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YEAR IN REVIEW

NINER TIMES LOOKS BACK
ON THE BIGGEST NEWS OF
THE YEAR

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Collage of Niner Times print issue covers from
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Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics



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Niner Times 2022-23 Report

by Niner Times Editorial Board

Content

From Aug. 22, 2022 to April 30, 2023, the Niner Times has published 995 articles on our website (ninertimes.com) within our four sections. We have published photo galleries on our website and videos on Instagram.

The published article breaks down as follows:

- News: 152
- Opinion: 126
- Sports: 472
- Arts & Culture: 234
- Other: 11

The published media content breaks down as follows:

- Number of photo galleries: 60
- Number of videos: 23

This year, news has covered many events and student organizations at Charlotte. The section has been making strides to cover news for the city of Charlotte that still pertains to our campus audience. The biggest challenge for news in the fall semester was publishing enough articles. At the time, the news section had three writers, but the number rose with increased recruitment during winter break and the start of the spring semester. In the second half of the spring semester, news began working on investigative stories requiring further interviewing, reporting and surveying.

The Niner Times also began breaking/urgent news coverage this academic year. Upon hearing breaking news, members of the editorial board quickly produce, edit and publish articles to the website and social media. The first breaking news coverage was of the detainment of a Sikh student for a kirpan in the Student Union. Due to the severity of the topic, as well as it being the first breaking news coverage, it took six hours to write and finalize. The most recent breaking news coverage was the carjacking in Lot 8. The story was written and published in 20 minutes upon hearing the news.

The opinion section has continued to produce articles covering campus, local, national and societal issues. The Niner Times is pushing to cover more campus and Charlotte-related issues. Changes to article requirements have been made to require interviews and quotes for each story.

The sports section has been the most active section within the Niner Times, often producing over 20 articles a week. The sports section has written previews, recaps and takeaways of many

athletic games and matches. Feature articles on athletes and coaches have continued to be written. New within the sports section has been columns and coverage of city, state and national sports. More effort has been made to cover club sports at Charlotte. Sports writers have also attended athletics events on campus and in other states to ensure coverage of Charlotte athletics news.

The arts & culture section has seen the most change within the Niner Times as the section's focus has been adjusted. Most of the content produced in the fall semester was film and television reviews. As a publication, more arts coverage on campus and in Charlotte was necessary. In the spring semester, more articles relating to Charlotte's College of Arts + Architecture were published. For the next academic year, a push is being made to cover more cultural-based events. Reviews and coverage stories will also be more like features and focus on the big picture and its importance within our community.

Publication Staff

As of April 30, 2023, the Niner Times has 96 active staff members. Staff members of the Niner Times include members of the editorial board, writers, photographers, videographers, illustrators/designers and social media managers. Staff members can be in multiple sections and positions in the publication.

The staff breaks down into the sections as follows:

- Editors: 19
- News: 13
- Opinion: 16
- Sports: 21
- Arts & Culture: 16
- Copy: 3
- Photo: 15
- Video: 4
- Layout (Illustrators/Designers): 2
- Community (Social Media Managers): 4

This academic year, multiple new positions have been created at the Niner Times. These include illustrators/designers, social media managers and lead writers. These news positions have increased efficiency with content production.

Members of the publication have also won one organizational award and seven individual awards at the state level awarded by North

Carolina College Media Association.

The Niner Times will be further increasing recruitment efforts in the next academic year. This includes presenting within journalism classes and distributing flyers to writing, English, communications and design courses. The publication's primary focus with recruitment will be on photographers, videographers and illustrators/designers.

Partnerships and connections

This year the Niner Times has partnered with 12 student organizations to maintain equal communication and stay connected to a diverse set of missions. These partnered organizations include 49er Rocketry Club, Active Minds, Asian Student Association, Black Student Union, Charlotte Green Initiative, Disability Cultural Center Charlotte, Earth Club, Hispanic College Awareness Program, Native American Student Association, National Council of Negro Women Inc., Latinx Student Union and Spanish Club CEPA.

Each organization has agreed to collaborate with the Niner Times and provide any information that would benefit both the partnership and the student body.

The Niner Times staff and editorial board have prioritized connections and solidified our communication with campus departments such as Parking and Transportation Systems, Center for Counseling at Psychological Services, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and College of Arts + Architecture.

The Niner Times has pursued coverage of other student organizations outside a partnership, including but not limited to the Vietnamese Student Association, Iranian Student Organization, Speech Team and the Student Government Association.

By meeting with campus administrators, the Niner Times built steady connections with the chancellor's office, vice chancellor of student affairs and dean of students.

These organizations allowed the Niner Times to remain Charlotte's trusted source of information through our active communication. The efforts from our staff and these organizations allow the Niner Times to continue expanding our partnerships.

Outreach and engagement (social media and website)

The Niner Times has shifted to a "digital first" mentality this academic year. As a part of this

shift, we switched from printing weekly to bi-weekly. Instagram (@niner_times) was also a big focus for our publication outreach and engagement this academic year.

On Instagram, the Niner Times has gained 1,040 new followers from Aug. 22 to April 30. We started with 4,291 followers and now have 5,173 Instagram followers. Instagram also saw record accounts reached and engaged on Instagram, with 25.5k accounts reached in the spring semester alone.

The Niner Times website has also received increased pageviews and engagement. This academic year, ninertimes.com received 220,978 pageviews. In recent months, the website has averaged 35,000 pageviews each month. The pages on ninertimes.com with the most pageviews are:

1. ninertimes.com — 24,036 pageviews
2. "Why 'it is what it is' is a toxic saying" — 10,905 pageviews
3. "UNC Charlotte student found dead in an off-campus apartment" — 10,884 pageviews
4. "Opinion: The illusion of unlimited choices on dating apps" — 9,035 pageviews
5. ninertimes.com/sports — 5,781 pageviews
6. ninertimes.com/search — 3,795 pageviews
7. "Concord Mills shooting suspects arrested" — 3,589 pageviews
8. "Take a dip: Top five chicken nugget sauces" — 3,510 pageviews
9. "The Best Lyrics from Taylor Swift's 'Speak Now: Ten Years Later'" — 2,983 pageviews
10. ninertimes.com/news — 2,474 pageviews

The Niner Times website also saw updates to its design. The homepage has seen updates and published articles now include summaries. These changes were made to better user navigation and encourage engagement. New pages have also been added to the site, including the About Us and the permanent Day of Remembrance page.

Management

The Niner Times has also made significant strides to improve internal management and communication with the staff. These include:

- Created a Discord for centralized communication among all staff

Read more at ninertimes.com

Niner Times looks back on the biggest news of the year

by Niner Times Staff

UNC Charlotte experienced a lot of breaking and important news over the 2022-2023 school year. As the academic year comes to a close, the Niner Times reflects on the key events from the past year.

On-campus housing shortage

One hundred forty-one students were placed in expanded university housing at the beginning of the 2022 fall semester.

The student's temporary living arrangements were as follows: 91 students at The Edge apartments, 26 students at the Sonesta Select hotel and 24 at the Holiday Inn hotel, according to Buffie Stephens, director of issues management and media relations.

Sikh student's detainment for a kirpan

A Sikh student was detained by campus police on Thursday, Sept. 22, for wearing a kirpan in Popp Martin Student Union. The incident was brought to light through social media and the student's tweet the following day, containing a video of his interaction with the police.

After discussions with local and global Sikh communities to be more inclusive of Sikhism, Charlotte updated the weapons on campus policy to allow the possession of a kirpan on campus.

Man arrested in UNC Charlotte's Popp Martin Student Union for trespassing

Campus police arrested a man for trespassing in the Popp Martin Student Union on Oct. 20. The man, wearing pink boots and a pink vest, was charged with possession of drugs and intent to distribute, trespassing, resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer, according to a statement released by the Student Government Association.

The man arrested in the Student Union, Jordan Timothy Baker, was released on Oct. 21.

According to the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office website, Baker was charged with possession with intent to sell or deliver marijuana, assault inflicting serious injury on an officer, resisting public officer, second-degree trespassing and possession of marijuana paraphernalia.

UNC Charlotte fires football Head Coach Will Healy after 1-7 start

Charlotte fired football Head Coach Will Healy on Oct. 23. The firing followed a 34-15 homecoming game loss to Florida International University, which eliminated the 49ers from bowl contention.

On Nov. 15, Charlotte administration announced that the University of Michigan's Associate Head Coach Francis "Biff" Poggi would be the 49ers' third football head coach.

Anti-abortion group sets up graphic display in CHHS/COED plaza

An anti-abortion group known as the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) set up a graphic display comparing abortion to genocide in the College of Human Health and Services and College of Education plaza from Oct. 26 to Oct. 28. Student protests against GAP started forming around the display on its first day.

The Student Government Association and Charlotte administration later specified where outside groups may put up displays or protest. They are only allowed to be in Belk Plaza or West Quad and must be five feet from the curb.

UNC Charlotte student found dead in an off-campus apartment

The Charlotte Mecklenburg police department (CMPD) found fourth-year political science student Patrick Harding dead on Dec. 26 at approximately 4 a.m. in his apartment off campus.

The death was determined to be a suicide, according to the CMPD-released incident report. According to the Dec. 27 police log, campus police were called onto the scene.

Crown Commons renovation began April 1

UNC Charlotte's Dining Services is renovating Crown Commons and has temporarily relocated it to Upper Prospector.

The renovation is planned to make it a more open and bright area for students to eat and hang out. Renovated Crown Commons and Upper Prospector will reopen in fall 2023.

CATS bus drivers threaten to go on strike

On Jan. 7, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) bus drivers voted to go on strike.



Former Head Coach Will Healy | Photo by Chris Crews



Genocide Awareness Project's display | Photo by Jade Suszek

On Feb. 4, CATS bus drivers voted 204-11 in favor of an improved contract. The new improvements include significant wage increases, double-time for holidays, pension increase, raised night-time pay and the additional holiday of Juneteenth. These improvements averted the potential bus driver strike.

Charlotte protests police brutality following the death of Tyre Nichols

Dozens peacefully marched through Uptown Charlotte on Jan. 28, protesting police brutality following the death of Tyre Nichols.

The protest came a day after the release of the bodycam footage of Tyre Nichols' arrest on Jan. 7. Memphis Police (MPD) pulled Nichols over for an alleged traffic violation after taking pictures of a sunset in Memphis, Tenn. The confrontation was captured in a video where MPD beat Nichols for three minutes while screaming profanities. Nichols passed away on Jan. 10, after spending three days in the hospital.

UNC Charlotte's department chairs of Urban Youth and Communities Studies, Susan Harden and Shamaie Haynes, along with a few of their students, organized a Feb. 15 campus march to honor Tyre Nichols.

Food delivery robots arrive at UNC Charlotte

Autonomous robots were introduced as a food delivery option for students on the UNC Charlotte campus in early March.

Starship Technologies partnered with Charlotte via the catering company Chartwells on campus. Charlotte deployed 30 to 40 robots for on-campus food delivery.

UNC Charlotte student carjacked at gunpoint in Lot 5

A UNC Charlotte student reported a carjacking at gunpoint in Lot 5 on March 23.

The suspect in the carjacking at UNC Charlotte's Lot 5 was arrested on the evening of March 23.

According to the Mecklenburg County Jail, Williams was charged with possession of a stolen motor vehicle, possession of a firearm by a felon, felony possession of cocaine, possession of drug paraphernalia, carrying a concealed weapon, robbery with a dangerous weapon, possession of a firearm on educational property and misdemeanor larceny.

UNC Charlotte completes the April 30 remembrance memorial

After four years, the April 30 constellation garden memorial to commemorate the deaths of Ellis "Reed" Parlier and Riley Howell is

complete.

The \$2 million memorial was designed, installed and constructed by TEN X TEN, Hypersonic and Susan Hatchell Landscape Architecture.

The tubes, at the six points, are interactive with touchpads. People can touch the tubes,

and the memorial's lights will glow brighter. The more people interact with the structure, the brighter the lights glow.

The light animations will play 365 days a year from dusk until dawn. The animations will be different on April 30, Oct. 2 (Parlier's birthday) and Dec. 13 (Howell's birthday).



April 30 memorial in memory of Ellis "Reed" Parlier and Riley Howell | Photo by Jade Suszek

Survey shows UNC Charlotte student opinions on if classes will be helpful in future careers

by James Kmosko
Staff Writer

A survey conducted by the Niner Times in spring 2023 found that less than half of students surveyed believe their classes will be fully helpful to them in their future careers.

The survey included 56 UNC Charlotte students. Of the students surveyed, 42.86% said that their classes would be helpful to them in their future careers. However, 48.21% of surveyed students said that their classes would be only "somewhat" helpful and the remaining 8.93% of students said that their classes would not be helpful.

The same survey revealed that 64.29% of students surveyed attend Charlotte primarily to get a job. 75% of participants listed getting a job as their primary or one of several reasons for attending Charlotte. This leaves a disparity of 32.14% of students surveyed who attend

Charlotte to get jobs but feel that their classes may not aid them in their future careers.

Megan Schulte-hinnerichs is one of those students. A fourth-year psychology major, she not only believes that her classes will not help her in her future career but that she has learned nothing at all.

"I have been in college for three years," said Schulte-hinnerichs. "And I honestly can say I have not really learned anything other than how to take a test. And even then, I have failed to do that."

Many students surveyed believe that some of their coursework will aid them in their future careers, but some aspects of their classes will not be helpful.

"[My classes] help me refine some of my skills and teach me things I can improve on," said Ibukun Ajani, a fourth-year communications

major. "But some things aren't new, and some things aren't being taught. It's kind of half and half."

A large minority of students surveyed believe their classes will be helpful in their future careers.

"My main major classes right now are definitely helping me with what I want to do," said Tessa O'Connor, a fourth-year communications major.

"Communications, public relations, my campaigns class - that one's showing me how to run a campaign. I would not know that without these classes."

Grouping majors broadly into the categories of arts, science and business, arts majors were most likely to say that their classes would be helpful.

"I did come to college to get a job," said O'Connor. "I think it has helped me; I got a job. I talked about [my electives] when I was doing a job interview so they could see [my education] was well rounded."

Science majors were the second most likely to say that their classes would be helpful in their future careers. Business majors were the least likely to say so, with only 36.36% of respondents answering "yes." They were also the most likely to say their classes would not be helpful, with 9.09% of respondents answering "No."

"They're not [useful]," said first-year biochemical engineering major James Burgess. "We don't learn sh*t."

Only 8.93% of all students surveyed listed learning as their primary reason for attending college.

Sperm donation banks discriminate against gay and bisexual men

by Natalie Monson
Staff Writer

Gay and bisexual men are often turned away from sperm donation banks on discriminatory grounds.

Recently, the FDA ban against gay and bisexual men from donating blood has been under scrutiny in the media and restrictions are slowly lifting. But, unfortunately, the same cannot be said about a similar phenomenon to the blood donation ban: the sperm donation restriction.

This restriction keeps gay and bisexual men from donating sperm to banks anonymously. It has been in place since 2005. Similar to the blood donation ban, gay and bisexual men are rejected due to being considered at higher risk for HIV.

The concept that HIV is a “gay disease” is a false label because not all gay and bisexual men have HIV, as the ban seems to suggest. Additionally, those diagnosed with HIV are not exclusively gay and bisexual men.

Donation restrictions against gay and bisexual men contribute to harmful misconceptions, such as gay and bisexual men are dirty and dangerous.

Policies on sperm donation require donations to be quarantined for six months and tested for HIV before being released, minimizing the risk of transmission. Additionally, the HIV testing used on sperm donations is highly sensitive and accurate. The unique feature of this restriction is

that it is not a full-on ban like its blood donation counterpart; instead, it is an FDA guideline.

Despite not being mandatory, most sperm donation centers follow the guideline. In addition, donations are still accepted at certain LGBTQ+-friendly centers.

However, owners of LGBTQ+-friendly donation centers have been issued warnings through “Form 483” documents. These warnings act as a type of intimidation, as the agency tries to enforce a guideline as they would a regulation.

Despite increased discussion on bans against gay and bisexual men, there have been no actions taken by the FDA to lift the restrictions against sperm donations as there have been with blood donations.

Increased awareness has proven beneficial in making efforts toward loosening the restrictions on sperm donation. However, the issue reemerged in 2012 when the television show “Drop Dead Diva” featured a storyline revolving around the sperm donation ban.

The issue is back in public debate due to the blood-ban discussion and a recent Canadian court case that is gaining attention.

Hopefully, the FDA will lift the ban alongside the blood ban this upcoming year. If not, citizens must keep bringing awareness to the issue to prevent it from cycling in and out of the public discussion for another eighteen years.



Pride Flag in donation cup | Graphic by Denise Soriano

The clean-girl aesthetic damages the way we perceive beauty

by Ruhshona Soledjonova
Staff Writer

It must be addressed how the clean-girl aesthetic ignores the realities of self-image and the struggles of people of color.

The clean-girl aesthetic refers to minimal-effort makeup and slicked-back hair that has been popularized on TikTok but has also been implemented in the beauty industry for years.

This social trend is usually associated with rich, predominately white and thin girls. Not only does it discriminate against prevalent

insecurities that young girls on social media encounter, but it also highlights the idea that anything aside from the “clean” look is considered dirty.

UNC Charlotte fourth-year student, Mary McLaughlin, said that attaining perfect hair and skin without any blemishes is just unrealistic.

“If I did not wear makeup or concealer, I would not be considered clean because I have acne,” said McLaughlin.

Typically, influencers do not show the hours of work or money put into pulling off the clean-girl aesthetic. Filters and enhancements are used in the process, adding to toxic beauty standards.

The growth of social media has been proven to impact self-esteem and body image negatively. Although social media provides inspiration and creativity within the beauty industry, the clean-girl aesthetic reinforces stereotypical femininity and standards of desirability.

More importantly, it is concerning to see the extent of attention that white ‘clean girls’ get on social media platforms, mainly because it is yet another form of appropriation and erasure. For decades, Black and Latina women have worn the clean-girl aesthetic, but people of color seem to be labeled with negative connotations.

Generally, the entire idea of the clean-girl aesthetic is detrimental because it questions

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what differentiates people from clean or dirty. People of color are excluded by this trend because textured skin and hair are not included in this look.

There is also a trend featuring skinny girls of color with flawless textured hair and perfectly done eyebrows.

UNC Charlotte third-year student Daysha Evans recalled her experience on Black TikTok — a TikTok feature that allows users to view more content by Black creators — as harmful.

Overall, the clean-girl aesthetic is well-roundedly damaging to the perception of beauty and encourages young girls to engage with it. This is why taking accountability for the facade of being ‘perfect’ is crucial.

Beauty brands and modern television essentially promote achieving ‘youthfulness’ and a ‘perfect’ complexion. In reality, models shown for beauty products being sold wear more makeup than we think. Their appearance is also enhanced by lighting, retouching technology and editing.

Clean-girl aesthetic stimulates pretty privilege and diminishes the platforms of people with different body types, economic statuses and ethnicities. Diminishing the label of clean-girl aesthetic and nonconforming to harsh trends are ways to improve the awareness of realistic beauty.



Figure with and without makeup | Graphic by Kim Zan

Online coursework makes it harder to maintain a school-life balance

by Alaina Moran
Contributor

Online courses have become an option for college students all over the country. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when academic work was forced to move online, words like “synchronous” and “asynchronous” have become familiar to students of all ages.

Universities have begun offering more online courses and, in many cases, only offer an online option for some classes. This has increased the difficulty of separating academic work and students’ personal lives.

“Even after the pandemic, I have had multiple Zoom classes, and I felt like I had to constantly be ‘on,’” third-year student Libby Peterson said. “There was no break to detach from my laptop.”

Improvements in technology have made school accessible throughout all hours and days of the week. Universities have taken advantage of this accessibility by setting due dates over weekends. Working late at night and over the weekend is not an unfamiliar concept to anyone in college. However, working to make deadlines set for Saturday nights has not previously been an option for students.

The flexibility of online courses allows students a more personalized schedule, leaving time to work a job or internship, but that is often at the expense of being able to create a distinct boundary between school life and personal life. It can be difficult for many college students to

find a balance between work, school and study.

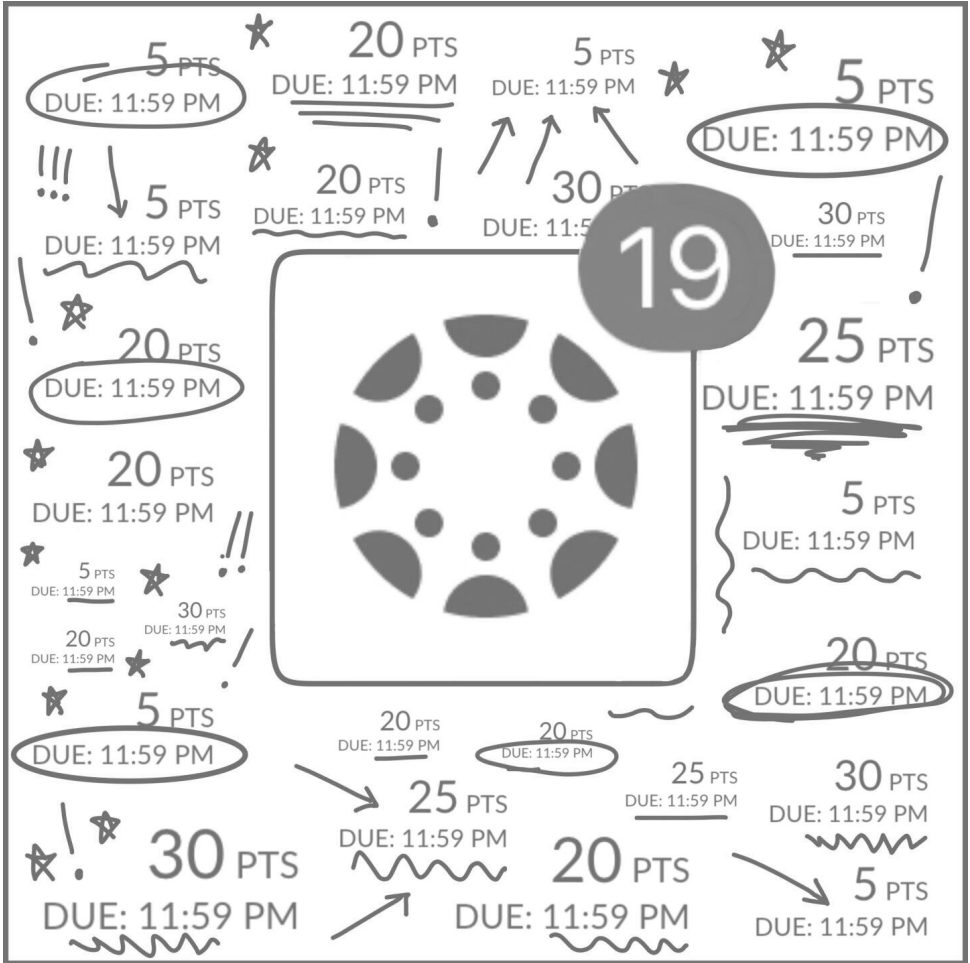
“I started going to the library and coffee shops on a routine schedule,” Peterson said. “The more I leave my room and set aside hours of time, the more balance I have.”

Achieving this equilibrium has only gotten more challenging with the constant accessibility of coursework. Many professors have similar concerns about teaching online courses, as online teaching encourages being available to students on any day or at any time.

Students are also pressured to constantly be available, especially when working on group assignments, making it even harder to maintain the boundary between home and school life.

In addition to the rise of online courses, working from home has become an option for many people in many professions. This is all the more reason to establish healthy boundaries between personal time and time spent being “plugged in” online.

Online courses have their benefits, such as allowing students to express self-discipline and creating a more flexible work environment. However, it is important to create and maintain healthy boundaries with academic work. Though the accessibility of online courses makes it difficult to balance school and leisure time, it is not impossible to achieve a healthy medium with a little bit of effort and some established boundaries.



Collage of Canvas due dates and assignments | Graphic by Lola Oliverio

Niner Times Grad



Jess Danesi

Jess Danesi is a communication studies major with a concentration in mass media and a minor in journalism. Danesi joined the Niner Times in August 2021 as a writer for the opinion section. She was then promoted to opinion editor in August 2022. Her favorite issue of the Niner Times was “Opinion: The tea about celebrity worship and the queen’s passing,” where her story made the cover.

I am graduating after three years in college, and they have been an eventful three years. I am grateful for everything that UNC Charlotte has taught me, especially for the experiences I have had at the Niner Times. I have been writing for the opinion section for two years now and have been the opinion editor for the last year. It has been some of the most rewarding time I have spent at this university and in my life. I appreciate all the friends I have made here and all the memories that I will cherish in the future. If you are just starting out, life at college can be overwhelming — but do not get discouraged! Joining the right communities can be the key to your success.



Jackson Martin

Jackson Martin is a writing, rhetoric & digital studies major and English minor. Martin joined the Niner Times in May 2022 as assistant copy editor. At the start of spring 2023, he transitioned to assistant news editor and continued to help with copy editing. His favorite issue of the Niner Times was “How Charlotte destroyed and revived the Brooklyn neighborhood,” where his story made the cover.

It’s sad to say goodbye to the Niner Times, but I am very proud of the work we did this year to improve the quality of the paper’s writing, content and aesthetics. The paper has served as a point of connection between the University and me. I have never felt more engaged with the campus, city and Niner Nation than the time I have spent working here. It has been an honor to help share that connection with the rest of my peers and classmates. Looking forward, I hope my predecessors passionately continue the work our team has put out this semester to provide quality coverage here at Charlotte. I hope they take what we have done and make it better.



Bryson Foster

Bryson Foster is a communication studies major with a concentration in mass media and a minor in journalism. Foster joined the Niner Times in November 2019 as a writer for the sports section. He was then promoted to assistant sports editor in June 2021 and then Sports Editor in May 2022. His favorite issue of the Niner Times was “Biff Poggi Talks Expectations for Upcoming Football Season,” where his story made the cover. Foster will be the summer 2023 editor-in-chief and will continue as a sports writer and an advising member of the editorial board in the fall while in graduate school.

The Niner Times has been such a huge part of my life for the last four years. At the paper, I have grown as a leader and writer. I have met some of my best friends and have been welcomed by a community. I discovered my passion for journalism at the paper and was able to grow while working on my career outside of college. I am forever grateful for meeting with all my sports writers on Thursdays and for all the discussions we’ve had about sports. Sundays at production nights are times where I had some of my fondest memories where laughs were shared and conversations were had. As my tenure as sports editor comes to an end, I am excited for my next chapter. I will be attending graduate school at Charlotte and, with it, will be moving into the editor-in-chief position in the summer. For the next two years, I will be an advisor for the paper and help the next generation of writers and editors. A big thank you to the Niner Times for all the memories and all the new ones I will make.

Miguel Sanchez-Nuñez

Miguel Sanchez-Nuñez is a psychology and communication studies double major with a concentration in public relations. Sanchez-Nuñez joined the Niner Times in fall 2022 as a videographer and photographer. He was then promoted to video editor in December 2022. His favorite issue of the Niner Times was “College of Arts + Architecture hosts Fall Dance Concert,” where his photo of the concert made the cover.

University life has blown past faster than I could’ve imagined. I love the career path I’m ending on, and the Niner Times has been an amazing place to take risks and dive into my childhood passions. The greatest advice imaginable to creatives out there is to just get started. Don’t worry about the “what ifs” and “buts” that come from perfectionism. Have fun making mistakes.

Graduating Staff



Zoya Zalevskiy

Zoya Zalevskiy is a political science major with a minor in journalism. Zalevskiy joined the Niner Times in August 2021 as assistant layout editor. They were then promoted to layout editor in December 2022. Their favorite issue of the Niner Times was "Satire: Our Guardian Angel," from 2021, featuring a goose with laser eyes on the cover that they designed.

The Niner Times has been one of the only constants in my life for the past two years I have been at UNC Charlotte. No matter what happened during the week, I knew I would come in on Sunday evenings and put together a paper I could be proud of. I have been able to do something I am passionate about and meet my best friends while doing it. I am so grateful to have been a part of this amazing team and to have met so many wonderful people. College is a time of uncertainty, but there is always a place for you somewhere. There is always a group out there that will support you both professionally and personally, and I hope everyone gets a chance to be a part of something as impactful and fulfilling as I have.



Dezanii Lewis

Dezanii Lewis is an English major with a concentration in creative writing and a minor in journalism. Lewis joined the Niner Times in June 2022 as a writer for arts & culture. She was then promoted to community editor in December 2022. Her favorite issues of the Niner Times were the voting guide and "Opinion: North Carolina must investigate Huntersville cancer clusters."

My college journey has been difficult for many reasons, but I'm thrilled to finally be able to see the finish line and look back at how far I've come. When I first started college, I was so fearful about having the capability to do pretty much anything. With the encouragement of various professors, I gained the confidence to join clubs and step outside of my comfort zone. Being part of the Niner Times has been an enriching experience that I will take with me after I graduate. If I could go back, I'd tell myself not to be afraid and don't let anyone ever say you can't achieve something. You'll never know how far you can go if you limit yourself before you've even begun.

Spring/Summer 2023 Graduates

Jessica Ceballos
Alex Finnerty
Josiah House
James Kmsko
Emily Kottak
Alina Madsourivong
Matthew Porto
Kameron Roach
Juwan Watson

Fall 2023 Graduates

Uma Chavali
Arin Garcia McCormack
Billy McGee
Annie Turk



Column: Grading the Carolina Panthers selections in the 2023 NFL Draft

by Josiah House
Staff Writer

On Thursday, April 27, the Carolina Panthers selected University of Alabama quarterback Bryce Young, the first selection of the entire NFL Draft and the first of five selections for the Panthers.

The coveted No. 1 overall pick in the NFL draft was scored in a blockbuster trade that sent multiple first and second-round picks to the Chicago Bears and star wide receiver D.J. Moore.

The Panthers used the newfound capital to draft Young, the first first-round quarterback drafted by the Panthers since Cam Newton in 2011.

The Panthers utilized their five other draft picks to select four players, packaging picks 93 and 132 to move up to pick 80 in the third round.

Round one: A+

In the first round, the Panthers selected the highly touted and egregiously productive quarterback Young, who took Alabama to a college national title game and won the Heisman trophy in 2021.

Young threw for 8,356 yards and 80 touchdowns in two years as a starter at Alabama. The successful quarterback fits the Panthers' most significant need, as the Panthers have had seven quarterbacks start in four years.

Round two: A

In the second round, the Panthers selected the University of Mississippi wide receiver Jonathan Mingo, a 6-foot-2, 220-pound workout warrior.

Mingo was not the most productive in college, but his intangibles are off the charts. Mingo ran a 4.46-second 40-yard dash at the NFL scouting combine.

The Panthers add a young offensive weapon to pair with their young quarterback. Mingo joins an expansive receiver room containing Adam Thielen, D.J. Chark, Terrace Marshall Jr. and Laviska Shenault.

Round three: C+

In the third round, the Panthers traded with the Pittsburgh Steelers to move from pick 93 to pick 80 to select University of Oregon defensive end, D.J. Johnson.

Johnson was a solid defensive end for the Ducks, collecting nine sacks in three years. Johnson also had a productive NFL Scouting Combine performance, recording a 4.49-second 40-yard dash time at 260 pounds and ranked fourth for all defensive ends in the bench press, racking 28 reps of 225 pounds.

However, according to the NFL Mock Draft Database, the 24-year-old Oregon Ducks prospect was projected to fall to the sixth round. Instead of letting Johnson fall to

them at 93, the Panthers got antsy and pulled the trigger on a trade heavily weighted in the Steelers' hands.

Round four: B

In the fourth round, the Panthers selected North Carolina State University (NC State) offensive guard Chandler Zavala, reuniting Zavala and former NC State offensive tackle and 2022 Panthers first-round pick Ikem Ekwonu.

Zavala was a two-time first-team all-Mountain East Conference player while attending Fairmont State University before transferring to NC State, where he was a first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference player in 2022.

Round five: B+

For the Panthers' final pick of the NFL Draft, they selected Florida State University safety Jammie Robinson.

Robinson is coming off two starting seasons for Florida State, where he recorded 183 combined tackles, 13 pass deflections, a sack, two forced fumbles and five interceptions.

Like Zavala, Robinson also has connections to a current Carolina Panthers player Jaycee Horn, as Robinson started his collegiate career at Horn's alma mater, the University of South Carolina.

Final grade: A-

The Panthers walk out of the 2023 NFL Draft with one franchise-altering player in Young, two future starters in Mingo and Robinson and two contributors with high upside in Johnson and Zavala.

The solid haul compliments the two previous team-building drafts Panther General Manager Scott Fitterer handled. Fitterer has scrounged up solid players and contributors in the 2021 and 2022 NFL Drafts and finally scored his first major splash in Young.

With a quarterback to operate the offense and a defense stocked to the brim with talent and physicality, the Panthers enter 2023 in a prime position to swing for the No. 1 spot in the NFC South division.



Bryce Young after being drafted to the Carolina Panthers | Courtesy of Fox News

CLT CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

RECENT GAMES APRIL 23 - APRIL 30

BASEBALL

April 23: Charlotte 2, UAB 0

April 25: Winthrop 5, Charlotte 2

April 28: WKU 8, Charlotte 4

April 29: WKU 5, Charlotte 3

April 30: WKU 14, Charlotte 10

SOFTBALL

April 26: Charlotte 3, UNC 2

April 28: Louisiana Tech 4, Charlotte 3

April 29: Charlotte 8, Louisiana Tech 1

April 30: Charlotte 3, Louisiana Tech 1

OVERALL STANDINGS

Baseball:

22-21, 12-8; No. 3 in the C-USA

Softball:

29-18, 14-6; No. 2 in the C-USA

UPCOMING GAMES

Baseball:

@ Coastal Carolina on Tuesday,
May 2 at 6 p.m.

Softball:

@ UNCG on Tuesday, May 2 at 6 p.m.

Top 10 moments from Charlotte Athletics' 2022-23 school year

by Joey Ellsworth
Asst. Sports Editor

With the 2022-23 school year coming to an end, the Niner Times sports staff looks back on the year with the top-ten moments from Charlotte Athletics.

The year was chock-full of notable performances and moments, a lot of which could not make the list, such as Riley Felts breaking the program record in the pole vault three weeks in a row, Charlotte football's record-breaking 56-23 win over Rice University during Pete Rossomando's interim head coach debut and more.

The Niner Times sports staff voted upon the year's top moments.

10. Ruxi Schech and Kaavya Sawhney earn historic doubles win

In Charlotte women's tennis' 4-0 victory over No. 75 Tulsa University, the duo of Schech and Sawhney earned one of two doubles victories for the 49ers with a 6-3 win, making them the program's all-time most-winningest doubles pair.

9. Robert Woodard and Ashley Chastain reach win No. 100 in the same week

On April 1, Head Coach Chastain earned win No. 100 as the softball team took down Western Kentucky University 11-0.

Five days later, on April 6, Charlotte baseball beat the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) in a high-scoring 12-10 game, giving Woodard his 100th win with the 49ers.

8. Lena Elkins throws a no-hitter in her second start

On Feb. 20, Charlotte freshman pitcher Elkins was named Conference USA (C-USA) Pitcher of the Week. Elkins threw a no-hitter performance leading the 49ers to a 1-0 win over St. John's University on Feb. 17.

Elkins' no-hitter marks Charlotte's 16th in program history. Elkins showcased her arm and earned the accomplishment in just the second game of her collegiate career.

7. Men's golf wins second-straight C-USA title, earning NCAA Berth

The 49ers men's golf team took a 3-2 victory over North Texas University in the semi-finals before earning a 3-2 win over the Louisiana

Tech University Bulldogs to take the title.

The C-USA title win marks the team's second straight, shutting out the UTSA Roadrunners 3-0 in the 2021-22 C-USA final.

The team earned an NCAA Championship Berth. The tournament will be held from May 15-17. The NCAA Selection Show will be live on the Golf Channel starting at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, May 3.

6. Charlotte baseball knocks off No. 4 South Carolina University at Truist Field

On March 21, the Charlotte baseball team beat the No. 4 South Carolina Gamecocks 6-2 at Truist Field, home of the Charlotte Knights.

The team played in front of an audience of 2,161 fans, the highest number they have had this year.

This marks just the fourth time in program history that the 49ers have beaten a top-five team. The highest-ranked team the 49ers beat was South Carolina in 2008, who was ranked No. 3.

5. Nick Scudder crowned individual cross country champion

On Nov. 12, 2022, the reigning men's Conference USA Individual Champion, Nick Scudder, became the first 49er in program history to take home the individual title at the NCAA Southeast Regionals, crossing the 10K finish line in 29:42.8.

Less than one month later, on Dec. 10, the league's head coaches voted Scudder one of two C-USA Cross Country Athletes of the Year.

4. Emani' Foster Records 1000th Career Kill as Coach Karen Weatherington earns win No. 100

On Nov. 4, Charlotte volleyball took down Florida International University (FIU) 3-2. This win marked Head Coach Weatherington's 100th win with Charlotte.

In the win over FIU, Foster earned 17 kills, marking over 1000 in her career. After three years with the 49ers, Foster totaled 1065 kills.

3. Brice Williams ends 2022 with two 31-point performances

While Charlotte students were on winter break, Williams was still working on the court,

wrapping up 2022 with back-to-back 31-point performances.

Williams shot 78% from the field in the two games and led the 49ers to victories over Middle Tennessee State University and Louisiana Tech University.

2. Charlotte cross country sweeps C-USA tournament, and Charlotte track and field wins both C-USA indoor championships

Charlotte's men's and women's cross country teams swept both conference championships at the 2022 Conference USA. This marks the women's first conference championships since 2017 and the first for the men since 2020.

The women were led by a full team effort as five runners finished in the top 10. The men were led by Scudder, who took home the individual championship.

The Charlotte track and field teams traveled to the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Birmingham Crossplex for the C-USA indoor

track and field championships from Feb. 18-19.

Charlotte secured their fourth consecutive men's indoor track and field championship, while the women's team claimed their first-ever indoor track and field championship victory.

1. Charlotte basketball wins the 2023 College Basketball Invitational (CBI) tournament

A number of big moments and performances came out of Charlotte men's basketball this year, but none were as significant as the squad taking first place in the CBI tournament.

On March 22, Head Coach Ron Sanchez and the Charlotte men's basketball team bested the Eastern Kentucky University Colonels 71-68 to be crowned the 2023 Discount Tire College Basketball Invitational champion in Daytona Beach, Fla., at the Ocean Center.



Charlotte guard Bryce Williams (3) | Photo by Chris Crews

Charlotte men's tennis senior Abhimanyu Vannemreddy talks legacy and next chapter in colligate career

by Kameron Roach
Staff Writer

The senior men's tennis player, Abhimanyu Vannemreddy, from Bangalore, India, earned Team MVP in the spring of 2022-23 after battling an injury in the fall.

Vannemreddy will graduate from Charlotte in May and use his remaining two years of eligibility at Brigham Young University. Vannemreddy will study Business Analytics at Brigham Young University.

Playing tennis at a prestigious university such as Brigham Young is an outstanding achievement for anyone, but especially for Vannemreddy, who, at a point in time, was unsure if he would return to play college tennis.

Early tennis roots

Like many athletes, Vannemreddy's sports career started long before he got to college.

"I started when I was about six and a half years old, and I played tournaments around the world. I think when I was about 14 or 15, I thought I should pursue college tennis in the future," said Vannemreddy.

Not long after realizing that he should play collegiate tennis, at age 17, Vannemreddy played at Roland Garros in the junior French Open, a tournament in which you must qualify.

Beginning his collegiate career

When choosing where to attend college, Vannemreddy had some deciding factors, but there was one that was most important. He said that he wanted to be a part of a program that was "growing," so he did not choose an already "established" program because he did not believe it was the right fit for him.

Vannemreddy started his collegiate career at Winthrop University, a school with a population of over 6000, in 2019.

While at Winthrop, Vannemreddy posted a 9-3 overall singles record at the No. 1 position. He earned Big South Player of the Week and Freshman of the Week for the weeks of Jan. 22 and Jan. 29, 2020. Vannemreddy's freshman season was also the last tennis season for Winthrop University.

Once the tennis program at Winthrop was

discontinued, Vannemreddy took a year off from tennis and was solely a student during that time.

Becoming a 49er

Vannemreddy went to Charlotte and began his career as a 49er in 2021.

"Not having played for a year, I knew I was going to face some challenges, which I did," said Vannemreddy.

In his debut season as a 49er, Vannemreddy went 6-4 in singles and 5-3 in doubles, adjusting following taking a year off. He split time at the No. 5 and No. 6 positions in the spring of that season, clinching match points against Coastal Carolina University, Liberty University and Rice University.

Due to injury, Vannemreddy only played in three matches for Charlotte during the 2022-23 season. However, his role during this current season has shifted.

Charlotte added five players, with three being first-years. The coaches have entrusted Vannemreddy to help lead this team through a season of adversity which says a lot about both Vannemreddy's character and his ability to lead as a senior.

"I hope I can maybe push some of my teammates to take up leadership roles in their own lives," said Vannemreddy.

When asked about his next two years at Brigham Young University, Vannemreddy said he is looking for another challenge.

"Moving to a completely different part of the country is also going to be a change," said Vannemreddy.

He is prepared to be pushed a lot athletically and academically, hoping to make a smooth transition into the Big 12 Conference.

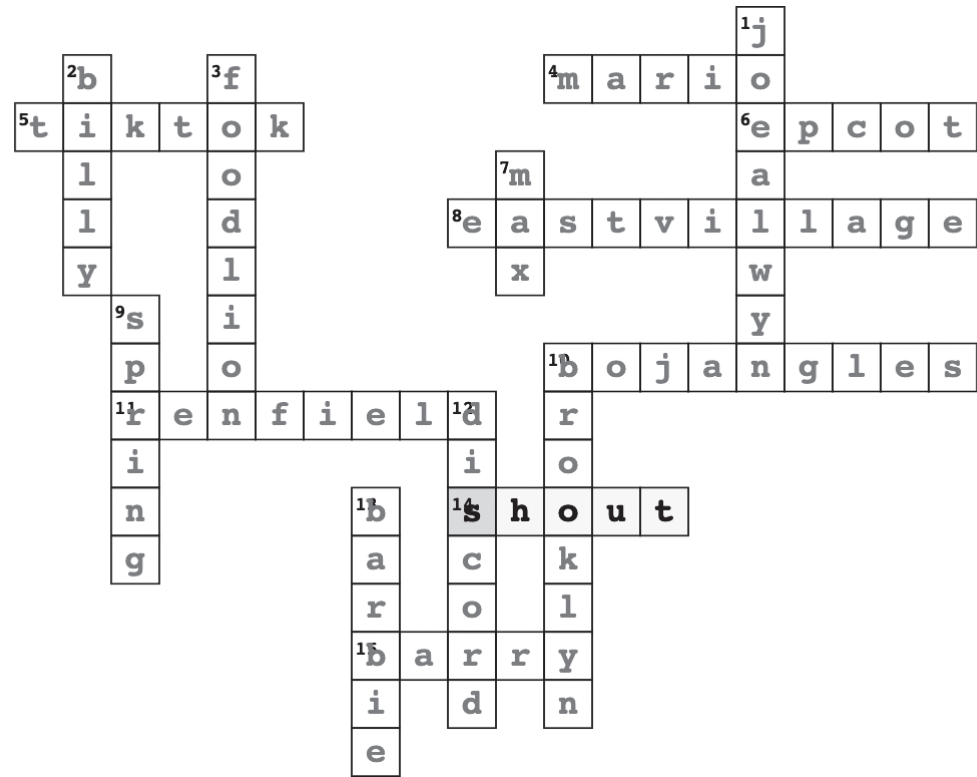
"[I hope to be] remembered as someone who was a nice guy and always wanted to keep growing," said Vannemreddy.

Currently, Vannemreddy has no plans to continue to play professionally after graduating from Brigham Young but also said, "never say never."



Charlotte men's tennis' Abhimanyu Vannemreddy | Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

4/4 ISSUE ANSWERS



6	1	4	2	7	8	9	3	5
8	9	2	3	5	4	7	6	1
7	5	3	9	6	1	2	4	8
5	4	1	6	2	7	8	9	3
9	2	6	8	4	3	5	1	7
3	8	7	5	1	9	6	2	4
2	3	9	1	8	5	4	7	6
1	7	5	4	9	6	3	8	2
4	6	8	7	3	2	1	5	9



Time for a change
Summer Haircuts
For \$\$Cash\$\$

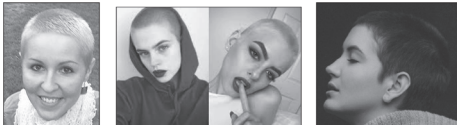
Females (respectively, Female-
Assigned-at-Birth) to be in a haircut
documentary about how hair
fashion has changed dramatically
over the last 5 years.

**Be willing to get a buzz-cut
or head-shave.**

Commissions paid for referrals.
You're paid based on how long your
hair is and how short you go.

**Send picture of your
current hair length.**

CutsCuts1994@gmail.com



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Restaurant review: Rockin' Rolls Sushi conveys a unique and delicious dining experience

by James Kmosko
Staff Writer

Rockin' Rolls Sushi offers a unique dining experience while serving quality food at reasonable prices. The restaurant is situated between Central Piedmont Community College and King's College in the quaint community of Elizabeth, a Charlotte neighborhood.

The inside of the restaurant is clean and sparsely decorated. The main feature of the dining area is the thin conveyor belt that runs between each row of tables, carrying sushi and other foods to eager customers.

I was seated at a table immediately, despite many other customers. Initially, I was not pleased with the \$17.99 price for the all-you-can-eat dinner, especially because drinks cost extra, but I quickly realized that the price was reasonable for the amount and the quality of the food provided.

Each table is complete with a tablet that allows customers to order appetizers and entrees directly from the kitchen, included in the price of the meal. I ordered the spring rolls and beef gyoza dumplings, both of which were delivered to me within 10 minutes by friendly and accommodating staff.

The spring rolls were unremarkable, but the dumplings were a superb combination of soft and crispy. The filling was savory and juicy,

serving as a perfect counterpoint to the dryness of the spring rolls and the soft moistness of the sushi rolls.

Sushi has never been one of my favorite foods, but the mesmerizing conveyor belt running alongside my table led me to sample nearly a dozen different types. Each sushi roll I tried was fresh and delicious, and the variety was enough to keep my palate entertained.

From the classic California Roll to the Crazy Monkey Roll, which contains deep-fried bananas, the freshness of the ingredients came through, giving nuance to the otherwise mild flavors that are typical of sushi.

My favorite was the Las Vegas Roll, fried crab and cream cheese drizzled with eel sauce and mayonnaise. Dipped in more complimentary eel sauce, the sweet and savory combination was a mouthwatering masterpiece. I found myself waiting in anticipation for the Las Vegas Rolls to pass again on the conveyor belt so I could have another taste.

Aside from sushi rolls, the belt carries a variety of other Japanese delights from the kitchen to the tables. The belt even provides cheesecake and tiramisu as dessert at no additional cost.

Though somewhat pricey, the unique experience of dining alongside a conveyor belt

of all-you-can-eat sushi combined with the quality and deliciousness of the food made for an excellent dining experience. Even as someone who typically does not like seafood,

Rockin' Rolls kept me eating long after I was full. I shall return.

Rating: 8/10



Rockin' Rolls Sushi | Photo by E. Alexander Zimmerman

Dear Niner Times: How do I stay productive during finals?

by Sofia Fuentes
Contributor

With the spring semester ending in the next few weeks, it can be tempting to think about the beautiful weather and exciting social events and steer clear of academic commitments. Phones, in particular, can cause distractions and procrastination. To combat excessive phone usage and focus on finals, here are some suggestions for avoiding common distractions during the final weeks.

Turn off notifications

Limit the number of app reminders shown on the screen. This setting can reduce the frequency with which you check and pick up your phone. Most smartphones now include a feature in their settings that allow all or selected notifications to be silenced.

Apps such as TikTok and Snapchat can be highly addictive because of their constant

notifications. While these apps are meant to entertain and connect people with their friends, they can also be time-consuming. According to a recent study, the average American checks their phone 159 times a day. Time is precious and it is crucial to honestly reflect on how much time we spend scrolling through social media and other apps.

Set the phone aside during meals

While watching a comfort show while eating might seem like a great idea to decompress, crossing two dopamine-inducing activities creates a stronger craving for entertainment during downtime. Setting the phone aside may help you be present and connect with others who may be sharing a meal with you. Eating while distracted can also confuse the brain, allowing one to miss or ignore their hunger cues and overeat. Multiple studies have shown that eating

while watching TV or scrolling through social media can create an unhealthy relationship with food. Being preoccupied while eating does not allow one to see what they are eating, how much is consumed, or even if one enjoyed their meal.

Give phone-free mornings a try

Many people prefer to check their phones first thing in the morning either to turn their alarm off, to scroll through notifications to get updated on anything they have missed while asleep or to wake up. However, using our phones first thing in the morning primes the brain to be distracted during the day. Some great ways to establish a "phone-free" morning routine include, journaling, meditating or exercising. Another tip is to leave your phone charging across the room; getting up and out of bed will ensure you are awake without scrolling on your phone.

Spend time outdoors

Spending time with nature is a simple way to get off the screen, be present and be more aware of oneself. Studies have shown that being with nature can improve one's mood and reduce stress and feelings of anger. Getting some sun can not only improve one's emotional well-being, but it can also improve sleep quality and boost immunity functions. Visiting the campus botanical gardens or walking around the Toby Creek Greenway are simple ways to enjoy the outdoors and decompress.

With the end of the term coming around, it is vital to use time wisely. Spending time outside, connecting with those around us and simply putting the phone away can make all the difference in one's mental and physical well-being. As daunting as it sounds, making changes can help you maximize your time.

Year-in-Review: College of Arts + Architecture

Faculty highlights the academic year

by Bethany Ivan
Arts & Culture Editor

UNC Charlotte's College of Arts + Architecture (CoAA) continuously strives to improve and showcase its students' work. Throughout the academic year, the college has put on different performances and exhibitions that display the dedication and hard work of the students, faculty and staff.

Meg Whalen, the director of communications and external relations for the CoAA, highlighted some of the performances and exhibitions that took place throughout the year:

'Beacon,' an exhibition by Morgan Kinne

Sculptor Morgan Kinne showcased her exhibition "Beacon" on March 16 in the Lambla Gallery. The work featured Kinne's concept of the structure around Charleston.

"That was just an exceptional exhibition of a wide range of works that were beautifully crafted," Whalen said. "Just lots of detail and artistic depth to the works across many different kinds of artworks all demonstrating ideas of home, housing and place in that South Carolina region. I just thought it was an unusually beautiful show."

'These Shining Lives'

Charlotte's Department of Theatre put on a play during the fall semester from Nov. 17-20, highlighting the true story of the Radium Girls, who were female factory workers exposed to the dangers of radium-based paint.

"It's always really powerful the way works of art can bring more emphasis to history and perhaps make us feel those stories strongly. So, really taking that sad story and making us empathize with and understand those characters, that's an important role that theater does," Whalen said.

'Sweat'

The Charlotte Department of Theatre Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Sweat" tells the story of a group of friends in Reading, Pa., highlighting economic hardships, immigration and race relations.

"It takes something that sort of esoteric, like international trade policy, and turns it into these very human stories about people's

lives," Whalen said.

The University Chorale

Whalen recognized the University Chorale and the conductor, Dr. Jason Dungee, for their performances throughout the academic year.

"Our University Chorale is always exhilarating to listen to. They are a beautiful ensemble, and [Dungee] put together some wonderful programs over the whole academic year that were performed here on campus and out in the community," she said.

"So, they went to local churches, sang uptown at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts and Culture, and had some fabulous performances."

CoAAPalooza

Whalen and David Brodeur, graphic design professor and program coordinator, highlighted the success of the second annual CoAAPalooza, which took place on March 30, following the Distinguished Alumni Awards, where each CoAA department recognized alums for their careers since graduating from Charlotte.

"They got to see all the things that different student organizations were doing in the college. Since the founding of the College of Arts + Architecture, it's really the first time I saw that kind of community and enthusiasm."

Looking forward

Whalen elaborated more on the new thematic project for next year, "New South, Global South."

"New South" refers to where we are in North Carolina. It is a historical term that arises from the turn of the 20th century, and it refers to a post-agricultural and post-Civil War South," Whalen said. "Charlotte has seen a lot of change over the last 100 years — There's been incredible growth in Charlotte and much more diversity."

Whalen expanded on the upcoming projects planned for the college surrounding this idea.

"There will be concerts in the spring, new music that reflects some of this thought and study. And there may be other theater pieces and other dance works. So that'll be interesting to see," she said.



The University Chorale performing at the Harvey B. Gantt Center | Photo by Miguel Sanchez-Nuñez



The "Beacon" exhibition displayed the work of sculptor Morgan Kinne | Photo by Delaney Nielsen

The Percantile and Creamery is an offbeat café where students can unwind

by Mudit Mehta
Contributor

With summer break around the corner and everyone getting through the last few weeks of school work, many students are looking for a place to relax or get work done with a serene ambiance. The Percantile and Creamery is a great place with good food and tastefully created seating.

Founded in 2017, the family-owned Percantile and Creamery is just a 13-minute drive from campus. The café serves coffee and some amazing delicacies like ice cream and cronuts, which are half croissant and half donut.

“Percantile” is a combination of “percolator” and “mercantile.” A percolator is an appliance for making coffee, and mercantile refers to the mercantile era of the 1920s when many new local businesses opened. The theme of this café is based on this era.

Sean Colas, the owner of the café, said, “We wanted to have a somewhat of a themed coffee shop when you walk in. It’s got that kind of modern but 1920s theme.”

This café offers plenty of seating options. They have welcoming couches with pillows and a couple of areas with barstool seating in addition to traditional tables and chairs. There

is artwork on the wall at the entrance created by local artist Napoletano.

The Percantile and Creamery used to have an original 1921 Ford Model T in working condition showcased inside. However, to open up more space, they let it go.

The Percantile offers a variety of coffee options, from traditional lattes, cappuccinos and americanos to more than seven types of flavored coffees. With the season change, their menu changes to feature season specials. For spring, they have a latte called “bee’s knees” that is just as unique as its name. It has three main flavors: vanilla, honey and lavender. It is served in hot and cold options, which are both worth trying.

The Percantile also serves different food items. Cronuts are a specialty at this café. Cronuts are so popular with customers that most days, they run out of stock by the afternoon. They also have a wide variety of pastries, with ten different brownies and many different muffins, bagels and truffles. Ice cream is another specialty of the café and comes in 12 flavors.

The staff at The Percantile and Creamery is always friendly and willing to serve and are an

essential part of the café’s experience.

“There’s a lot of good coffee out there, right? And I think there’s a lot of cute spaces,” Colas said. “We really hire not for experience; we hire people that care.”

Overall, The Percantile and Creamery is a café where one can sit and do some work or hang out with friends. The mercantile era ambiance makes it perfect for that. The quality of food and coffee is just the cherry on top.



The Percantile and Creamery | Photo courtesy of Sean Colas

Book review: ‘Misfit in Love’ is the right representation for Muslim youth

by Amna Noyal
Staff Writer

CW: This article contains mentions of sexual assault.

Misfit in Love” by S.K. Ali tells a compelling love story that accurately portrays the Muslim experience.

Janna’s brother, Muhammad, is getting married, she will see her mother again after being apart for the entire summer and Nuah, her love interest from the first book, will be visiting. As promising as it sounds, Janna’s summer of love will prove to be extremely crowded and brutally unpredictable.

As a Muslim myself, I have found that romance novels never truly encapsulate what it is like to be Muslim in love. Most novels gloss over it, while others misrepresent the real experience. However, with “Misfit in Love,” I was impressed by not only the romance but also how the taboo topics were handled such as sexual assault, racism and interracial couples.

Janna is a likable and interesting protagonist.

Despite having feelings for a boy, Janna refrains from making physical contact with him due to her Muslim faith. S.K. Ali incorporates this in a way that allows readers to see her emotions as well as how she deals with them. This is a difficulty that many Muslim women have in a non-Muslim, dating-centric society.

Ali has a remarkable ability to express the beauty and solidarity of the Muslim community. Janna and others can be seen praying together throughout the day and rising early to pray in many scenes. Janna’s behavior with boys is also influenced by her faith. She wears a hijab to hide her hair. She swims in a burkini. She does not interact physically with boys.

Islam’s other principles are also discussed through dialogue between Janna and the characters, including the significance of loving one’s neighbor and the necessity of protecting the environment. These and other aspects of Islam are shown throughout the novel, and I

admire how Ali does not shy away from these beauties.

The book also does not shy away from topics such as racism and sexual assault. In the book, Janna gets assaulted by a family friend who is respected in her community. The book shows her struggles in coming to terms with the assault and how others help and support her. This is refreshing to see, as many other Muslims treat these as taboo topics that should be kept in the dark. The discussion of these topics helps other Muslim readers feel comfortable with the idea of communication in the community.

Racism is also explored when Janna’s father makes remarks about her love interest, Nuah, who is an African-American Muslim. Janna resents her father and confronts him about it. Islam’s principles tell Muslims not to judge based on looks but on what lies beneath one’s skin, and Ali did a great job explaining this to the readers. The book shows the clear colorism and racism

that is prevalent in the community and shows how no matter what Janna’s background is, her love for Nuah is continuously visible throughout the story.

Watching Janna explore love in unexpected ways made me smile, cringe, laugh and cry. Janna is mostly thinking about romantic love as she gets ready for her brother’s wedding, but there are many kinds of love in this book. For Janna, the love road is winding and is often inconvenient and painful. Yet, even though there is romantic turmoil, Janna has loving people she can rely on and opportunities to reach out and show love to others.

Fans of “Saints and Misfits” will want to pick up its heartwarming sequel “Misfit in Love.” While Janna experiences challenging times, she also experiences plenty of laughter, love and joy. Even if you are not Muslim, I highly suggest reading this book.

Rating: 9/10