What else exists?”

Kim noted the constancy of watching the days pass, and society’s natural assumption that the sun and moon will rise and set each day. As she worked on this project, Kim sought to address the romanticized cliché of sunsets, the moon and other celestial symbols.

According to Kim, many images of celestial bodies have become overused symbols; she wanted to take a moment to recognize how different pictures of them can look and how that represents how different the passage of time can feel.

“Sometimes your days and your life feel like it’s endless, but other times, the passage of time feels different,” Kim said.

Depicting the liminal state of humans

In “The Distance of the Moon,” Kim focused on the idea that fear coupled with beauty is what makes something sublime

rather than simply pretty, thinking about the sunset as a liminal object always in transition.

“When I think about the romantic sublime, in a philosophically based idea of it, it’s not just the natural beauty of things; it’s natural beauty combined with terror,” Kim said.

Kim compares the liminality of people to the state they are in while traveling on a plane or train, and she wanted to explore this concept through the examination of astronomy.

“It’s about imagining ourselves in this kind of liminal state of being a drifter,” Kim said.

Kim aspires not to answer questions with her art; rather, she aims to pose them. She always begins her art process by asking questions, finding that it creates a broader space for thinking.



Sophia Maiorano/Niner Times

New BS in Sports Analytics pairs data science with athletics

Aaron Park | Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte introduced a new major in fall 2025 with a Bachelor of Science in Sports Analytics, giving students a new way to combine their interests in sports, data and human performance.

Charlotte's program is one of fewer than 10 standalone sports analytics degrees in the country, along with Syracuse University, who pioneered the major. The degree builds on UNC Charlotte's existing Undergraduate Certificate in Sports Analytics, which trains students in statistics, data analysis and human performance in sports-specific settings.

Combining data science and human performance

The 120-credit degree is a collaboration between UNC Charlotte's School of Data Science and the College of Health and Human Services. The School of Data Science focuses on data analysis, interpretation and technical skills, while the College of Health and Human Services studies health, movement and human performance through its Department of Applied Physiology, Health, and Clinical Sciences. Together, the two colleges created a program where students learn how to collect, analyze and visualize data while developing an understanding of the physical factors that influence athletic performance. The program is designed to give students opportunities to apply those skills to real-world sports situations.

John Tobias serves as the program's co-director and is credit-

ed with bringing it to life at UNC Charlotte. With a master's degree in sports management from High Point University, Tobias serves as a bridge to the working world of sports, mentoring students and helping them make connections for that first gig.

Opportunities in Charlotte's sports market

UNC Charlotte's location gives students opportunities to connect classroom work with the sports industry. The University has identified hands-on opportunities involving Charlotte's Division I athletics programs and professional organizations, including the Carolina Panthers, Carolina Hurricanes and Charlotte FC. These connections let students gain experience in sports environments while developing skills they use in analytics careers.

Analytics has become an increasingly important part of modern sports. Sports teams use data to evaluate players, measure performance, analyze opponents and inform decisions. As the amount of information teams collect continues to grow, organizations

need people who can understand both the data and the sports context behind it. UNC Charlotte's program was created around that intersection.

Building on the sports analytics certificate

The bachelor's degree expands on UNC Charlotte's previous work in the field. Before the degree's inception, the University's Undergraduate Certificate in Sports Analytics was the only path for students to gain fundamental knowledge in statistics, programming, data analysis and human performance. Alongside the new program, the certificate also provides a pathway into the sports industry for some graduates; UNC Charlotte has highlighted former certificate students who have gone on to roles with professional organizations including the Philadelphia Phillies, Charlotte FC and the Boston Bruins.

The sports analytics program also connects to UNC Charlotte's larger investment in data science. Established in 2013, the University's School of Data Science is an interdisciplinary collaboration involving six colleges: the College of Computing and Informatics, the Belk College of Business, the College of Health and Human Services, the Klein College of Science, the College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences, and the William States Lee College of Engineering. The interdisciplinary structure reflects data's growing importance across industries. Students learn how to use data to answer questions in fields ranging from health care and business to engineering, science and sports. Sports analytics fits into that broader approach by combining data science with athletic performance.

The degree also does not limit graduates to careers with professional sports teams. The technical skills developed through the program can apply to other data-focused positions, while the sports-specific coursework prepares students for careers involving athletic performance and sports organizations. Charlotte's diverse sports market gives students opportunities to see how analytics is being used across different levels of competition. As a full undergraduate curriculum rather than simply an additional concentration or certificate, it gives students a dedicated path to study sports analytics at UNC Charlotte.



Ali Thiam/Niner Times

From assistant to architect: Kevin Langan's lasting legacy on Charlotte men's soccer

Jacob Brindle | Video Editor

For over a decade, Charlotte men's soccer has excelled nationally, becoming one of the University's most prestigious programs. Charlotte has seen roster, staff and even conference changes over the years, but one thing has remained: head coach Kevin Langan.

Langan's tenure began in 2012, but his connection to the team runs deeper than his time at the helm. He joined the team as an associate head coach under Jeremy Gunn in 2009. That season, the 49ers finished 11-3-6 and earned a spot in the NCAA tournament.

Langan's best season under Gunn came in 2011 when Charlotte reached the NCAA Men's College Cup final, the only team in Charlotte athletics history to reach a national championship. Charlotte lost the final 1-0 to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After Charlotte's run, Gunn left to coach Stanford University, leaving only one name for the program to rely on.

Langan takes the reins

On Jan. 3, 2012, Director of Athletics Judy Rose appointed Langan head coach of Charlotte men's soccer, marking the start of the greatest coaching tenure in team history.

For most, a coaching career begins with mistakes, struggles and doubt. Langan's inaugural season was the opposite. He opened his first season winning seven straight games, making a statement in the Atlantic 10 Conference. Langan finished the season 15-4-3 and 7-1-1 in conference play, tying former coach John Tart for the second-best regular-season record in program history. Langan led the 49ers into the second round of the national tournament before losing to Georgetown University. Langan holds the best inaugural-season record among coaches in program history.

Success continued in his second season. In 2013, Charlotte accepted an invitation to join Conference USA. The team finished 12-6-3, including a 4-3-2 mark in conference play. The 49ers went on to win the conference tournament, giving Langan his first official conference tournament title as a head coach, and leading the 49ers to national tournament appearances in back-to-back seasons.

A decade of consistency

Langan is the seventh coach in the pro-

gram's 36-year history, and what stands out most about his tenure is his consistency.

Since taking over in 2012, he has led Charlotte to more than 154 wins, 11 NCAA tournament appearances and seven conference championships. As of the 2025 season, Langan's conference record is 70-23-19. During his tenure, Charlotte won the Atlantic 10 regular season title in 2012, the Conference USA regular-season title in 2014 and 2016, and conference tournament championships in 2013, 2023 and 2024.

Most recently, Charlotte captured the 2025 American Conference regular season championship, adding another piece of hardware to his trophy case. Langan has never had a losing season as head coach.

Langan is the most successful coach in program history by a landslide. The closest to Langan's tenure is Tart, who won 117 games to Langan's 154 and counting.

The Langan standard

While Langan's record shows the program's success, the players who have come under his tenure reflect his impact.

Under Langan, 71 players have earned all-conference honors, including 39 first-team se-

lections. These players span multiple recruiting classes, from domestic to international and different eras of Charlotte soccer, underscoring Langan's ability to build a continuous talent pipeline.

Langan's ability to develop players extends beyond the collegiate level. 16 players have gone on to play professionally in Major League Soccer (MLS) and other international leagues. In the 2024 MLS SuperDraft, Charlotte had two selections: Sean Suber at 35th overall and Kameron Lacey at 82nd overall. Langan coached both for multiple seasons.

Langan has had five players earn All-American honors and 43 All-Region selections during his tenure. For a program that faces change every season, producing individual award winners has been a constant throughout Langan's time at Charlotte.

His current team has continued that tra-

dition. 2026 team captain Natsuki Ogata, a first-team All-American Conference selection in 2025, is one of the team's leading scorers this season.

Langan has dominated every statistic a head coach can in one tenure, but in his 15th season at the helm, one mountain remains: bringing a national championship to Charlotte. Langan will look to push Charlotte to the national tournament as they finish conference play.

The architect is still building

No, Langan did not build a prestigious program from the ground up. He inherited a team coming off an NCAA College Cup final appearance. But Langan did something no coach in the program's history has ever done: consistently win for over a decade. Langan leads almost every stat among coaches in program history, all

while consistently winning and competing at the national level every season.

The best part about Langan's journey is that he isn't finished. Now in his 15th season, Langan looks to push his team to maintain the standard he has set since being promoted in 2012. With Charlotte still competing for another regular-season title, Langan has another chance to add to an ongoing legacy.

No matter what the future holds for Langan and Charlotte, his impact on the program goes far beyond victories, titles or awards. He's set a standard that future 49ers' teams will aspire to meet. As Langan guides Charlotte, his legacy isn't just something to look back on; it is something he continues to build.



Zoe Best



Da'Brya Clark



Charish Thompson



Key contributors to watch this season in Charlotte women's basketball

Jaylen Giles | Staff Writer

Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

With the departure of former players Princess Anderson, Tanajah Hayes and Asiana Nichols, UNC Charlotte women's basketball head coach Tomekia Reed has plenty of new faces to build around this season. Following a 14-18 record last season, the team tips off against the University of Richmond Spiders on Nov. 2 at Halton Arena. As rosters shuffle and players graduate and transfer, a few individuals stand out heading into the 2026-27 Charlotte women's basketball season.

Zoe Best

Junior guard Zoe Best returns to the 49ers after starting 31 of the 32 games last season, averaging 9.2 points per game on 33% from three. She also led the team last season with 59 three-pointers made. Last season, Best reached double figures 16 times for the 49ers. The 49ers hope Best will remain a key piece this season.

Da'Brya Clark

Senior guard Da'Brya Clark transferred from Norfolk State University after spending three seasons there. Last season she was

selected to the All-MEAC first team and defensive team. She also set the single-season three-point record at Norfolk State with 76 made and the single-game three-point record with nine made against South Carolina State University. Clark averaged 13.9 points per game last season and scored at least 10 points in 22 of the 32 games. She'll bring elite three-point shooting and experience to the 49ers this season.

Charish Thompson

Sophomore forward Charish Thompson transferred from Cal Poly University. Thompson made the Big West All-Freshman team last season. She was Cal Poly's second-leading scorer last season, averaging 14.2 points, which ranked No. 11 in the Big West. Thompson led Cal Poly in rebounding last season and scored double figures in 22 of 28 games. The 49ers are hopeful Thompson continues to be a force on the glass and provides efficient scoring this season.

Mariah Sain

Mariah Sain is a freshman guard from Muskegon, Mich. She arrives to Charlotte

with an impressive high school résumé. Sain was a McDonald's All-American nominee last season at Muskegon High School. Sain also led Muskegon High School to the school's first Michigan D1 High School State Championship. She scored a season-high of 34 points in the championship game; Sain averaged 21 points per game in her senior season and was a 1,000-point career scorer in high school. Charlotte hopes Sain's high school scoring production will translate to the college game in her freshman season.

McKenzie Graves

Sophomore guard McKenzie Graves battled injuries last season and only played two minutes during the season. The Durham, North Carolina native signed with Charlotte following her time with the N.C. Good Better Best Academy. Graves is the daughter of Charlotte women's basketball alum Nikki Richardson, who finished her career with over 1,100 points and top-10 finishes in steals and assists. Graves is also the sister of former Charlotte men's basketball guard Nik Graves, who played at Charlotte from 2022-25 before transferring to Creighton.

Tomekia Reed

Reed enters her third season as the Charlotte women's basketball head coach. The former Jackson State University coach doubled her number of conference wins from Year 1 to Year 2. During Reed's tenure, Charlotte has led the conference in rebound margin, a key component of Charlotte's 14-win season in 2025-26. Reed took medical leave in April because of a severe illness, but she has been cleared to return to coach the 49ers this season and will look to lead them to a successful year.

Preseason record prediction

Reed has an impressive résumé. After her first two seasons as the 49ers head coach, she'll look to get back to her winning ways. Charlotte improved on their win total from Year 1 to Year 2 under Reed, and you can probably expect the same in Year 3. Furthermore, the 49ers are looking for their first NCAA tournament appearance since 2022. With some key returners and new additions, the 49ers are in a good position to have their first .500 season under Reed.

Mariah Sain



McKenzie Graves



Tomekia Reed



Opinion: Writing centers are still important

Lauren Simendinger | Staff Writer

Harvard University shut down its writing program in July, closing its writing center and laying off its director. This marks a dangerous shift in higher education.

About writing centers

Writing centers are a campus resource where students and faculty can get help with both academic and creative writing. Writing center tutors work with everything from correcting grammar mistakes to helping students brainstorm ideas. But they are more than just resources — they are a community.

“I love the people who work here. I love seeing all the people getting to know [and] work with everyone,” Keven Leon, a fourth-year student, said.

Leon has worked at UNC Charlotte’s Writing Resources Center (WRC) since 2022. His freshman writing professor, who is a former Writing Resources Center tutor herself, encouraged him to apply. When he joined, he found not just a job, but a family.

Students like Leon come together to learn from each other. In the early days of the WRC, people assumed it was just English majors working with other English majors. However, that is not true. Anyone from any major or discipline can come in and learn about the writing process.

Both tutors and clients come from all sorts of backgrounds. While yes, many tutors and clients are in English and education, there are plenty of tutors with computer science backgrounds. Charlotte’s Writing Resources Center even partners with the William States Lee College of Engineering to help students with technical writing for their reports.

“A lot of clients are surprised to advance their literacy skills,” Leon said. “When they come here, I think a lot of them, especially undergraduates, are expecting help [with] ‘where to put my commas, where to put my periods.’ Then they leave here learning more about the global stuff, so learning about coherency, your tone — stuff that can’t be as simply taught by searching online.”

Writing centers in the age of AI

Chris Harrington, the senior tutor at Charlotte’s WRC, has seen a lot of things change in the center since she started in 1985. One recent change is students using AI to help them write, and even to do their writing for them.

“It can mean that they have this AI-generated paper that they want to sound like a human wrote it,” Harrington said. “Or they’ll use AI, but they don’t quite trust it enough

so they still feel like they need that human audience.”

It is clear that students are still getting used to combining AI and writing, but what does this mean for writing centers? Harvard felt it meant that they were a thing of the past. Harrington and Leon do not agree. In fact, Leon feels AI can be beneficial.

“In some ways, it is good, in that before, students would have this fear that if they come into the Writing Center with nothing, we will judge them for that, or they wouldn’t really get anything out of a session because they’re coming in with nothing,” Leon said. “Now these students, yes, are like, ‘Hey AI, write this out for me.’ Then they’ll come in and show that kind of writing. It gives them the courage to get through the door here.”

Harvard’s shutdown

In this sense, AI actually boosts the importance of writing centers. But can it sustain them? A key issue raised with the closure of the Harvard College Writing Center was that, while tutors would be consolidated into

the university’s Academic Resource Center, robbed of a formal office and a director to guide them, they would no longer be able to adequately support peers.

It also raises the question: is Harvard devaluing the importance of English and language arts skills? The university is known for being a hotbed of intellectualism. It has produced notable authors such as Helen Keller, the deaf and blind activist for people with disabilities, poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, and author and philosopher Henry David Thoreau.

These writers’ works have been taught in schools for years, guiding students in critical thinking and command of language. Writing gives people a voice. If it is no longer a worthy acquisition, then what is the point of learning at all? Why teach mathematics when calculators and AI can do it themselves?

Learning still matters

“It makes me feel really sad and disappointed,” Leon said about Harvard’s writing center shutting down. “We have the respon-

sibility to stand up to these obstacles that we face. Harvard [shutting down their writing center] sends a message to other universities that this is just an unimportant thing.”

UNC Charlotte’s Writing Resources Center just celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sept. 17, 2026. It has been lucky to receive support from Charlotte to ensure it can continue helping students and faculty. What happens if this changes?

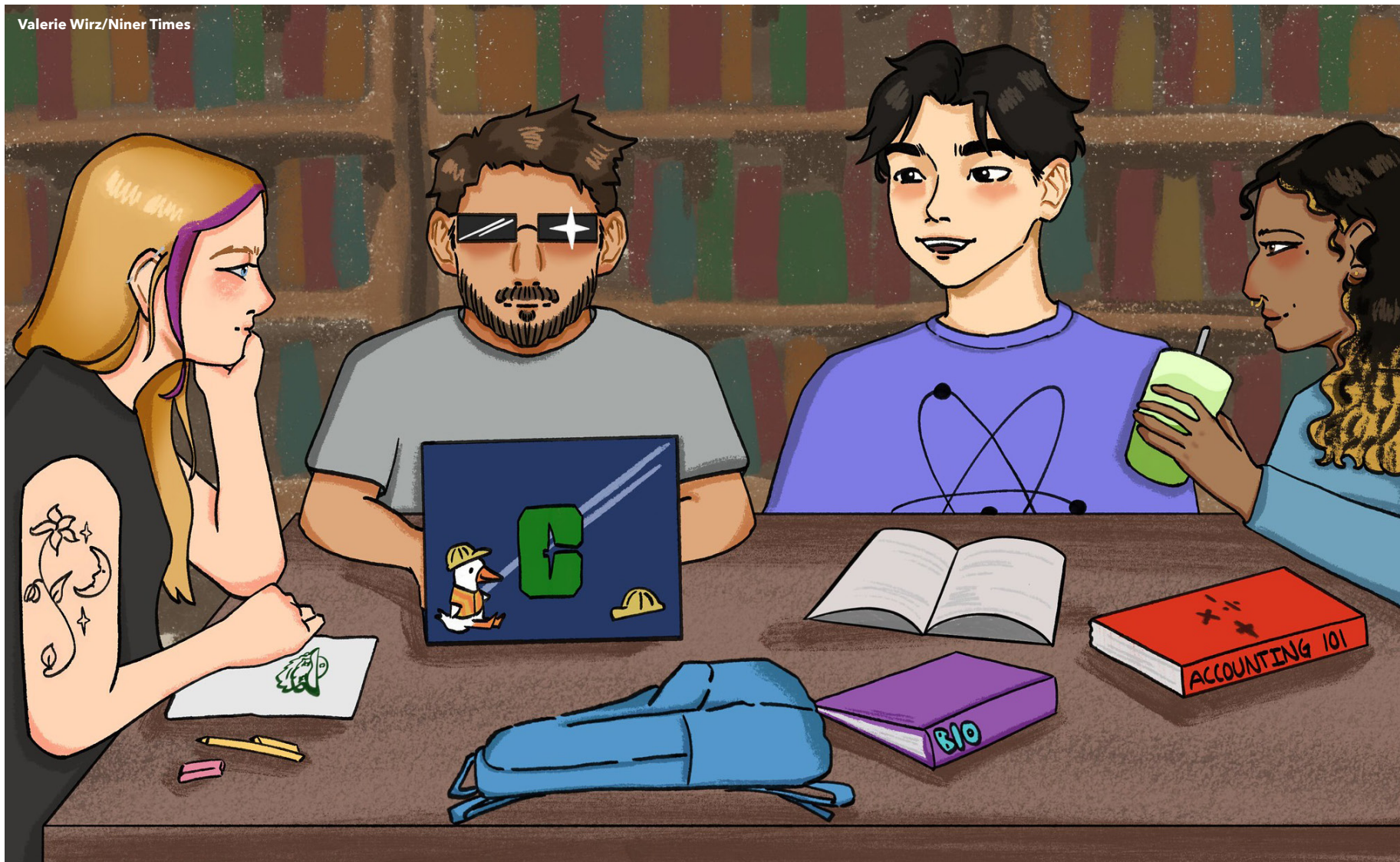
What if people stop coming in? What if we give everything over to robots? What do we have left?

Human beings are a unique species. Our brains are capable of more intelligence than any other animal on the planet. We think, reason and feel. We persevere. All of this is shaped by what we learn in our lives.

Writing centers are fundamental to helping people learn. Whether someone is trying to finish a paper, pass a class or write the next great American novel, when they step through the Writing Resources Center’s doors, they matter. That is perhaps the most important thing of all.



Ali Thiam/Niner Times Courtesy of UNC Charlotte



Opinion: Do not judge a book by its cover

Lindsay Hawkins | Staff Writer

With school back in session, it's time for dreaded icebreaker questions. Everyone just wants to make friends in their classes, but how do you do that? Most people probably fall back on the oldest trick in the book: "Does it look like we would get along?" The first week is full of judgment in the hopes of finding "your people." However, doing so may exclude people you could be great friends with.

As Sue Sylvester, a character in "Glee," said, "You see, that's the problem with your generation. You're obsessed with labels ... You know, there is only one person in this world who can tell you what you are?"

"Me?" replied a hopeful Kurt Hummel.

"No. Me. Sue Sylvester. And she hasn't quite made up her mind about you."

How many times have you decided who

someone is without consulting them? Whether it's their outfit, hair, makeup or a comment taken out of context, you have likely avoided interacting with someone based on preconceived notions. However, that only shows you are unwilling to give people a chance and decide for them, like Sue Sylvester.

Personally, I do not dress in a way that reflects my interests. I tend to lean toward very feminine, flowery attire. Despite this, I like rock music, nerdy topics and stereotypical pop music. When I've informed people in the past about my love for 90s grunge, I am almost always met with shock. No one expects someone dressed in pink from head to toe to like Alice In Chains.

I think my situation applies to many others.

Not everyone can dress perfectly aesthetic

every day. Some people choose to dress comfortably for class, some are more concerned about the weather, while others dress to the nines just because. In my case, when I am not dressed up, I feel like I miss the opportunity to meet people.

There have been many TikTok videos on this topic, practically stating, "I am not dressed cool enough to be perceived as cool by other people who have a similar aesthetic to me." This is pretty sad when you actually think about it. People assume they don't have a certain look and then avoid interaction simply because they preemptively judge themselves.

Another point is that people are multifaceted. There are people who fit into multiple subcultures but may not look like it. Many subcultures are based on interests and ide-

ology. For example, being goth is based on music and politics, and being sporty is associated with athletics and leisure. While certain fashion choices are associated with being goth, sporty or any other fashion archetype, you don't have to actually dress that way to be connected to a certain identity. Just because you don't have your "uniform" on does not mean you don't share the same interests, struggles or ideology as those who do dress up.

You never know who you will meet in college, so here is a challenge: Try sitting with a stranger. Talk to the person in front of you in the Starbucks line. Don't be afraid to make friends with someone who looks like they may not share your interests. You never know who will surprise you and become a meaningful connection.



Cait Hanson | Staff Illustrator

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