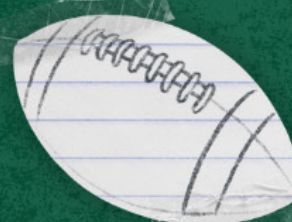
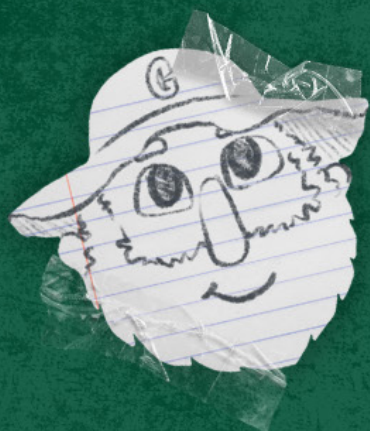


WELCOME BACK 2025

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

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

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EVENTS TO WATCH FOR ON AND OFF CAMPUS

New Student Welcome & Chancellor Cookout
Aug. 17, 3-6:30 P.M.
Halton Arena

Upper Prospector Grand Reopening
Aug. 20, 11 A.M.-9 P.M.
Prospector building

Back to School Bash
Aug. 25, 6-8 P.M.
Harris Alumni Center

Career Center Art Gallery Opening Reception
Aug. 18, 11 A.M.-1 P.M.
Atkins Annex 150

Movie Night at Jerry Richardson Stadium
Aug. 23, 6:30-11 P.M.
Jerry Richardson Stadium

Duke's Mayo Kickoff Classic (Football vs Appalachian State)
Aug. 29, 7-10 P.M.
Bank of America Stadium

Notes from the newsroom:

IT'S TIME TO KNOW YOUR WORTH

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief



Know your worth. I could sit here and write out some beautifully inspiring words about how everyone needs to find a more profound meaning of life and how self-worth should be put above all, but I am just going to keep it real. You do not owe anyone anything.

Now, that might sound like this is just a stuck-up attitude, but it is the truth. You may have had an internship this summer, and it did not go so well because your boss treated you differently from everyone else.

Okay, take that experience and learn from it. Realize that it may not be the place for you, and that is okay. Some people do not deserve to have a young, hardworking, independent individual in an office space with no work culture. Now, just because your first experience in the workforce, sports team, dance squad, art class, etc., did not go exactly as you envisioned it on the drive there, does not mean that it justified you feeling bad about yourself. Know your worth.

With an applicant pool of 20-250, being selected says a great deal. As members of the ever-so 'amateur' Gen-Z, I urge you not to let whatever previous notions employers, advisors, or really, whoever, may have about you. As you walk onto campus this fall, walk with your head up high and ready to take on whatever challenge may come your way. Remember that you are greater than what someone may think about you, and that self-confidence is your greatest secret weapon.

WELCOME BACK 2025 | 3



Letter from the editor:

TALK TO STRANGERS

Davis Cuffe | Editor-In-Chief



You can undeniably hear the mix of nerves and excitement in the air on the first day of school.

Sometimes, split by the pop of a well-timed clap is the whirl of voices sharing summer memories or icebreakers amongst the unfamiliar.

For many, it's the only day they'll be early for class, taking five to 15 minutes off their morning routine to crowd hallways outside classrooms. In those minutes waiting for the doors to the class to swing open, some will chat with the stranger next to them, and others put their heads so far in their phones that the angle of their necks dips below 90 degrees.

For me, the first day and almost every day in class after is solitary. My mom has ragged on me enough about my posture to prevent my neck from getting too angled, but I compensate by shoving my earbuds so deep in my ears I can almost hear the plastic.

This year will be different (it probably won't), but I encourage all of you to take my social history as a cautionary tale.

Luckily, with the Niner Times, I've gotten the chance to talk to professors, student leaders, student athletes, administrators and everyone in between. Every time, it's a pleasure; those conversations make my job rewarding.

There are so many cool, interesting people on campus that would be happy to talk to you if you just say 'hello'.

If you need more facilitation for those conversations, consider joining a club, maybe even the Niner Times.

If talking to me isn't enough incentive for you to join the Niner Times, how about cash?

Unlike most clubs, you can get paid for your participation at the Niner Times. This isn't a clock-in, clock-out thing either; for every photo, article, video or whatever you create and publish with us, you get paid.

If you're into media as a career, hobby or just a way to meet peo-

ple, the Niner Times is perfect for you. You can build your resume and portfolio as a podcast host, writer, photographer, videographer, editor or designer working with one of the top student publications in the state.

Last year at the state college media awards, the Niner Times took home 11 awards, third only to NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill. Cool stuff.

Arguably even cooler are the 400 or so clubs and student organizations on campus. While my attendance rates have been shoddy at best, I was a member of the birding, sports analytics and Pokémon Go clubs, among a few others that I'm forgetting but love all the same. All connected me with some fun people that I wouldn't have met otherwise.

The upcoming academic year marks my last year as editor-in-chief, meaning this is my last letter from the editor written specifically for a summer guide edition.

In these letters, I've handed out hair-raising advice, telling people to maximize opportunity, follow their passion and other rather wishy-washy sentiments where I tell you to do things I've done.

This year, as I prepare to be dragged out of the editor-in-chief position, I want to leave you all with advice that will help you avoid having the same regrets I have.

Talk to people! While it's more comfortable to hold your peace at the onset of the academic year, I do wish I had contributed to the first-day buzz.

So on the first day, speak up, talk to the stranger next to you as you awkwardly await your class's start. Make some conversation with a professor after class. Talk to me if you see me; my picture should be somewhere on this page for reference. Tell me what stories you'd like to see in the Niner Times.

Charlotte is genuinely pretty great if you connect with your fellow 49ers.

Talk to people, even when it feels awkward. It's the conversations you don't have that you'll end up regretting.

DAVIS CUFFE
Editor-In-Chief

Letter from 2025-2026 student body

PRESIDENT AND VP

Welcome back to Charlotte! Whether you're a first-year student just beginning your 49er journey or a returning student continuing to build your legacy here, we're excited to start this year with you.

This year, our focus as a campus community is clear: connection and engagement. College is more than just lectures and assignments; it's about the people you meet, the relationships you build and the ways you get involved. UNC Charlotte and the Student Government Association (SGA) are working together to make sure every student has opportunities to connect, find their place and make an impact.

SGA is expanding outreach this year, from campus events that bring students together to grant funding that helps your organizations grow. We're working closely with University leadership to build a stronger, more inclusive campus culture, one where students aren't just attendees, but active participants in shaping campus life. Whether it's through joining a club, attending events, running for office or sharing your ideas, we want every student to feel that they belong and that their voice matters.

We encourage you to take that step and get involved: visit the student organization fairs, cheer on our teams, meet with SGA or explore the hundreds of student groups that match every interest and passion. Every time you show up, you're not just enriching your own experience; you're helping build a more vibrant, connected Niner community.

If you have ideas, concerns or a vision for how to make our campus stronger, reach out to us! We're here to listen, advocate and work alongside you to make UNC Charlotte the most engaging, inclusive and exciting campus it can be.

Let's make this year about more than just being students; let's make it about being a community. Together, we can make this our most connected year yet.

Welcome back, Niners. Let's get to it.

ISAIAH GRAYSON

Student Body President

MADISON BROWN

Student Body Vice President



Courtesy of Isaiah Grayson

Letter to the editor:

WELCOME TO UNC CHARLOTTE



Ivory Galloway/Niner Times

Dear Niners,

I couldn't be more excited to welcome you to what promises to be an incredible year at UNC Charlotte.

First, let's celebrate something truly remarkable—we've officially earned Carnegie R1 status, joining the ranks of the nation's most prestigious research universities. This means you're now part of an elite community where groundbreaking discoveries happen daily, where your professors are pushing the boundaries of knowledge and where YOU have unprecedented opportunities to dive into research that could change the world.

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

Here's another thing to know about our University: our well-being initiatives connect you to resources you need to thrive—not just academically, but emotionally, physically and socially. From general healthcare to counseling services to wellness programs, we've got your back every step of the way.

Speaking of connection, did you know we have over 450 student organizations on campus?

Whether you're passionate about student government, fraternity and sorority life, esports, performing arts or community service, there's a group of like-minded Niners waiting to welcome you. These are more than just organizations—they're your future best friends, your professional network and your home away from home.

This year, I hope you take advantage of everything UNC Charlotte has to offer.

Join that organization that intrigues you. Attend that research symposium. Strike up a conversation with someone new in the dining hall.

I can't wait to see you in your Niner green on #WearGreen-Wednesdays! Let's cheer on the Charlotte 49ers against Appalachian State (Aug. 29), UNC-CH (Sept. 6) and especially during Niner Nation Homecoming Week's matchup against Temple (Oct. 18).

This is my ninth year as your Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and supporting you is the heart of why I do this work. My role is to champion the resources, services and opportunities that help you thrive both in and out of the classroom, and to help build a campus community where you truly feel you belong. You are the most important part of Niner Nation, and we want you to know that. We are here to support your success—so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Your college experience is what you make of it, and I hope you make it absolutely extraordinary.

Go Niners!

KEVIN W. BAILEY, PH.D.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

CHARLOTTE WELCOMES NEW CAMPUS ADDITIONS:

New eateries, academic programs and student

Giselle Jimenez Del-Carmen | Staff Writer

With a new academic year comes new opportunities on campus, ranging from new programs to new clubs.

The following are some new programs, dining options and clubs or organizations joining Charlotte's campus community starting this 2025–2026 academic year.

New on-campus dining options

Prospector is one of the four food courts on campus that closed down in the fall of 2024 for renovations. These renovations took place for the addition of new dining options to the upper level of Prospector. These include The Oasis, The Halal Shack and Qdoba. Panda Express will be moving from the Cone Center with these new options.

The Oasis is a new bar-style restaurant that offers a wide range of foods and drinks. These foods can include sushi, sandwiches and ice cream. Drinks ranging from floats to mocktails and coffee are available as well. With a wide range of foods and beverages on the menu, there is something for everyone, whether they want a quick lunch or a sweet treat.

The Halal Shack is an option serving Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisine. It serves a variety of vegan and vegetarian options, as well as healthy options for students seeking foods outside these diets. This eatery will serve salads,

bowls and wraps, per the announcement from Auxiliary Services. Mrinali Rao, director of Marketing of Chartwells at UNC Charlotte, says the new halal-friendly meals aim to meet diverse student needs.

The last new addition will be Qdoba, which is an option serving Mexican-inspired cuisine. Apart from having a menu to choose from, they offer the option to customize bowls and burritos to customers' preferences.

Latest in academics

Charlotte students now have an even broader horizon when it comes to academic fields as the University recently introduced a variety of new major programs, including concentrations.

One of the new majors will be a B.S. in Sports Analytics under both the School of Data Science and the College of Health and Human Services. This collaboration, in which the latter co-administers, aims to provide students with the knowledge to understand and analyze data in sports. It involves courses in physiology and data science, which are combined into a single field.

Another new major is a B.A. in Theatre under the College of Arts and Architecture. Housed under the Department of Theatre, there are several concentrations, including performance, directing/tech and dramatic writing.

Apart from majors, there are new concentra-

tions for established major programs. This provides students who seek specific concentrations beyond a broad major with a wide variety of options across many departments.

The Philosophy Department will have a Pre-Law concentration for students interested in the pre-law path.

Architecture has three new concentrations: Practice, Architectural Studies and Pre-Professional. Global Studies has a Cultural Studies concentration.

Mechanical Engineering has also introduced its Aerospace Engineering concentration.

Music will have a Contemporary Practices and Cultural Rhetoric concentration.

New student organizations

This school year, campus will be greeted with several new clubs and organizations. Here are the clubs to watch out for:

Brothers in Medicine, or BiM, is an organization focused on students who are aspiring to pursue careers in the medical field. "We foster professional growth through engaging workshops, impactful community service, meaningful volunteering and active campus involvement," said Palmer Everett, the president of the club. "These opportunities cultivate essential skills vital for future healthcare professionals."

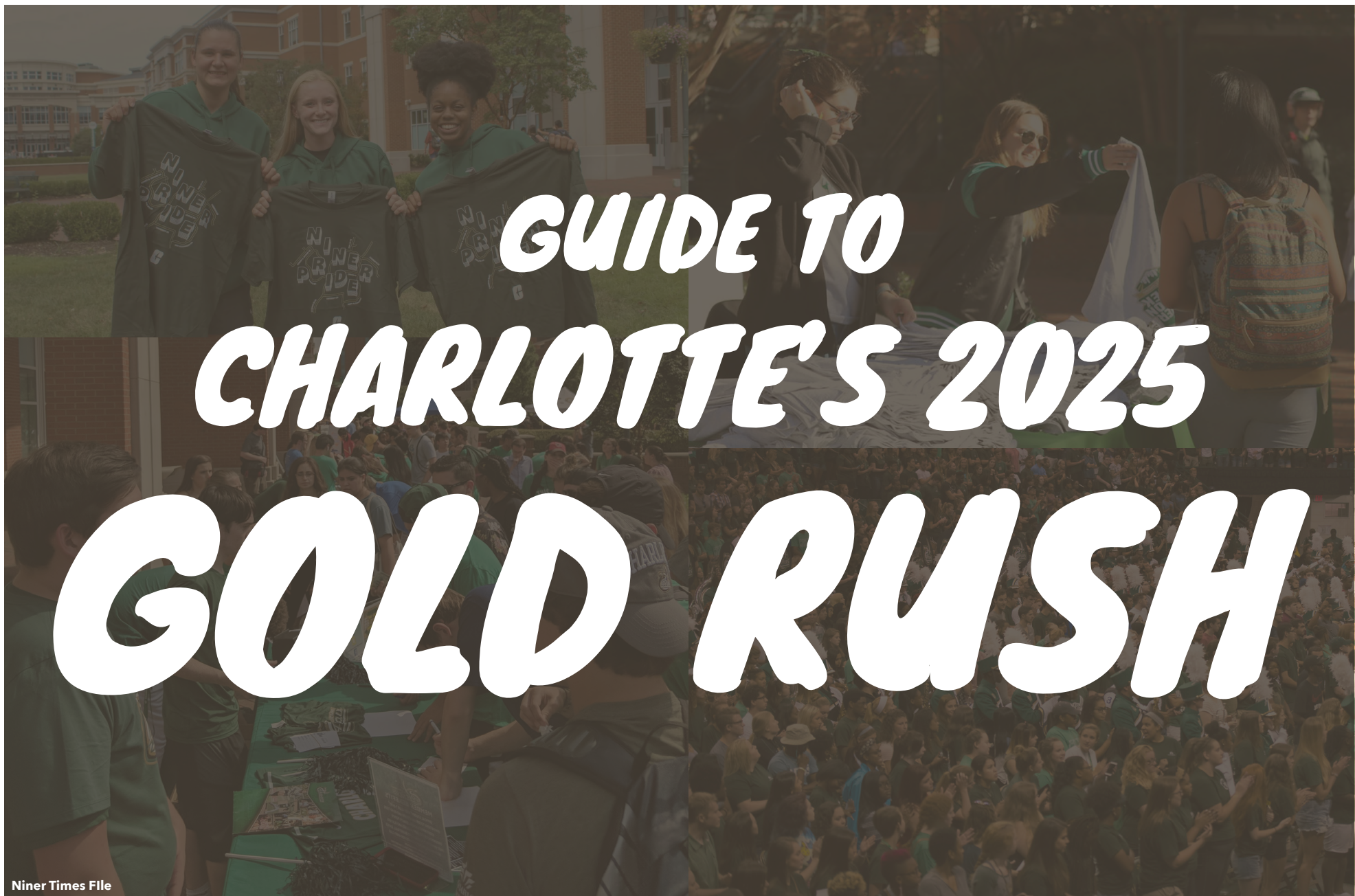
On the opposite end of the medical field, there is a club centered around law for those interested in the legal field. This club is the Undergraduate Law Review at Charlotte (ULRC). This law review aims to publish fall and spring editions full of long, professional articles surrounding the legal field. It allows non-members of the club to submit articles for a chance to be included in the editions, as it also consists of those who are not students at Charlotte.

For students interested in giving back to the community with a passion for volunteering, The Greater Good is a club centered around community service. Established on campus on Feb. 1, the club aims to serve marginalized communities, including minorities, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities. Students involved in The Greater Good will find themselves serving the community by serving meals and care packages.

Students interested in computer science and passionate about coding will find Coding Camp Plus to be a club built upon the importance of computer science. This club travels to schools in the surrounding areas of Charlotte to hold workshops for students in grades K-12, to leave a lasting impression about the importance of coding.

Additionally, the club holds bake sales to fund various purposes, including travel, as well as donations to schools and charities, to further the quality of computer science education.





Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

Taking place during the first week of classes, one of the most anticipated weeks of the school year, Gold Rush introduces newcomers to campus life with a packed schedule of events that highlight the spirit, diversity and opportunities at Charlotte. From cookouts to resource fairs, there will be plenty to do during Gold Rush.

Gold Rush is designed to help you feel right at home from day one. It is your first chance to meet fellow Niners, connect with student organizations and experience the pride and traditions that make UNC Charlotte such a dynamic community.

The 2025 Gold Rush runs Aug. 14-28. Classes begin Aug. 18, so students have the opportunity to enjoy Gold Rush activities before, after or in between classes. The following are some of the top events and activities throughout the week.

Aug. 14 - Plaza Party

Located at the North Main Quad Plaza across from the Rowe building, kicking off Gold Rush is the plaza party from 8 a.m. to noon. Hosted by the Career Center, the plaza party will feature food, music from a live DJ, carnival games, prizes and opportunities to connect with campus departments and employers.

Aug. 17 - New student welcome and Chancellor cookout

Held at the Barnhardt Student Activity Center, Halton Arena, the new student welcome and cookout will provide students with an opportunity to learn about campus traditions and meet University leaders.

Attendees can enjoy performances by the Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band, followed by a free outdoor cookout and multiple activities, including RecFest and 49er Frenzy.

Aug. 21 - First-Gen Meet, Greet and Eat

UNC Charlotte's First-Gen Niners are invited to a special meet and greet in the Cone Center's Lucas Room from 2-3 p.m. Designed to foster connection and belonging, the event aims to give first-generation students a chance to meet peers, share experiences and build a supportive community. Free food and casual games will also be provided at the event.

Aug. 25 - Back to School Bash

Hosted by the Future Alumni Network, from 6-8 p.m. at the Harris Alumni Center, students can kick back and relax at the annual Back to School Bash. Free food trucks, lawn games and Charlotte merchandise will be available for students who attend.

Aug. 27 - Gold Rush Resource Fair

The Gold Rush Resource Fair returns from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the CHHS/COED Plaza, offering students a one-stop shop for campus resources. Over 20 departments and offices will be on hand to answer questions and distribute information about student support services, academic tools and wellness initiatives. The fair aims to boost student engagement and awareness of the resources available to them throughout the academic year.

Aug. 29 - College Colors Day

The campus community is invited to wear Charlotte green to celebrate College Colors Day from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Barnes & Noble bookstore inside the Popp-Martin Student Union. Games and giveaways will take place during the event, and free food will also be available.



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UNC Charlotte's SGA has plans for this year: *WHAT ARE THEY?*

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

Courtesy of Emily Hoyle, Madison Brown, Ja'Mia Degree, Isaiah Grayson & Amarielle Oliver

The 2025-2026 academic year marks the beginning of the 62nd assembly of UNC Charlotte's Student Government Association (SGA). While there are new faces for class presidents, this is the second consecutive year with Isaiah Grayson as Charlotte's student body president.

While Grayson ran unopposed during the spring 2025 election alongside Madison Brown, many students on campus wonder what plans and goals the SGA has, especially how they aim to improve.

During the March 2025 SGA election debate, every candidate on stage emphasized the importance of connecting more closely with the student body. And this upcoming school year may be the year they achieve that goal through the plans they have in place.

Connecting with the student body

Across the board, class presidents and student body leaders say they want to focus on outward events that bring the Charlotte student body together as a whole.

Tabling, attending student organization events and hosting social events are all on the to-do list for this fall.

"I feel like at UNC Charlotte, there's somewhat of a culture that needs to be formed within students, and more engagement amongst students. I feel like it's very much just students to themselves," said Brown. "And I feel like if we have more activities or events that bring the student body together, maybe we could break some of that."

Brown also highlighted that these types of events would not only act as a bridge to forming a better bond between students

and the SGA but also as a form of networking.

With an operational budget of only \$13,000 to host events, SGA has had to be both strategic and creative in the event ideas it brings to life.

Lined up already, SGA will be bringing back the Sustainability Summit and hoping to double the attendance compared to last year's summit. They also plan to host a Safety and Security tour on campus, as well as a second "Anything That Rolls" event, which was a success in the spring, according to Grayson.

In addition to strengthening their connection with the student body, Brown shared that as vice president, one of her goals is to enhance SGA operations, as this will reflect not only on their overall performance but also on what the student population will see.

"Making sure that Senators know how to do what they're supposed to be doing is important. We will want to do more training and communication to make sure we have a strong internal structure," said Brown.

Grayson noted that current members of the 2025-2026 SGA senate have already demonstrated interest in enhancing the quality of their involvement with events and students.

"I think we're starting to see a little bit more of a momentum in that sense," said Grayson. "But, being present with student orgs and trying to put ourselves out there and engaging through the brand new press team that we created at the end of the year, so we have better outreach. That's how we can improve ourselves, and also listen to the feedback the students give us."

On a class-by-class level, each president has a different focus point for the upcoming year. For senior class president and fourth-year student Emily Hoyle, that means ensuring fourth years

are prepared and aware of postgraduate opportunities.

"Just making seniors more aware of graduating and postgraduate opportunities is important. Along with that, I would love to do a networking event for seniors to get their options open," said Hoyle.

For junior class president and third-year student Ja'Mia Degree, her top goal is to connect with her classmates as much as possible.

"I would like to reach out to different student boards, whether they are cultural orgs or their professional orgs, to kind of possibly show up at events that they have to really get a well-rounded idea of how different student groups are feeling," said Degree. "We [SGA] also have a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion liaison, who plans to do something similar, so making sure that we're keeping in contact with her and her committee as well, to get an idea of what all students are feeling and any concerns."

Amarielle Oliver, second-year student and sophomore class president, hopes to not only build a strong connection with the sophomore class but also be a resource for first-year students. Oliver said she also wants to help her peers prepare for the different aspects of college.

"I would like to try speaking with freshmen during the first week since we don't have a freshman class president yet," said Oliver. "So they know what SGA is and that it's not just some boring organization on campus, but that we're actually doing something and we're actually here for the student body."

SGA Judicial Branch

New to the Judicial Branch, but a familiar face in SGA, third-year student Bre-

anna Applewhite is taking on the role of chief justice this year. Applewhite and the branch's primary focus is on whether there are any election violations or bylaw violations; the branch will have a fair hearing process.

Within the branch, there will be seven justices, as well as a Lieutenant Chief Justice, who will be a third-year student, Emsley Jackson.

The seven justices will be selected from students who have applied for the position and come from diverse backgrounds. Whether they have prior experience in SGA or not, the Judicial Branch aims to welcome all, allowing different perspectives on student life to be shared.

"I think it's a great way to start with a clean slate and get a diverse set of opinions from students all across the board," said Jackson. "People who may not know how student government works can now get their hands in it and learn more about it."

Applewhite hopes to bring students in as justices who are willing to collaborate with the legislative branch on their initiatives.

Despite being new to the branch, Applewhite and Jackson have various plans to not only improve the branch but also enhance its connection with the rest of SGA.

Applewhite has been in SGA for the last three years and hopes that her new role will foster new connections and promote improvements within SGA.

"We can say that we represent the student body well or that we're trying our best, but I think that you can always try harder, and that's a goal that is always within reach," said Applewhite.



GUIDE TO SETTING UP YOUR DORM

Emma Kate Williams | Staff Writer

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

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

How to make your room your own

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

- Use bed risers that you can buy on campus or online for more storage space.
- Put your dresser under your bed to maximize space.
- Get dresser organizers so things do not get cluttered.
- Make sure you and your roommate(s) have

talked before moving in so you know what vibe each of you is bringing to the room.

- Buy extra hangers to account for breaking or if you accumulate more clothes throughout the year.
- Do not forget to get a duster; it helps, especially during peak cold season on campus.
- Use decorations that match your personality, such as favorite band posters, fake or real plants, string lights or maybe just some printed pictures.

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

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

How to keep your area clean

A clean dorm is important so that you and

your roommates have a clean shared space, as well as a clean individual space. Try splitting chores, such as taking turns with tasks like taking out the garbage or vacuuming.

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

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

Roommates and communication

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

nice and tidy when your roommates come home.

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

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



Lauren Steventon/Niner Times & Niner Times File

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20 students share the pros and cons OF LIVING ON OR OFF CAMPUS



Sunnya Hadavi | Lead Writer

With over 31,000 students enrolled at UNC Charlotte, only 19% live on campus each year. During the 2025-2026 academic year, first-year students are required to live in on-campus housing for the very first time.

This new policy highlights the recent shifts in Charlotte's housing policies, especially with the Housing and Residence Life's (HRL) implementation of a housing lottery system in 2024.

To understand how students feel about the state of student housing on and off campus, the Niner Times has gathered 20 anonymous responses from current UNC Charlotte students. These students have shared their experiences, ranging from financial challenges to difficulties with social interaction and beyond.

Adjusting to living in a new community

According to HRL, there are over 6,000 students who currently live on campus and are spread between 19 residence halls. Residence halls vary in size, room style and number of roommates.

"Living on campus has helped me to find my friends and learn more about myself as a person while living alone," said a fourth-year student. "There can be a level of homesickness at times when living on campus, especially since campus is dead on the weekends."

One student noted that living on campus facilitates meeting people, but it also presents challenges, as many students are on their own for the first time.

"Living on campus is better if you want to get to meet people and make good friends. But being in a residence hall with hundreds of other students can be a nightmare," said a second-year

student. "You have to get used to everything not being the way you want it to be, and that can be extremely stressful."

Social interaction on and off campus

For students living off-campus, there is a feeling of being disconnected from the campus community. Seven students agreed that living off-campus makes them feel this way.

"As a commuter, I often feel like the effort it takes to go to campus outweighs the additional time outside the class/bonuses that are provided," said a fourth-year student. "[This] has made me feel extremely disconnected and not affiliated with UNC Charlotte."

Another commuter student said others living off campus should find something that connects them to campus to help them feel less isolated.

"It's very isolating and easy to feel disconnected from the rest of the community," said the fifth-year student. "It's good to find something that will get you going back that isn't just classes."

High costs and old buildings drive students off campus

When asked about their top reasons for choosing their current housing, 55% of the students said that cost was an important factor.

"I felt like I was paying thousands of dollars for the gamble that is on-campus housing. Hard water, horrible air quality, tiny rooms, countless fire alarms, broken elevators. The list is never-ending," said one fourth-year student.

The least expensive available apartment-style housing at UNC Charlotte costs \$10,710 for both semesters for the 2025-26 academic year. Off-campus apartments near campus generally vary between \$6,448 and \$8,800 for eight

months, depending on location and number of roommates.

Scott and Holshouser Halls offer the least expensive on-campus housing options, priced at \$3,655 for traditional double occupancy. These are also the oldest residence halls currently on campus and have some of the smallest living spaces, with Scott opening in 1972 and Holshouser in 1973.

"Living in Scott Hall was miserable," said a second-year student. "I have been best friends with my previous roommate [for seven years], and living in that small room genuinely made me hate her and consider never talking to her again."

Another student recalled her recent experience at Wallis Hall in the spring 2025 semester.

"I had problems with my apartment flooding in my residence hall. This caused a lot of issues, and I dealt with a lot of maintenance workers. The maintenance workers were always very polite and helpful," said the third-year student. "It was just very inconvenient to pay so much money for on-campus living and to have these problems occur with no compensation."

Frustration with HRL's lottery system

Five students explicitly said that they had to switch from living on campus to off-campus housing due to HRL's lottery system and lack of available rooms.

"Screw UNCC's new housing system. It forced me into a situation that put me and my family at a disadvantage and was detrimental to my education," said a third-year student. "I had applied to be in a dorm after my first year, but was waitlisted and never ended up getting a room because there were no more spots."

For some students, living on campus was a de-

liberate choice to ensure their safety and self-expression, and they felt at risk due to the lottery system.

"I lost the lottery and I didn't want to go back into the closet as living away from my parents had provided me a safe way to be openly queer," said a third-year student. "I would've lost that if I weren't lucky enough to be in a financial situation where I can live off campus."

Safety of off-campus housing

Concerns about safety and crime off campus are common among students at Charlotte. For those living off campus, there are issues with theft and general comfort. Leasing offices can also be unhelpful at times and not look out for their student residents, especially international students.

"My car got stolen and the HOA refused to check the cameras in the parking lot," said a fourth-year student at University Terrace North. "It's a good neighborhood with cheap rent, just get a steering wheel lock."

In many off-campus apartments, selecting random roommates does not guarantee placement with other students. One student shared her experience at East Village.

"I wish they put exclusively UNC Charlotte students together, because I've been put with adults who are not even students, which can be very uncomfortable as a student who is living on their own for the first time," said a fourth-year student. "Moving in with strangers can be scary and often very lonely. Just having a friend with you makes that process so much easier and safer."

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CHARLOTTE STUDENT LAUNCHES 'Gold Mine' App TO HELP USERS NAVIGATE CAMPUS LIFE



Deonna Dickens | Lead Writer

Courtesy of Aakash Shah

Finding parking, spotting campus events and avoiding a crowded UREC just got easier at UNC Charlotte thanks to one student's app that puts it all in your pocket.

In mid-April of his second year, Aakash Shah launched his app, "Gold Mine." The app has features that include UREC's participant status, parking availability, energy drink giveaways, student discounts, campus events and more.

With the help of his friend Brandon James, a fellow third-year student at UNC Charlotte, Gold Mine was created to showcase the mass social opportunities on campus.

"I realized that the school has a lot of cool stuff that they offer," said Shah. "In terms of software and websites, it was so many items that my friend would tell me about that I didn't even know we had, along with all of the events that we have throughout campus. It was so hard for me to access in the beginning because I didn't know where everything was."

This inspired him to take initiative and create something to help himself and others.

"Being a computer science student, I wanted to build something that would help people out. I knew it would help me out, I knew it would help my friend out and I think it might help other people out as well," said Shah.

Initially, the app was meant to help the students at UNC Charlotte navigate through campus life. Now, as a result of positive feedback and further development, Shah hopes that the Gold Mine app will be helpful to staff, faculty and the surrounding community.

As a solo developer, he knew he would miss things, so he promoted it on social media platforms such as YikYak and Reddit to get as many eyes on it as possible. The responses were helpful, pointing out things he had not realized himself.

Shah worked on the app for four months before it became available to download. He spent a few weeks working on the app's design using Figma to create a prototype.

Once the prototype was ready, Shah began coding the elements that would be incorporated into the app. With the help of AI and James, serv-

ers for the app were created. After combining all of these components, the app was complete.

Although the app has gained traction, Shah commits 20 minutes to six hours daily to work on updates. These include bug fixes, creating an Android version of the app, adding virtual classes to the Gold Mine schedule, finding friends through mutual interests and implementing a goose warning notification.

Before introducing the app to UNC Charlotte officials, Shah wants to ensure that it is at its best.

"I've only talked with a professor because if I talked about it over the summer, I would only have around 500 users. I want to get a lot more because it shows that people are interested. Hopefully, during the school year, I can get a lot more and talk to [Charlotte higher-ups] so they can help with funding to get more stuff out and form a more formal organization," said Shah.

The current stack Shah uses includes Swift, an iOS programming language, along with the libraries CORDDATA, localStorage and SwiftSoup, which enable scraping of various websites

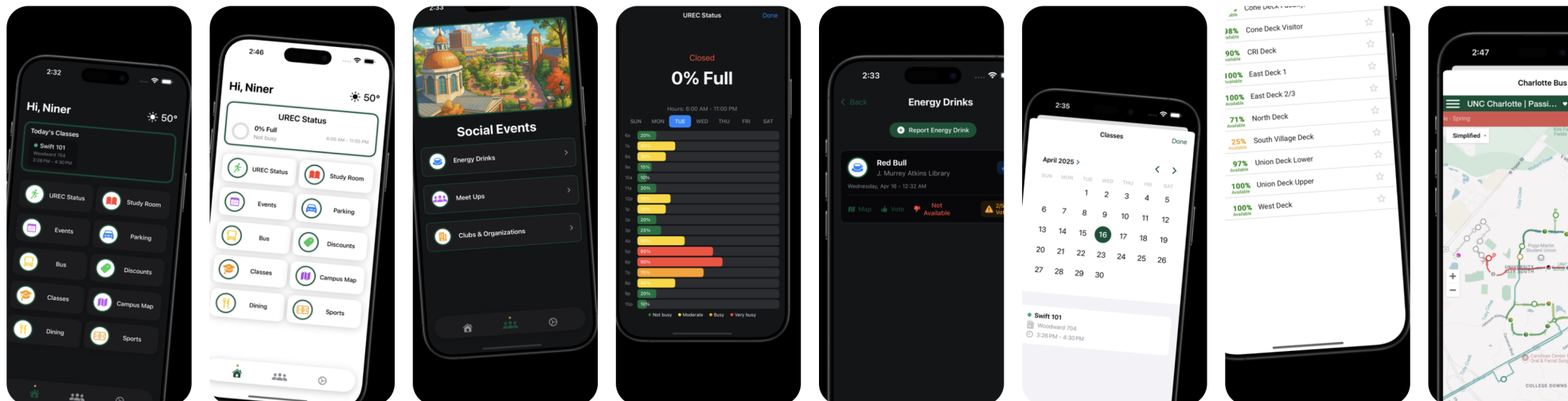
to extract information. By doing this, users only have to sign into Shah's app once, and it will save all their data.

To find parking availability and UREC's participant status, Shah found a Discord bot that directs users to a website that has official parking data through the sensors and cameras on campus. He then copied the link, created a script to access all the data from it and posted it back to the Gold Mine app. This feature reloads every few minutes to maintain accuracy.

Overall, Shah hopes that the Gold Mine app will be convenient for the Charlotte community.

"I hope that people can access stuff pretty efficiently with a few clicks rather than going to a website, logging in and getting a stale request. My friend says that they can just go to the app and look at whatever they need, and they're done; it only takes a few minutes, so I think it will help people out," said Shah.

To download Shah's app on iOS products, search "Gold Mine UNCC" in the App Store.



WELCOME BACK 2025 | 15

ADVICE FROM THE EDITORS



No one notices your bad hair day

As the editor-in-chief at the Niner Times, I would like to consider myself, to some degree, a journalist. With that title comes a heightened sense of awareness and a need to be observant. To write about something, you have to know what is going on and be observant to do so. Still, I cannot tell you who wore what or who said what when. Sure, I developed opinions about some people and knew who did what in class, but never have I caught myself thinking that someone's outfit was not to my own taste or their acne was flaring up. It is not that I do not care about the people around me or am devoid of judgment; I am plenty opinionated, but I do not have the time to worry about other people's details, and neither does anyone else. I promise you, people are more worried about making rent or their midterms than the bags under your eyes. Everyone is busy, and no one cares; this is truer than ever in college. You bringing attention to or stressing over your hair not falling right only makes it worse for you. Presentation matters, as do your actions, but let the small stuff go and learn to chill out.

DAVIS CUFFE
Editor-In-Chief

Do it scared

Throughout human evolution, fear has been a physiological response to danger, pushing you to remove yourself from the situation. As a hunter-gatherer, this trait was useful. However, as a college student, this fear can easily overwhelm you and cause you to turn away from incredible opportunities. The good news about college is that there are future friends, jobs, possibilities and more right at your fingertips. The bad news is that new things will take a while to stop being scary. If I allowed myself to give up on something every time it got scary, I would not have friends, I would not be able to work at the Niner Times, I would not be a member of academic societies and I would not be pursuing my honors thesis. The best advice I can give you right now is that sometimes, you have to do it scared. You cannot wait for things to settle down; you have to take the moment as it comes to you. New things can be scary, but that fear soon turns into elation.

CLARE GREALEY
Copy Editor



Be yourself, and the friendships will come

Coming to a new and unfamiliar place makes it easy to feel like you do not quite fit in. For some, blending in with the crowd may feel safer than stepping into your unique light. But in college, you will find that forcing connections can be more exhausting than fulfilling. The truth is, the best friendships come when you are being your most authentic self. In today's world, authenticity is rare and incredibly valuable. As I have grown throughout college, I have found myself in rooms and roles where I initially questioned if I belonged. But by staying true to who I am and being open with others, I have formed meaningful connections that I believe will last a lifetime. Real friendships take time and truth. Do not be afraid to put yourself out there, but be patient in discovering who and what is right for you. Trust that being yourself is enough, and the right people will find you.

KELLI BLACKBURN
Sports Editor

The Niner Times is managed by members of the editorial board (section editors and assistants) and is then overseen by the managerial board. Here is advice from some editors for those just starting at Charlotte.

Healthy habits beat sleepless studying

When you start college, it is easy to feel a little off-balance. With all-nighters, unlimited meal plans and a culture that thrives on caffeine, your health can often slip through the cracks. Many think success in college is all about mental strength—acing exams, pushing through late nights and understanding new topics. But one of the most reliable ways to improve mental focus and acuity is not putting in longer hours studying; it can be as simple as building some healthy habits, even if small. Fresh air, simple stretches or going for a walk can make more of a difference than you might expect. I have noticed that regular sleep, getting a healthy meal or some quick physical activity has done more to prepare me for the day than any last-minute cramming ever did. Now, I have had my share of energy drink-fueled study sessions, but have always felt—and performed—better when holding myself to healthy routines. Your physical and mental health are not separate. Supporting both does not just make you feel better; it helps you to succeed.

WES PACKHAM
A&C Editor



It's okay to misstep

College is filled with a lot of your 'firsts.' Whether these firsts are your first time doing laundry by yourself, doing dishes on your own or navigating a new place, you will inevitably find yourself outside of your comfort zone. When you find yourself there, do not be afraid to misstep. Everyone starts somewhere, no matter how big or small that start is. What is important is that you give yourself the grace to make mistakes and to take the effort to learn from them, most importantly. Dust yourself off, ask for help if you need and keep moving forward.

MEGAN KHOR
Asst. Layout Editor



Live your college life how you want

While it may be easier to do whatever others want or claim is 'fun,' you must take these four years of college and make a life you enjoy for yourself. It does not matter if you missed the party to work to save up for rent, or if you joined a club in which no one else in your friend group is interested. These are your four years, and you should spend them how you want to. I encourage you to take the time to find what you are genuinely interested in and let yourself flourish in whatever group, organization, activity or hobby that may be. There is no better feeling than surrounding yourself with things that make you happy, and in college, you have the freedom to be as involved or uninvolved as you like. Find what fits best for you and do not let anyone make you second-guess that choice. It is your life, so live it how you want to.

SOFIA DISTEFANO
News Editor



UNMASKING SPIRIT:

The story behind UNC Charlotte's 'Norm the Niner'

Deonna Dickens | Lead Writer

After spending years hiding in plain sight, three students made their debut reveal as they unmasked themselves as Norm the Niner, UNC Charlotte's beloved mascot. Now, they reveal the emotion and grit that goes on behind the scenes.

Graduated students Aisha Qatabi, Jamie Williford and Owen Joyce made the surprise every Niner looks forward to: the mascot reveal. Qatabi, a spring 2025 graduate, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Arts in Architecture with a minor in Architectural History and Heritage.

Qatabi took on the role of Norm the Niner in the spring of 2023. Initially, she had no plans of becoming a school mascot.

"I heard about [the opportunity]. I had no idea, or even thoughts, about becoming a mascot; it just happened," said Qatabi.

When Qatabi received the acceptance email, she was in disbelief.

"I got the email, and

they asked if I still wanted to do it, and I said 'Yes, of course,' but I was surprised because I did not think that I was ever going to be a mascot. It was out of nowhere when I applied, so when I did get it, I couldn't believe it," said Qatabi.

Williford, a spring 2025 graduate, obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Math for Business with a minor in Data Science. Williford was behind the Norm costume since the summer of 2022. He had reservations about becoming a mascot until his friend pushed him out of his comfort zone.

"In high school, I always thought it would be a fun possibility, but [I] never gave it any further thought until I was going into my sophomore year. My friend had sent me the tryout form and said, 'If you don't do this, we're all going to be upset at you,'" said Williford.

Williford admitted that he "giggled like a small child" from excitement when he found out that he was selected.

Joyce, a spring 2025 graduate, obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Joyce also played Norm for three years, beginning in the fall of 2022. He had a similar process to Williford, stating that he became interested in his second year after seeing Norm in action.

"I always loved mascots when I was younger, but I never had any thought of doing it until my sophomore year. I stood next to Norm at a basketball game and said, 'I think I can do this,'" said Joyce.

Joyce stated that he was scared, yet excited, to become Norm the Niner.

"I didn't really know what I got myself into if I'm being completely honest," said Joyce. "I remember when I first got [the acceptance email], I was scared, especially since you're supposed to keep Norm a secret. I didn't do much research because I didn't know what to research, but luckily, they took a shot in the dark with me."

When it came to hiding their identity, Qatabi, Williford and Joyce admitted that it was a difficult secret to keep from their friends.

"Sometimes I'll interact with someone I know, and they'll text me afterward saying, 'Are you sure you're not Norm because he tapped my shoulder and it felt like something you would do?' So, it can be tough, especially because that's something you want to share with people because it makes it special, but at the same time, it is really fun to mess with people that you know and they have no idea who you are," said Williford.

Qatabi had a cover story when friends would start to question her.

"I kept saying stuff like, 'Oh, I'm

helping Norm with media, so I'm always recording Norm's videos.' They would always see me walking with Norm, so they just figured that was true. At some point, if a friend would really push the question, I would say, 'I'll be honest, I tried out, but I couldn't fit in the suit, so that's why they put me with media,'" said Qatabi.

Besides the challenge of secrecy, all agree that missing events was a struggle.

"You're not losing the college experience; you're just changing it a little bit. That was one of the biggest struggles, thinking, 'My friends are at a football game; they're all going out, but my body's kind of shut down, I'm dehydrated and I can't do the things that I wish I could.' Again, I wouldn't change that for the world. I truly don't know what I would have done if I hadn't done this," said Joyce.

All sided with Joyce in this statement, mentioning that becoming Norm gave them an abundance of pride in their school.

"I bleed green and gold at this point," said Williford. "I wasn't that attached to Charlotte in my first year. I grew up in three generations of UNC-Chapel Hill, so I was a Tar Heel. [After] I became Norm, I don't even cheer for UNC-Chapel Hill anymore. I will die a 49er."

Norm makes appearances at approximately 200 events annually, whether a sports game, a tabling event on campus or volunteering. Outside of Charlotte events, they are required to participate in the Universal Cheer Association (UCA) national mascot competition. Admission includes creating a two-minute video of the school's mascot in a skit, showing crowd involvement, a stand cheer and dance and community events.

Last year was Charlotte's first year participating, placing last out of 40 schools. In 2025, Norm jumped 20 positions, putting the school in No. 20.

Qatabi advised people to consider taking on the Norm the Niner role.

"I never thought that I would do something like this, so just go for it and do something that you want to do, even if you don't think you'll get it," said Qatabi.

Williford echoed Qatabi's message, mentioning that this was an experience he could not replace.

"There is no better way that I could have spent my three years being Norm. It is a peak college experience, and if more people were aware of that and that this is a genuine possibility for their college careers, there would be a lot more people open to and wanting that," said Williford.



Courtesy of
Charlotte
Athletics

Meet the top leadership

SHAPING UNC CHARLOTTE

Sunnys Hadavi | Lead Writer

While students are usually only at UNC Charlotte for a few years, the administration stays on for much longer. Knowing who leads the University gives students an understanding of how things work, but also who ultimately shapes what Charlotte looks like today and tomorrow.

UNC Charlotte's Senior Leadership consists of the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor's Cabinet. For students, here are some of the most important names to know.

Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber

The chancellor is the face of the University and leads its administration and operations. Dr. Sharon L. Gaber arrived as chancellor in 2020 and continues to serve in the role. She is the fifth person to have held the position and is the second woman to do so.

Upon becoming chancellor, Gaber's vision for the University was to become a globally recognized, top-tier research university and to advance student access and economic mobility. Under her leadership, Charlotte has reached record-breaking enrollment numbers and has achieved R1 Carnegie classification, the highest recognition for research universities.

Provost Jennifer Troyer (Academic Affairs)

Dr. Jennifer Troyer is the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. Her office is responsible for Charlotte's academic programs and faculty. They evaluate all existing and upcoming programs and manage academic policies.

Troyer works closely with the Deans of the Colleges and the Dean of the Graduate School. These include:

- College of Arts + Architecture: José Gámez
- Belk College of Business: Richard Buttner
- Cato College of Education: Malcolm Butler
- College of Computing & Informatics: Bojan Cukic
- College of Health & Human Services: Yvette Huet (Interim)
- College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences: Chris Boyer
- Klein College of Science: Bernadette Donovan-Merkert
- William States Lee College of Engineering: Robert S. Keynton
- Graduate School: William J. Tolone

Vice Chancellor Kevin Bailey (Student Affairs)

Dr. Kevin Bailey is the vice chancellor for

student affairs and leads Charlotte's Division of Student Affairs. Bailey provides leadership for student success initiatives, including student advocacy and engagement. He provides guidance and advice to both undergraduate and graduate student leaders and ensures the University administration considers student perspectives.

The senior leadership of the Division of Student Affairs features multiple associate vice chancellors, each dedicated to supporting different aspects of the student experience. Some notable names include:

- Student Engagement: Dr. Karen Shaffer
- Housing & Resident Life: Dr. Casey Tullos
- Dean of Students: Denise Balfour Simpson

Athletics Director Mike Hill

Mike Hill is the seventh director of athletics for the Charlotte 49ers. He came to Charlotte in 2018. Hill is responsible for the leadership of the University's intercollegiate athletics program. Responsibilities include supervising and hiring coaching staff, ensuring conference compliance and advocating for student athlete success and wellness.

Under Mike Hill, the Charlotte 49ers moved into the American Conference in 2023-24. In this conference, Charlotte's teams have won six conference championship titles.

Vice Chancellor John Daniels (Research)

Dr. John Daniels serves as the vice chancellor for research. He leads the Division of Research in advancing University research, especially with Charlotte's new R1 status. Daniels has been at the University since 2001 as a member of the faculty and was the chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering from 2012 to 2022.

Board of Trustees and Donta L. Wilson

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the University. The Board consists of 13 members, including regional leaders, philanthropists and impactful alumni. They approve a variety of strategic decisions for the University, including the selection of the chancellor, approval of the University's strategic plan and the appointment of other administrators.

Donta L. Wilson leads the Board as its latest chairman, having begun in July. He is an alumnus of the class of 1997 and has been actively supporting the University. Most notably, the University recognized Wilson with the dedication of the Wilson Residence Hall.





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Become a **Conversation Partner**

Become an **Education Abroad Student** intern

Join the **Phi Beta Delta Honor Society**

Take part in the **International Coffee Hour**

Study Abroad 101

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edabroad.charlotte.edu/getstarted

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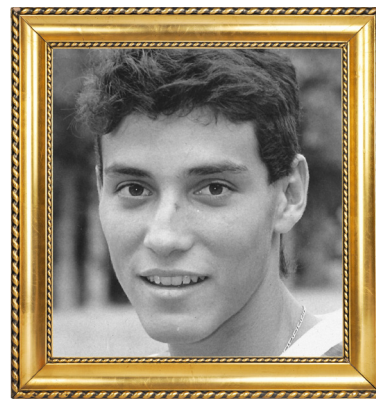
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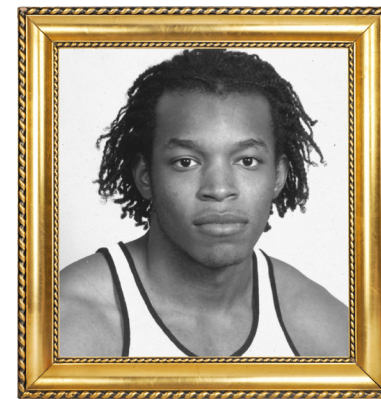
CHRIS HANEY



LARRY OGUNJOBI



GABE GARCIA



REPHIEL MARTIN

Charlotte Athletics announces ***INCOMING 2025 HALL OF FAME CLASS***

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

Charlotte Athletics will welcome four new legends into its Hall of Fame this fall—including its first-ever football inductee. The Class of 2025, announced on July 2, features standout athletes from football, baseball, men's soccer and track and field: Larry Ogunjobi, Chris Haney, Gabe Garcia and Rephel Martin. Their banners will be raised during the annual induction ceremony on Sept. 12, honoring their careers defined by impact and legacy.

Haney, 49er with longest MLB career, joins baseball representatives

A native of Barboursville, Va., pitcher Chris Haney played for Charlotte baseball from 1988-1990 and is the third representative from the 49ers' program in the Hall of Fame. He has the longest Major League Baseball career of any 49er and is also the first and only player in school history to play with the Team USA Collegiate National Team.

"I am deeply honored and incredibly grateful to be selected for the 49ers Hall of Fame," said Haney to Charlotte Athletics. "Every time I reflect on my decision to attend school in Charlotte, I'm reminded of just how thankful I am. At the age of 18, we don't always make perfect choices, but choosing Charlotte was, without a doubt, the right one for me."

At Charlotte, Haney set multiple program records—leading the 49ers in innings pitched, strikeouts and wins in both 1988 and 1990. He ranks first all-time for Charlotte with 20 career complete games, holding a school record with 12 innings pitched in a game in 1989 against Virginia Commonwealth University.

In 1989, Haney joined the Team USA Collegiate Team and had a 2-2 pitching record with a 3.98 ERA. As he began to gain national recognition, he was named a 1990 Preseason All-American. That same year, Haney went on to become the highest draft pick in school history, selected by the Montreal Expos in the second round,

making his professional debut in June 1991.

After two seasons with the Expos, Haney was traded to the Kansas City Royals, where 33 of his 38 career wins were earned. In his 11-year major league career, he posted 442 strikeouts. His accolades have earned him the right to become the first pitcher of the baseball program to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

From first snap to first Hall of Famer: Ogunjobi's legacy cemented

A member of the inaugural football team, defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi is the only 49er who started every game of his four-year career. Ogunjobi was the first to do many for Charlotte football during his time from 2013-2016, including: the first player chosen to wear the 49er jersey in Charlotte's inaugural game, the first player to be selected in the NFL Draft, the first to earn all-conference honors and the first to play and start in an NFL game.

Ironically, he holds the school record with 49.0 career tackles for loss (TFL) and finished his career with school records for sacks, career tackles and quarterback hurries.

In 2016, Ogunjobi landed on national Watch Lists for the Bednarik Award (Top Defensive Player) and the Outland Trophy (Top Interior Lineman), giving Charlotte national attention after their FBS transition. He earned his way to the 2016-2017 Reese's Senior Bowl and the 2016-2017 NFL Combine.

His accomplishments do not stop there. In 2016, he also became the first 49er named First Team All-Conference-USA (C-USA). Ogunjobi ranks all-time in single-season quarterback hurries with 10 in 2013, 2014 and 2016.

Ogunjobi was selected in the 2017 NFL Draft by the Cleveland Browns with the first pick of the third round. He remains the program's highest draft pick among the five picks in the program's 12-year history. Across eight years, he has also played for the Cincinnati Bengals and Pittsburgh

Steelers—and now enters his ninth NFL season with the Buffalo Bills.

He was a starter in seven of his first eight NFL seasons, starting 79 out of 92 games played. In his career, Ogunjobi has amassed 277 career tackles with 48 TFL and 23.0 sacks.

Ogunjobi can now also add to his list of many 'firsts' that he is the first 49ers football player to be selected to Charlotte's Hall of Fame.

Garcia, the G.O.A.T.—men's soccer icon takes his place in 49er history

Forward Gabe Garcia earned the honor of being a two-time team captain for the 49ers during his time from 1988 to 1991, bringing his leadership to new heights to guide Charlotte to new beginnings.

Before his journey in the Queen City, the 49ers had never ranked in the national polls, been to the NCAA Tournament or even had a player named All-America. When Garcia entered, all of that suddenly changed. During his four-year career, he became Charlotte's first All-American and the third-overall leading scorer.

In his last three seasons, Garcia led the 49ers in points and goals, bringing his career total to 39 goals, 97 total points and 19 assists. At Charlotte, Garcia brought the 49ers to a combined 47-22-9 record, a national ranking peak of No. 4 in the nation and the first bid to the NCAA Tournament.

Garcia was a part of the 1991 team that got off to a 13-0-1 start, earning that No. 4 national ranking after never having been on the board before. For his efforts, he was named a 1991 National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Second Team All-America and was a three-time first-team all-conference player (two-time first-team All-Sun Belt Conference and one-time first-team All-Metro Conference).

"It was definitely a defining period in 49ers soccer history," said Garcia to Charlotte Athletics. "We obviously did not see that at the time,

but looking back, it was a very special time. It truly was an amazing journey. It was an honor to have played with many of my teammates, such as Aidan Heaney, Lance Reed, Randy Sheen, and, of course, my brother, Carlos, just to name a few. I am privileged and honored to even be considered for this great award. I am greatly humbled and excited to be a part of this experience."

Martin paved the runway for decades of 49ers track and field success

The first male All-American for Charlotte's track and field program, Martin set two records in 2000 that still stand today—all while creating the two-decade-long success the 49ers have had since his collegiate career.

Martin competed for Charlotte from 1997 to 2000 and excelled in the triple jump; in C-USA, he won the triple jump three times and the long jump twice. In his last year of competition, he swept both the indoor triple jump and long jump titles and earned C-USA Indoor Track Athlete of the Year honors in 2000.

Martin also became the first 49ers' male athlete to compete at the NCAA Championship. At the NCAA Championship, he finished with a school-record leap of 53' 0.75" (16.17m) to earn USTFCCCA All-America honors. His No. 7 finish qualified him for First Team All-America honors by the current NCAA regulations.

Additionally, Martin was the first track athlete to be named conference Athlete of the Year and finished his career with the 49ers as an eight-time all-conference award winner with five C-USA titles. He was named Team MVP in both the indoor and outdoor seasons of 2000 and still owns program records in the indoor and outdoor triple jump.

He is the second male and fourth athlete to represent the track and field program in the Hall of Fame.

WELCOME BACK 2025 | 21

Charlotte football leans into simplicity, **CLEAN LOOK WITH 2025 UNIFORM DESIGN**

Evan Campos | Lead Writer

Change has been the norm for Charlotte football. With their fourth head coach in 13 years, the 49ers have bounced between conferences and redefined their identity time and again. Now, with Tim Albin at the helm, the program is aiming to reset—starting with threads that reflect what he expects this team to be, and what he believes it can become.

On June 30, Charlotte unveiled two new uniforms for the 2025 season: a green-on-white home set and a clean all-white road look. Both feature a white helmet with a brick-patterned stripe running down the middle. The redesign is stripped down and intentional, trading past flashes of chrome and gradient for something more focused.

For a program still finding its footing in the FBS landscape, it is a notable pivot. The primary uniforms move away from the gold that defined much of Charlotte's recent look, leaning fully into the school's official green and white.

Each detail has a purpose. The shoulder and pant stripes nod to traditional football aesthetics. The return of the "Charlotte" wordmark across the chest re-centers the brand around the University.

The brick helmet stripe—a detail requested by Albin—ties into campus architecture and his belief in building the program steadily, layer by layer.

Comparisons to Albin's former team, Ohio University, are inevitable. But the look is not copy-paste—rather, it is a reflection of the kind of team he wants Charlotte to become: steady, disciplined and confident in its direction.

The design is not loud or flashy. There is no chrome, no green helmet and no oversized fonts.

Instead, the focus is on simplicity and cohesion, qualities that reflect a quieter, more serious approach to program-building.

The infamous gold is not gone completely. The 49ers confirmed their alternate gold uniform will remain

in the rotation for select games.

Charlotte will wear a white helmet with its primary jerseys and pair the gold helmet with alternates. The uniform lineup includes three jerseys: green, white and gold—along with two sets of pants: one white and one green.

The uniforms will not turn heads for creativity or bold design, as that is not the point. They reflect a program trying to simplify, steady itself and move forward with purpose.

Charlotte opens the 2025 season against Appalachian State University at Bank of America Stadium for the Duke's Mayo Classic on Aug. 29, a high-profile stage for the debut of the 49ers' new look.

The 49ers' home opener is set against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on Sept. 7 at Jerry Richardson Stadium. For Charlotte, both games offer a chance for the new uniforms to make their on-field debut in front of a wider audience.

Courtesy of
Charlotte Athletics





CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS FALL 2025 SCOUTING REPORT

Evan Campos | Lead Writer

Charlotte Athletics had another successful year marked by American Conference championships, individual honors and academic recognition. Five athletics programs are currently active, and this overview will highlight them all ahead of their upcoming seasons.

Backed by new coaches and experienced rosters, the 49ers look to carry that success forward in one of the toughest conferences in the Group of Five.

Football

Following the departure of former Charlotte Head Coach Biff Poggi, the 49ers hired Tim Albin to turn the program around. Albin arrives after guiding the University of Ohio to three straight seasons with at least 10 wins—including an 11-win campaign in 2024—and a Mid-American Conference title, bringing with him a reputation for winning and offensive innovation.

But year one will not be easy. Charlotte returns just two offensive starters and faces a daunting schedule that includes early tests against Appalachian State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with a late-season road trip to the University of Georgia.

The quarterback battle remains Charlotte's biggest storyline. Redshirt sophomore Grayson Loftis, redshirt junior Conner Harrell and sophomore Zach Wilcke are all in the mix.

Loftis and Harrell split first-team reps throughout the spring and early fall camp, but no starter has been named with less than a month to go.

On defense, Albin is hoping to replicate the stingy performances of his past teams. Charlotte gave up more than 35 points per game last season but returns key veterans and is led by its strongest position group—the linebackers.

Redshirt senior Shay Taylor and junior Kadin Schmitz followed Albin from the University of Ohio, joining senior Reid Williford to form a physical and experienced group. Senior defensive back Ja'Qurious Conley leads the secondary.

The 49ers open the season Aug. 29 against Appalachian State at Bank of America Stadium, with nearly all student and alumni ticket allotments already claimed.

Women's soccer

Charlotte women's soccer approaches the 2025 season under new leadership after a transitional but promising spring. Former Assistant Coach Sinead Byrne will serve as acting head coach for the full campaign after stepping into the interim role in February.

The 49ers are coming off a challenging 2024 campaign in which they finished 4-8-7 overall and 3-2-5 in American Athletic Conference play. Charlotte struggled to find consistency, especially outside of league competition, finishing with a .395 overall winning percentage.

The team went 2-3-5 at home, 2-4-2 on the road and 0-1 at neutral sites.

Charlotte opens its 2025 schedule on Aug. 7 with a road matchup at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, S.C.

Men's soccer

Head Coach Kevin Langan commences his 14th season at the helm of the Charlotte men's soccer program, looking to reload after another strong campaign in 2024. The 49ers finished 11-3-5 overall, including an unbeaten 5-0-2 mark at home, and went 3-2-2 in American Athletic Conference play.

Charlotte capped the season with its second straight conference title, defeating Florida International University 2-1 in overtime in a thrilling championship match to earn the program's 11th NCAA Tournament appearance in 13 years under Langan.

The 49ers' defensive organization and disciplined style once again defined the program's identity, helping them post a .711 winning percentage and remain competitive in a deep league field.

While several key contributors from last year's roster have moved on, Langan's track record of player development and tactical adaptability gives Charlotte a solid foundation entering the new season.

The 49ers open the 2025 season on Aug. 9 with a high-profile road test at Clemson University.

Women's volleyball

Charlotte women's volleyball returns on Aug. 23, when the 49ers travel to Buies Creek, N.C., to take on Campbell University in their season opener.

New Head Coach Benavia Jenkins, a former

All-American at the University of Florida and the 2022 Southern Conference Coach of the Year, takes over the program after recent stops at the University of Michigan and East Tennessee State University.

Known for her ability to develop winning cultures, Jenkins brings nearly 15 years of collegiate coaching experience and a championship pedigree to the Queen City.

Charlotte is coming off a difficult previous year in which they went 5-24 overall and 2-14 in American Conference play. The 49ers dropped their final four matches, finishing with a .172 winning percentage as they struggled to gain momentum at home (2-12), on the road (2-8), and at neutral sites (1-4).

Charlotte showed competitive stretches in non-conference play and weathered a season filled with lineup changes and adversity.

Cross country

Charlotte cross country enters the 2025 season with momentum under Head Coach Joseph Lynn and Director of Track and Field and Cross Country Bob Olesen. Both teams finished in the top 15 at the NCAA Southeast Regionals last fall, continuing the program's steady progression.

With the schedule yet to be released, the 49ers aim to build on that success and remain competitive in the American.

WELCOME BACK 2025 | 23

CHARLOTTE 49ERS SHINE IN THE PROS

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

Charlotte Athletics has produced several successful players who have gone pro. Whether it is from football to soccer, these athletes have continued to make a name for themselves and represented the 49ers along the way. Here is a breakdown of some current professional 49ers and how they are doing.

Football

Alex Highsmith

A standout edge rusher during his time at Charlotte, Alex Highsmith has become one of the NFL's most reliable defenders. Highsmith played with the 49ers from 2016 to 2019, then was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the third round of the 2020 NFL Draft.

He quickly earned a starting position and has since developed into a key piece of the Steelers' defense. In 2024, Highsmith recorded 28 solo tackles, six sacks and one forced fumble. The Steelers made it into the AFC Wild Card Playoffs, but fell to their division rival, the Baltimore Ravens, 28-14. Against Baltimore, Highsmith recorded only two tackles and a sack.

Highsmith will be entering his sixth season in the NFL in 2025 and has earned league-wide recognition as one of the top pass rushers in the AFC.

Larry Ogunjobi

Selected in the third round by the Cleveland Browns in the 2017 NFL Draft, defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi made his mark by becoming the first Charlotte 49er to be drafted. He has played across three AFC North teams, including the Cleveland Browns, Cincinnati Bengals and Pittsburgh Steelers. Ogunjobi lined up next to fellow 49er Highsmith for two seasons in 2022 and 2023, but signed a one-year contract with the Buffalo Bills on March 14, 2025.

Last season, Ogunjobi recorded 16 solo tackles with 1.5 sacks. Due to suspension, he will miss the first six regular-season games of the 2025 season. Ogunjobi is expected to make his return in Week 8 back in the Queen City against the Carolina Panthers on Oct. 26.

Demetrius Knight Jr.

Although he was only with Charlotte for one season, linebacker Demetrius Knight Jr. still shines with 49er pride in the NFL. Knight was at Charlotte in 2023 after transferring from Georgia Institute of Technology and made a name for himself. He was named 2023 First Team All-American Athletic Conference as the team's leading tackler with 96 tackles and led No. 2 in the conference. Knight had three tackles for loss and scored a touchdown before entering the NCAA transfer portal once more.

After playing for the University of South Caro-

lina in 2024, Knight was selected with the No. 49 pick overall of the 2025 Draft by the Cincinnati Bengals.

Soccer

Macey Bader

Forward Macey Bader concluded four seasons at Charlotte after the 2024 season, ending her collegiate career No. 7 in program history with 181 shots taken. She has always been known for her reliability and relentless energy, as she started and played in all 19 matches last year.

Across her collegiate career, she appeared in 70 matches, recorded 17 goals and 13 assists and finished No. 7 all-time in program history with 181 shots.

The past four seasons, Bader has played with the North Carolina Courage in the UWSL. To continue her soccer journey, Bader signed with Carolina Ascent FC on July 14.

Brandt Bronico

Midfielder Brandt Bronico, a graduate of the 2016 men's soccer team, was drafted in 2017 with the No. 47 overall pick by the Chicago Fire in the MLS SuperDraft. The former Conference-USA Offensive MVP made his professional debut on March 11, 2017, and signed with Charlotte FC in 2020 and has remained with the club ever since.

In 2025, Bronico has played in 23 matches so far, with one goal and three assists. Charlotte FC currently sits at 12-2-11 and are ranked No. 7 in the Eastern Conference.

Ian Pilcher

A standout on the men's soccer team in 2024, defender Ian Pilcher turned pro following graduation and is currently playing in the MLS for San Diego FC.

Over four seasons with Charlotte, Pilcher made 66 appearances, scored five goals and tallied one assist. He earned recognition as the American Athletic Conference's Preseason Defensive Player of the Year in 2024 and earned first-team honors.

On Dec. 20, 2024, Pilcher was selected in the 2025 MLS SuperDraft by San Diego FC with the No. 24 overall pick. His debut was made on Feb. 23, 2025, against LA Galaxy, where he appeared as an 88th-minute substitute in the 2-0 victory for San Diego.

As of July 31, Pilcher has played in 12 matches—starting in seven and subbing in five—with one goal and one assist.

Baseball

Ryan Degges

Right-handed pitcher Ryan Degges was drafted in the 17th round of the 2024 MLB Draft by

the Philadelphia Phillies. In 2024, Degges finished third on the team with 24 appearances on the mound and was just one of four pitchers with 50+ strikeouts, with 51 in 42.2 innings for Charlotte.

Through the farm system, Degges is currently active with the Single-A affiliate of the Phillies—the Clearwater Threshers. In 2025 thus far, he has played 17 games, throwing 63 innings for 54 strikeouts. Degges holds an ERA of 3.57 and a record of 3-2.

Tony Rossi

Right-handed pitcher Tony Rossi signed as a free agent with the New York Yankees in 2024 after leading Charlotte's bullpen with six saves in 2024. Rossi received the Hugh McEniry Award, which is given to the top male student-athlete at Charlotte and was second for the 49ers to have 25 appearances and four wins.

Same as Degges, Rossi is a part of the Yankees' farm system, which has placed him with the High-A affiliate, the Hudson Valley Renegades. In the MiLB, he has a 0-1 record over 29 games and across 32.1 innings. Rossi has 42 strikeouts and will continue to try to work his way up through the system.

Blake Gillespie

The most recent star of Charlotte baseball, right-handed pitcher Blake Gillespie, was selected by the New York Yankees in the ninth round of the 2025 MLB Draft on July 14, joining Rossi.

Gillespie is known for pitching the second no-hitter in program history, but was also named both Pitcher of the Year and Newcomer Pitcher of the Year in the AAC. Across all games in 2025, Gillespie finished with a 2.42 ERA and tallied 131 strikeouts in just over 100 innings.

As he begins his professional journey, Gillespie will likely start in the Yankees' minor league system. New York's farm system includes six affiliated teams across the United States and the Dominican Republic.

Looking ahead

Whether they are making tackles, scoring goals or striking out hitters, these former 49ers are proving that Charlotte is a pipeline for professional talent. Their success is a testament to the University's growing reputation—and an inspiration to the next generation of 49er athletes.

MACEY
BADER

LARRY
OGUNJOBI

BLAKE
GILLESPIE

Niner
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MEET THE COACHES:

Charlotte Athletics welcomes new leadership across 5 programs

Kelli Blackburn | Sports Editor

Charlotte athletics has undergone a whirlwind of changes, including the additions of five new head coaches across campus.

Football, women's lacrosse, women's volleyball, women's soccer and women's golf all feature new leaders heading into the 2025-2026 athletic season—some familiar faces, others brand new.

Football surges with new energy with Albin

Most notably, the departure of former football Head Coach Biff Poggi led to the new hire of Head Coach Tim Albin, who previously served as the head coach at Ohio University football for four seasons. Albin recently guided the Bobcats to a 2024 Mid-American Conference Championship title, compiling an overall 33-19 record and a 23-9 mark against conference play under his helm. Prior to becoming head coach, Albin spent 16 seasons as Ohio's offensive coordinator under Frank Solich.

Albin made his Queen City debut on Dec. 9 with an introductory press conference—and has been everywhere since. Whether attending a baseball game, shopping with his wife Brooke or representing the 49ers at the 2025 American Conference Media Days, Albin has embraced Niner Nation with enthusiasm. Charlotte football will kick off the 2025 season against Appalachian State University on Aug. 29 at Bank of America Stadium in the Duke's Mayo Classic.

Interim takes over for women's soccer

In 2024, Charlotte women's soccer team post-

ed a 4-8-7 record, managing just three wins in American Conference play. After a 1-0 double-overtime loss to East Carolina University (ECU) in the American Championships on Nov. 3, the program stayed quiet until Head Coach Brandi Fontaine was relieved of her duties on Feb. 28, 2025.

Fontaine, who led Charlotte for three seasons, finished with an overall record of 17-26-15 and helped guide the 49ers through their first American season in 2023.

Following her departure, Assistant Coach Sinead Byrne was promoted to interim head coach. A native of Coventry, England, Byrne will serve in the role through the 2025 season. Before joining Charlotte, she spent six seasons at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) as an assistant and associate head coach. With the Bees, Byrne helped the program to win back-to-back Sun Conference regular season and tournament championships in 2023 and 2024, while also reaching the NAIA Women's Soccer Championship last season.

Former Big-10 coach steps in for volleyball

On Dec. 23, Charlotte named Benavia Jenkins the 13th coach in volleyball program history. She joins the 49ers after two seasons as associate head coach at the University of Michigan. In 2024, Jenkins helped guide the Wolverines to a 9-0 start and an overall record of 18-13, including eight Big Ten victories.

Before her most recent stint, Jenkins built an

impressive resume both on and off the court. She played three seasons at the University of Florida before competing professionally for nine years from 2005 to 2024.

Jenkins began her coaching career in 2014 as an assistant coach at Santa Fe College, then moved on to Coastal Carolina University and the University of South Florida before landing her first head coaching position with East Tennessee State University (ETSU). In 2022-23, she earned Southern Conference Coach of the Year honors with a 21-8 record after capturing the school's first regular season championship since 2018.

Known for her strong player development and coaching consistency, Jenkins brings the experience Charlotte volleyball needs for a fresh, competitive start.

Women's lacrosse lands assistant coach to step up in second season

Following the inaugural women's lacrosse season, Head Coach Clare Short announced her decision on June 6 to spend more time with family.

Short, who previously turned Queens University of Charlotte into a powerhouse, played a pivotal role in launching Charlotte's program in 2022. In the 49ers' first year of competition, she helped the team produce three first-team All-American selections and a top-15 scoring offense nationally. Charlotte also posted the second-highest average per-game attendance in the American in 2025.

Much of that help came from Assistant Coach Sarah Stagaard, who was promoted to inter-

im head coach for the 2026 season on June 27. A proven winner as both player and coach, Stagaard began her career as a graduate assistant at Grand Valley State University before joining Queens in 2022 as an assistant coach.

That season, she rolled the Royals to 21 wins with only one loss and a perfect 10-0 run in South Atlantic Conference play. Queens earned the No. 1 seed and reached the NCAA Division II Women's Lacrosse Championship under her leadership—something the 49ers now aim to replicate in their own rise.

Women's golf keeps a familiar face in charge

Charlotte women's golf is in a similar position of transition, following the resignation of Head Coach Ryan Ashburn on May 20.

In four seasons, Ashburn helped Charlotte post its third winning season since the program's 2017-2018 inception. The 2024-2025 team went 99-45-4, with eight top-five finishes—all in a single season. Her standout recruit, freshman Pinky Chaisilprungruang, earned national recognition as the American's Freshman and Player of the Year and secured a spot in the NCAA Regionals.

Taking over the program is former Assistant Coach C.C. McMahan, who has been with the 49ers since 2023. McMahan becomes the third head coach in Charlotte women's golf history and previously spent six seasons coaching at ECU and Campbell University.

TIM ALBIN



Courtesy of
Charlotte
Athletics

SINEAD BYRNE



BENAVIA JENKINS



SARAH STAGAARD



C.C. MCMAHAN



WELCOME BACK 2025 | 25

49ER VENTURES NEW TO CAMPUS: What is it?

Sofia DiStefano | Summer Editor-In-Chief

UNC Charlotte's Athletic Director, Mike Hill, announced that the new initiative of Charlotte 49er Ventures, which will serve as the official agency for Charlotte Athletics, will begin this fall.

The announcement was made in May during the final Board of Trustees meeting of the 2024-2025 academic year. Hill shared that Kyle Caddell will serve as the 49ers' Ventures president and chief revenue officer.

Caddell comes to Charlotte with over four years of experience in a similar role at Clemson University as the president of their in-house multimedia rights (MMR) program. He has also worked with the Charlotte Hornets and Carolina Panthers.

What this means for Charlotte is that student athletes and their programs can now experience indirect benefits from MMR, such as increased funding for programs and scholarships, potential involvement in NIL revenue, an increase in resources and possible deals or sponsorship opportunities with third parties.

"We are incredibly excited about this evolution of our enterprise, particularly in how this new unit will engage the corporate community as well as develop NIL opportunities for our student-athletes," said Hill in the press release. "Having Kyle Caddell lead Charlotte 49ers Ventures is a game changer for our program, and he is building an all-star team to deliver the strategic results required to compete in today's college athletics environment."

Because of previous experience from Cadwell, Charlotte will now have multimedia rights represented in-house and plans to sell sponsorships in various areas such as:

- Arena and stadium signage
- Facility integration
- Digital assets
- Streamed broadcasts
- Student-athlete NIL activation
- Campus partnerships

While day-to-day management will be led by Caddell, the unit as a whole will report to the executive senior associate athletic director for external relations, Scott Byrd.

Charlotte 49ers Ventures plans to explore new revenue streams by utilizing upgraded or newly developed spaces at the football stadium and other campus locations. Cadwell shared in the press release that he hopes corporate branding on jerseys, playing fields and courts will become standard practice as college athletics looks to increase funding to support athlete compensation.



Megan Bentley/Niner Times

Evan Campos | Lead Writer

After years of misfires, injuries and make-shift rotations, the Charlotte Hornets enter the season with something they have not had in a while: a team that makes sense. Following a productive offseason and a culture-setting Summer League championship, the Hornets will open training camp in late September with renewed clarity and a coherent plan.

There are still rotation battles to sort out, roster decisions to make and questions in the frontcourt, but for once, Charlotte is not scrambling for answers. The Hornets are building—deliberately, steadily and in the right direction.

Starved to stacked

If nothing else, the Hornets have finally addressed arguably the biggest flaw of last year's team: a lack of offensive initiation. Star guard LaMelo Ball returns healthy, and the addition of guard Collin Sexton gives Charlotte another north-south scorer with a relentless motor.

Guards Tre Mann, Spencer Dinwiddie, Josh Green and second-year player KJ Simpson round out a backcourt that suddenly has no shortage of ball-handlers and playmakers.

The key question entering camp is who will start alongside Ball: Sexton or rookie guard Kon Knueppel. If Knueppel plays anything like he did in Summer League, it will be difficult for Head Coach Charles Lee to keep him out of the starting five.

If Lee feels Knueppel is not quite ready to start out of the gate, Sexton would complement Ball well in the backcourt—but ideally, he thrives as a dynamic sixth man and the kind of reserve table-setter the Hornets have lacked for years.

Guard Sion James is likely Greensboro-bound, and guard Nick Smith Jr. remains a trade candidate. It is a logjam, but for once, it is a good problem to have.

Center of attention

The center spot remains Charlotte's biggest variable. After trading Mark Williams to the Phoenix Suns on draft night, the Hornets appear ready to give forward Moussa Diabate a full runway at the five.

At 6'9", Diabate does not fit the mold of a traditional NBA big, but his effort and instincts are elite. Among players who appeared in at least 65 games last season, he ranked in the top 20 in defensive rebound percentage and top 10 on the offensive glass.

Veteran Mason Plumlee and rookie Ryan Kalkbrenner are expected to compete for the backup center role behind Diabate. Kalkbrenner, a four-time Big East Defensive Player of the Year, brings shot-blocking and size. Plumlee, back on a one-year deal, offers experience but limited upside.

Roster trim incoming

Outside of the positional battles, Charlotte still faces a roster squeeze. With 18 players currently under contract, at least three cuts or moves will be required before opening night.

Green, still recovering from shoulder surgery, is a likely holdover. Guard Pat Connaughton and forward DaQuan Jeffries, however, could be waived or dealt depending on how camp unfolds.

Expect the front office to remain patient. There is no urgency to force a win-now trade, but if this group finds early chemistry, the Hornets could explore moving future picks to reinforce the frontcourt before the deadline.

Expectations

The Hornets are not winning a championship this year—no one is pretending otherwise. But President of Basketball Operations Jeff Peterson has finally given this team a real chance to compete.

With improved guard depth, high-IQ contributors, youthful energy and proven winners added to the mix, Charlotte has a chance this season to play meaningful basketball again.

This will not be a miracle, film-like script where they go from worst to first; instead, it will be compelling progress. For a franchise that has spent years stuck in neutral, that is exactly what this season needs to be.

ARE THE PANTHERS READY TO MATTER AGAIN?

Previewing the 2025 season

Niner Times File

Evan Campos | Lead Writer

A year ago, the Carolina Panthers were chasing competence. Now, they are chasing consistency. After stumbling to a 5-12 finish in 2024 and fielding the worst scoring defense in NFL history, Carolina enters the 2025 season with higher expectations—ones no longer measured by moral victories.

The Panthers have retooled their roster, revamped the coaching staff and, most importantly, reignited belief in quarterback Bryce Young. They open the season with a mix of young talent, veteran presence and a clearer identity under second-year Head Coach Dave Canales. National projections remain cautious, but the foundation is in place for a meaningful step forward.

Young and armed

Young's late-season surge changed the tone surrounding the franchise. After being benched in week 3, the former No. 1 pick closed the year with 17 touchdowns, five interceptions and a newfound command of the offense.

His poise and playmaking sparked optimism that Carolina may have finally found its long-term answer under center.

The front office responded with urgency. The Panthers used the No. 8 pick in the draft to select University of Arizona wide receiver Tetairoa McMillan, a 6'4" target with a large catch radius and a knack for winning contested catches.

McMillan gives Young a true 'wide receiver one' for the first time in his career and headlines a revamped receiving corps that now includes Xavier Legette, Jalen Coker and veteran Adam Thielen, whose leadership and reliability remain invaluable.

That group pairs with an offensive line that returns all five starters and a run game that ranked among the league's most efficient in 2024. Running back Chuba Hubbard topped 1,100 yards behind a unit anchored by guards Robert Hunt and Damien Lewis.

The Panthers finished No. 7 in Pro Football Focus's run-blocking grade despite dealing with multiple injuries across the line.

Can Carolina get stops?

Defensively, the outlook is less certain. While the Panthers spent heavily in free agency and the draft to fix a unit that gave up 30.4 points per game last season, many of the solutions are unproven.

Carolina added interior linemen Bobby Brown III and Tereshawn Wharton, who join the returning Derrick Brown to form a trio that will be tasked with stabilizing the front. Brown, a former Pro Bowler, missed most of 2024 due to injury but remains the defense's most dominant presence.

On the edge, the Panthers are betting on volume. Veterans D.J. Wonnum and Patrick Jones II return with starting experience, but both

have injury and consistency concerns. Rookies Nic Scourton and Princely Umanmielen bring raw talent and upside, but will need time to adjust. If the pass rush does not improve, Carolina's defense could remain one of the league's weakest.

Still, the secondary looks more capable with the addition of safety Tre'von Moehrig and the return of a healthy Jaycee Horn, who flashes elite potential. Carolina is banking on improved health and cohesion on the back end to stabilize a defense that collapsed last fall.

Panthers hope for swing factor

Carolina enters the season with a deeper roster, a defense with upside and a coaching staff aligned in vision. But as a lot of people see, this year comes down to Young. His development will decide whether the Panthers make real progress or stay stuck in neutral.

Although he does not need to be elite right away, he does need to prove he belongs and eventually show he can be a quarterback who wins games. It is a tougher bar to clear—one reserved for only a dozen or so passers in any given season.

If Young gets there, Carolina will not just be fun, but it will be a team in the playoff mix.

2024 ATHLETICS' RECORDS

BASEBALL:

OVR 36-22, AAC 18-9

MEN'S BASKETBALL:

OVR 11-22, AAC 3-15

FOOTBALL:

OVR 5-7, AAC 4-4

MEN'S SOCCER:

OVR 11-3-5, AAC 3-2-2

MEN'S TENNIS:

OVR 12-11, AAC 2-6

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

OVR 11-21, AAC 4-14

WOMEN'S LACROSS:

OVR 6-10, AAC 1-5

WOMEN'S SOCCER:

OVR 4-8-7, AAC 3-2-5

SOFTBALL:

OVR 30-27, AAC 17-10

WOMEN'S TENNIS:

OVR 23-6, AAC 4-1

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL:

OVR 5-24, AAC 2-14

WELCOME BACK 2025 | 27

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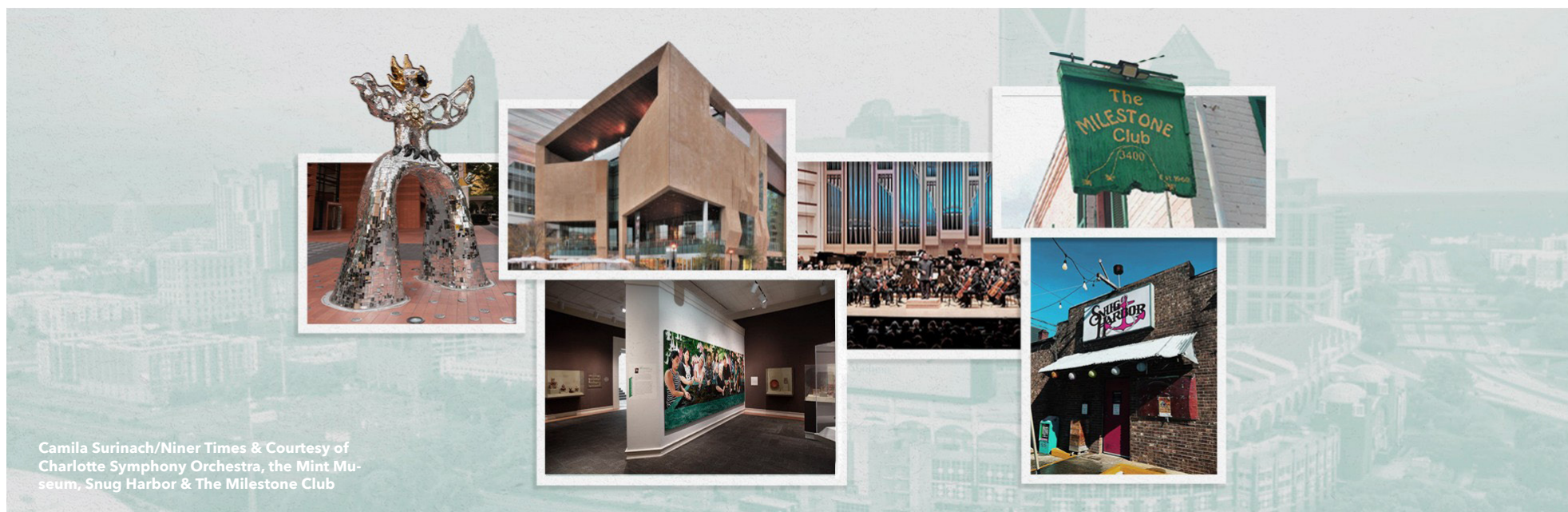
SOUND

49^{er}
Basketball
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Auditions due October 5th





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

GUIDE: Getting to know Charlotte's culture

Wes Packham | A&C Editor

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

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

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

Neighborhoods

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

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

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

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

Walking through these neighborhoods is where you can get a true sense of the culture that Charlotte has to offer and become familiar with the community you are a part of.

Music and nightlife

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

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

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

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

Arts and design

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

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

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

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

formances at the Belk Theater at Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Food and drink

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

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

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

Sports and outdoors

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

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

Charlotte is also home to the Charlotte Hornets, Carolina Panthers, Charlotte FC and the Charlotte Knights. While many of these teams

hold inconsistent win-loss records, attending games at the Bank of America Stadium or the Spectrum Center can be electric.

Media and pop culture

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

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

How to get the most out of Charlotte

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

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

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

49

Things to do as a UNC Charlotte student

There is an abundance of things to do while being a student at UNC Charlotte, and it can often become overwhelming to navigate them all. Here is a bucket list of 49 fun and interactive things to do before graduating.

Niner Times Archive

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Throw a coin in the Niner Miner statue | ☐ Visit Area 49 in Atkins Library |
| ☐ Visit the Student Union Art Gallery | ☐ Attend a residence hall event |
| ☐ Walk around the Botanical Gardens | ☐ Find the underground tunnel that connects CHHS and COED |
| ☐ Stargaze on top of a parking deck | ☐ Go to the campus greenhouse |
| ☐ Attend the homecoming football game | ☐ Try the High Ropes Course, Rock Climbing (Venture Outdoors) |
| ☐ Grab a late-night breakfast at SoVi | ☐ Tailgate before a football game |
| ☐ Get to know a maintenance employee | ☐ Try every dining option on campus |
| ☐ Check out graffiti at Toby Creek Greenway Tunnel | ☐ Pet the puppies between COED and CHHS |
| ☐ Ride on each Niner Transit bus route (Green, Gold and Silver) | ☐ Visit every academic building |
| ☐ Hit up the UREC pool | ☐ Get a gift for someone at the Barnes & Noble book store |
| ☐ Give a friend or family member a campus tour | ☐ Make five friends from different majors on campus |
| ☐ Get featured on the UNC Charlotte Instagram page | ☐ Apply for a campus job |
| ☐ Meet Norm the Niner | ☐ Find free merchandise or t-shirts |
| ☐ Order food from the Starship robot delivery service | ☐ Take a "fun" class |
| ☐ Study at the Science Building and enjoy Auntie Anne's | ☐ Get face paint before the first big game |
| ☐ Ride the light rail to Uptown | ☐ Lay out for a tan at the Hunt Hall courtyard |
| ☐ Attend a CoA+A performance at Belk Theatre | ☐ Do the winter polar plunge at UREC |
| ☐ Watch a movie at the Student Union movie theater | ☐ Visit the newsroom at the Student Union |
| ☐ Attend a career fair | ☐ Find a club or organization that fits and supports you |
| ☐ Stand in the middle of the Star Quad | ☐ Attend an intramural sports game |
| ☐ Try one of the campus food trucks | ☐ Volunteer at the Jamil Niner Student Pantry |
| ☐ Pick up a Niner Times newspaper | ☐ Watch out for geese |
| ☐ Lounge in a hammock between class | ☐ Attend a Campus Activities Board (CAB) event |
| ☐ Enjoy a pretty view from the 11th floor of Atkins Library | ☐ Learn how to cook new foods at the Demo Kitchen in UREC |
| ☐ Grab a snack from the EPIC vending machines | |



#1



#3



#17



#16

Ava Weaver/Niner Times
& Niner Times File

WELCOME BACK 2025 | 31

CAMPUS EVENTS TO ADD TO YOUR CALENDERS THIS YEAR

Sunnya Hadavi | Lead Writer



Niner Times File

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

Student Organization Showcase

A perfect way to find ways to be involved, the Student Org Showcase features over 250 student organizations and is recommended for all students who want to be more involved in the campus community. The showcase is hosted at the start of each semester and is always packed.

If you missed the fall showcase, be sure to attend the next one at the start of the spring semester. The date has not been announced, but it will take place in the first or second week of the spring semester in the evening.

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

Greek Life events

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

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

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

Norms Vintage Market

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

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

Niner Nation Week

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

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

Annual International Festival

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

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

Conferences, research symposiums and talks

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

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

- Honors Research Symposium (December)
- TEDxUNCCharlotte (February)
- Women in Data Science Conference (March)
- Media Literacy Matters Conference (March)
- Analytics Frontiers Conference (April)
- Graduate Research Conference (April 6, 2026)
- Undergraduate Research Conference (April 24, 2026)

Cultural, international and holiday-focused student events

With over a hundred different cultural and international student organizations, there is always an event celebrating the cultural diversity on campus. Information about these events can be found on the student organization's social media and Niner Engage. Here are a fraction of the events hosted annually:

- Black Student Union's Black History Month Kickoff (February)
- Organization of African Students' African Night (February)
- Muslim Student Association's Ramadan Iftar (February/March)
- Latin American Student Organization & Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity's Jar-ipeo Night (March)
- Asian Student Association's Hello Asia Market (March)
- Vietnamese Student Association's Viet Night (April)
- Triveni Indian Student Association's Holi Celebration (April)
- UNC Charlotte Hillel's Shabbat Dinner
- 49er Goldrush 5k

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

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

Late Night Breakfast

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

Want to know more?

There are many more events held on campus that could not be mentioned in this guide alone. The city also features various annual festivals for those who want to venture off campus. The best way to learn about these events would be to check UNC Charlotte's social media regularly, read newsletters in your Charlotte email, follow local news outlets and keep up with the Niner Times (ninertimes.com or @niner_times).



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Camila Surinach & Blaise Uy/Niner Times, Niner Times File & Courtesy of Charlotte Urban Institution



OPINION: The best and the worst of being a Charlotte student

Wes Packham | A&C Editor

Home to 30,000 students and counting, UNC Charlotte is one of the Carolinas' biggest universities. Would it even be possible to create a flawless college for all those students? Every college in the country has its pros and cons, its perks and drawbacks, and UNC Charlotte is no different.

Pros:

In terms of education, UNC Charlotte is a very solid option for many different areas of study, and it even outpaces many other universities in the Southeast.

UNC Charlotte has been steadily growing and improving over the years, and there is no sign of slowing down. The University has been steadily investing more into educational and research programs, and it shows. UNC Charlotte has its highest U.S. News ranking ever, No. 152 for national universities. 2024-2025 was its highest enrollment year ever, and the University was recently named a Carnegie R1 research institute.

UNC Charlotte also offers an engineering college, a dedicated school of data science and is one of the first institutions to offer a degree in sports analytics.

This modern growth also shows in the quality of the campus infrastructure. Dorm buildings are modern, and renovations or new buildings

are commonplace around campus.

The more modern campus also makes the campus more adaptable to growth and change. Other, more historic universities in North Carolina are struggling with modern development, a result of less-than-ideal original campus locations.

The campus's proximity to Uptown is really a great location. It has a good mix of closeness without restricting its growth if it were further built into the city. The light rail offers convenient access to the city, and the proximity helps build professional connections with businesses and companies in the region.

Even from a larger context, Charlotte is a great location for North Carolina. Mountains and the beach are both accessible in a short day trip, and Atlanta, Richmond, Va. and Charleston, S.C. are all good destination cities worthy of a drive.

A local international airport also opens the possibility for longer distances or visits from out-of-state family or friends.

UNC Charlotte also has a great-looking campus, with a cohesive brick theme throughout campus, thanks to efforts led by Chancellor James Woodward. The campus's 1,000 acres of property have wooded areas, greenways for walking and the botanical gardens for students to view.

UNC Charlotte is one of the more affordable

options for in-state universities. Yearly in-state tuition typically ranges between \$7,000 and \$8,000. With North Carolina being one of the most populous states in the country, it helps provide education to a large portion of the state.

Cons:

UNC Charlotte's location is far from perfect, though. It can feel disconnected from the city due to its distance of several miles from Uptown. Taking the light rail for public transportation usually takes at least 45 minutes, and there are fewer destination options. Most of Charlotte's appeal is not in University City, so to get a true sense of the city's culture, you have to travel a decent distance off campus.

This distance lends to the feeling that the University City area is just an offshoot of Charlotte. It does feel like there is a disconnect, especially when compared to UNC-Chapel Hill—a university more closely intertwined with its hometown, creating a more cohesive relationship between the two.

And yes, UNC Charlotte is a 'commuter' school, tending towards calmer weekends on campus. Sometimes it can seem like the only reason some students are here is to get a degree and leave, resulting in a mediocre student life. While the current administration is working to reme-

dy the problem through expanding on-campus housing options and requiring first-year students to live on campus, there is still a lot of work needed to improve Charlotte's on-campus culture.

And for those who view Greek Life as an essential part of the college experience, UNC Charlotte falls behind in that department, too. Only about 6% of students are involved in a fraternity or sorority on campus. Many other universities in North Carolina have double or even triple that number, and this lack of involvement can be a deal breaker for some.

While the campus might look nice, the minute you step out of the bounds of campus, you are exposed to Charlotte's urban sprawl. The Piedmont region already has little to offer in terms of natural beauty; combine that with the eight-lane highways and gas stations at every other intersection, and the problem is exacerbated.

And compare this to a campus like WCU or App State, and you cannot help but feel jealous seeing their campuses surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Growth can be a good thing, but it sometimes feels like too much here. With more than 30,000 students competing for housing and course registration, it can be very frustrating, and it might seem like UNC Charlotte bit off more than it could chew.

OPINION: College is about more than getting a **HIGH-PAYING JOB**

Noah Hughey | Lead Writer

Why are you going to college? Some form of the same conventional wisdom undoubtedly rattled through your mind at that question: “Go to college, get a good job, live a better life.” This logic is the first in a 15-item list of reasons to attend college, according to the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

But the pursuit of greater heights on the economic and social ladder we climb is becoming less true for graduates. It has long failed to contain the existential sustenance it promises. In its wake, we might want to consider the possibility that higher education is about something more than a trade-off of our time for a guarantee of a high-paying job.

“To me, a college education is distinguished from other kinds of education because it embodies ideals distinct from the rest of students’ lives,” wrote Professor Johann N. Neem. “If we take college education seriously, we want students to emerge from college different than when they went in. The test of a good college education is not graduates’ salaries but whether colleges have cultivated students’ intellectual virtues.”

Enter: capitalism

The rising prominence of capitalism as a philo-

sophical and economic system gives way to clear gaps between its highly materialistic valuation of goods and more abstract definitions of happiness. That said, there are grooves between the two beliefs that came together to create our current situation.

The prevailing logic would be that creating the conditions under which humans thrive is more materially attainable, thus leading to the individual happiness that the ancient thinkers and their educational institutions promoted. Problem solved, right?

If you buy into the idea that money can buy happiness, then yes. The assumption was that the payout would be worth the meticulous intellectual segregation. With an economy powered by America’s novel leadership in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), it was guaranteed that those safe bets meant safe livelihoods.

The safety of these guaranteed job opportunities meant that the more abstract fields—philosophy, the humanities as a whole—could take a back seat on account of their impracticality in securing work. Instead, workers should prioritize studying something safe, going to work, and then, when they have enough money to afford ample leisure time, use it to investigate the mysteries of life and the universe.

The reality

This promise has not been the case. Instead, we have consistently disregarded the humanities as being so unimportant that their study at all is a waste. Even if we gain leisure time post-graduating, why bother? With opportunities to earn even more money, who wants to sit around and read when they can ‘live’ life through the experiences and commodities they can afford to adorn it with.

The real kicker in all of this is that for many, society’s end of the promise that a college education guarantees lucrative employment cannot even be fulfilled. Unemployment for degree holders is higher than the overall unemployment rate in the US, the worst it has been in 12 years.

It is no surprise, then, that activists have begun calling college a scam and peddling ridiculous and expensive online courses about ‘preparing for the future.’ Our devaluing of a rich, intellectually virtuous education has created a vacuum that con artists have attempted to fill. Our love of money as the single tool through which human happiness can be achieved has created inequalities that not only cannot be resolved by

more money, but must never be resolved for the top earners to continue their gift.

Why are we here, then?

“Colleges must teach students to think, provide them the knowledge and skills to think with, and enable them to have thoughts worth thinking,” said Neem. “But most of all, they must graduate people who are not just morally and civically virtuous but intellectually virtuous.”

This is not necessarily about returning to some lost, virtuous age in higher education. It is not some kind of ‘gotcha’ or a promise to be fabulously rich when you graduate. It is a commitment to use the skills you learned to be a good person. It is, as Neem called it, “learning as an end in itself.”

Ultimately, all those golden promises society tells students are nonsense. And when they build their lives around them, that is not the school’s fault for failing to make them successful; it is society’s fault for believing such ridiculous promises were, or should be, true.

Before you now are two primary choices: Study what is safe, and hope you are lucky enough to get by on a career you might sort of care about. Or, study what you love, and live a life full of the passion of your interests, in spite of the stuff you cannot control.



Camila Surinach/Niner Times



OPINION: Newspapers are cool, especially the student ones

Lauren Simendinger | Staff Writer

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

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

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

There is some debate around when the first college newspaper was founded. The Dartmouth has claimed to be the oldest, with a founding in 1799, but it did not become a publication by and for students until 1839. It was not weekly until 1904, and The Cornell Daily Sun says it is the oldest continuous student

publication, with a founding date in 1880.

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

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

It is essential to stay informed about the broader community around you. The Charlotte Observer, local news stations and social media will all tell you that. But the Niner Times will tell you what is happening on this very campus, and what is important to its students.

It will share the score of the latest football game and break down what went right and what went wrong. It will tell you who joined the school board, who is running for student government elections and what their policies are. It will tell you how state and national pol-

icies affect the Charlotte campus. Like any good newspaper, it will not just provide information, but answers.

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

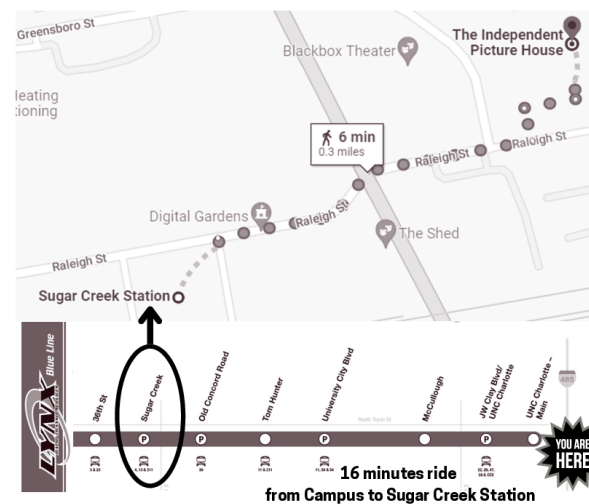
College can be a very busy time. Reading an article, especially a long one, can take a few minutes out of your precious time. The students behind a college newspaper know this, especially as they take time out of their busy schedules to write and pursue these stories. They do it because these stories matter, and you matter. You deserve to be a part of the conversation.

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



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independentpicturehouse.org



Blaise Uy/Niner Times

OPINION: IT IS OK TO ENTER COLLEGE WITHOUT A PLAN

Niner Times Archive

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

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

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

solely for the sake of having a 'plan.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



HEALTH & WELLBEING

OUR HWB Promise

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



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

OUR FOCUS IS HEALTH CARE

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



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

OUR FOCUS IS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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



CWP (Center for Wellness Promotion)

OUR FOCUS IS WELLNESS EDUCATION

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



UREC (University Recreation)

OUR FOCUS IS PHYSICAL WELLNESS

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

Scan to learn more about the HWB Unit and all departments



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Opinion: College is for everyone

Emsley Jackson | Opinion Editor

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

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

Social butterflies

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

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

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

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

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

Bookworms

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

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

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

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

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

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

Busy bees

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

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

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

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



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