NINER TIMES

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Aug. 29, 2023



NEW LOOK, SAME TASTE:
SOCIAL 704, A LARGER CROWN COMMONS

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GOLDRUSH FOOTBALL PREVIEW

NINERTIMES

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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.

The Niner Times aims to provide accurate and fair news to the UNC Charlotte community. We cover campus happenings, news and events in the city of Charlotte and North Carolina and topics that are important to students. We publish written, photo and video content online (ninertimes.com), on social media and through our weekly email newsletter (sent every Tuesday at 9:30 am). We also produce a supplemental bi-weekly (every other week) in-print newspaper that hits stands on Tuesdays.

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LOOKING DEEPER INTO THE PHASE XVI DELAY AND UNC CHARLOTTE'S RESPONSE

AJ Siegel & Bryson Foster | Copy Editor & Editor at-Large

On Thursday, July 27, UNC Charlotte Housing and Residence Life (HRL) announced a construction delay for Phase XVI affecting move-in and housing for 450 students. In the month since the announcement, the new completion date for Phase XVI is yet to be announced.

Construction delays

According to an Oct. 12, 2022, contract, the Phase XVI construction is estimated to cost $49,792,000. The project was initially estimated to be completed on July 1, 2023.

The construction company, New Atlantic Contracting, extended the project deadline to Aug. 6, 2023, according to a July 12, 2023, contract cost summary. This delay resulted in an additional $392,901 cost, bringing the project total to $50,184,901.

Phase XVI completion was further delayed past Aug. 6 due to missing critical path items, which resulted in the move-in delay.

"Critical path items are tasks that must be completed for subsequent tasks to continue," said HRL. "In other words, if there are delays in any of these tasks, it sets off a chain of delays in other tasks."

HRL said that New Atlantic Contracting provides regular updates about the construction progress. HRL did not provide a specific date of when New Atlantic Contracting informed them of the delay.

"Until recently, they maintained a high confidence level that the building would be ready for the first day of move-in," said HRL.

Effects on residents

The Phase XVI delay comes after last year's fall 2022 move-in crisis, where 300 students did not have on-campus housing and were assigned to off-campus hotels or apartment buildings. HRL said they are doing things differently this year.

"This year, students have been assigned to temporary housing, on campus or in a local hotel, due to the construction delays affecting Phase XVI," said HRL. "Students assigned to the hotel will receive the same level of staff support found in on-campus residence halls."

Students who needed housing were placed in the Hilton Charlotte University City Place Hotel or vacant on-campus housing slots, most of which were in Sanford Hall. According to HRL, approximately 350 students were temporarily placed in on-campus housing, and 100 students and 14 resident advisors were placed in the Hilton.

HRL said the hotel choice was due to meeting the requirement for the number of rooms.

"The Hilton Charlotte University Place Hotel was able to provide the University with the requested number of rooms and is working with the University to accommodate our additional support systems for our students – such as on-site food availability," said HRL.

According to Student Body President Tife Olusesi, the Student Government Association (SGA) was informed of the delay on the day of the announcement. On Monday, July 31, SGA met with Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Dr. Kevin Bailey, Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs Richard Amon and Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Dr. Christine Davis to discuss the issue.

"We wanted to understand if the University had known for a while because we weren't informed prior to the announcement," said Olusesi.

SGA has been meeting with HRL to discuss the mental impact on students due to the delay.

"I don't think that you can quantify someone's struggle when they get displaced. We want to make sure the University does its part and communicates the value of the resources that they are providing," said Olusesi.

The delays impacted the start of residents' first year at Charlotte.

"I am incredibly frustrated and disappointed about the housing situation I find myself in," said first-year Phase XVI resident Kriti Palaparthy. "This turn of events has left me feeling let down and disheartened, as I had certain expectations and hopes for my living environment that have now been disrupted."

Action going forward

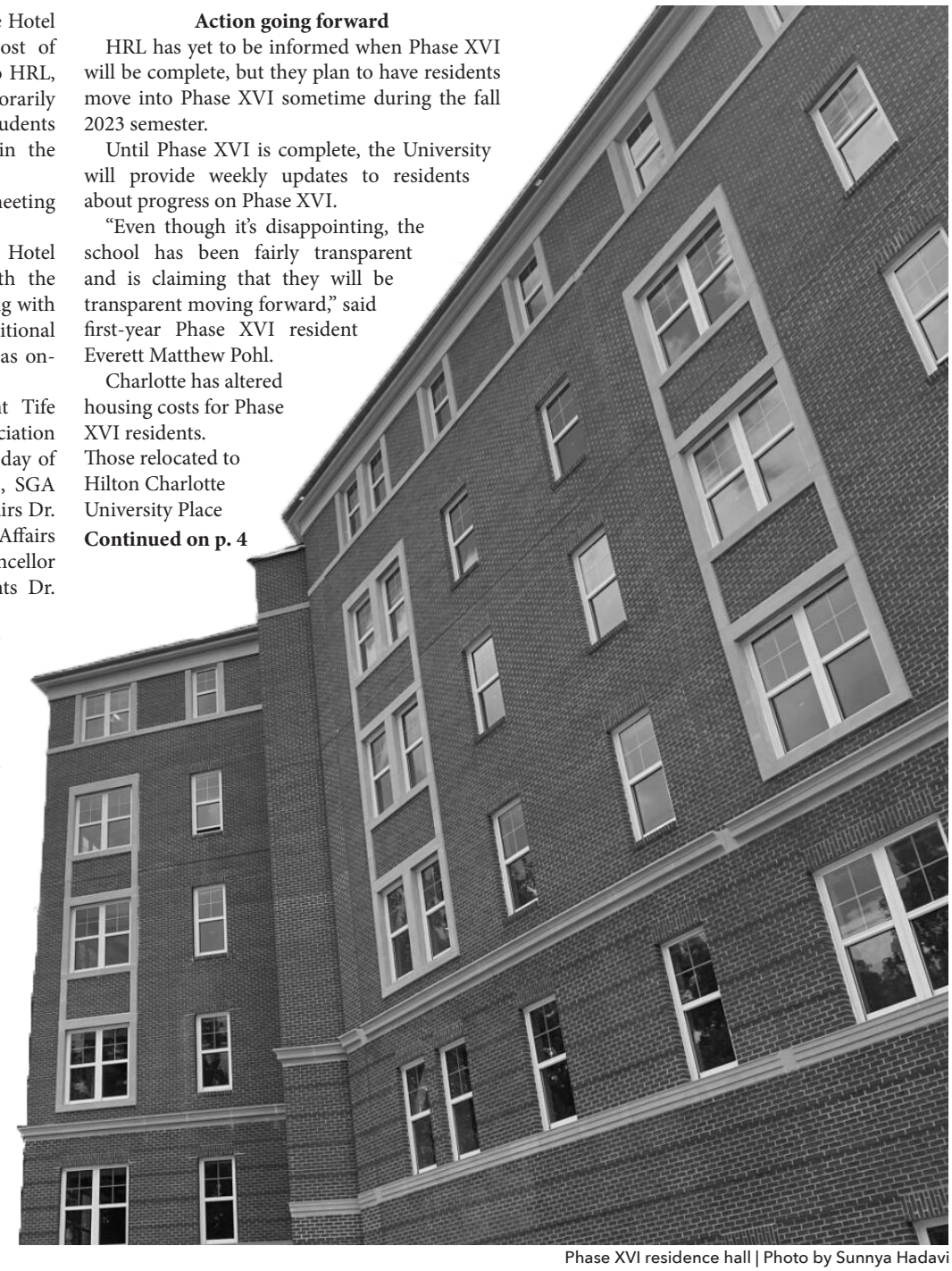
HRL has yet to be informed when Phase XVI will be complete, but they plan to have residents move into Phase XVI sometime during the fall 2023 semester.

Until Phase XVI is complete, the University will provide weekly updates to residents about progress on Phase XVI.

"Even though it's disappointing, the school has been fairly transparent and is claiming that they will be transparent moving forward," said first-year Phase XVI resident Everett Matthew Pohl.

Charlotte has altered housing costs for Phase XVI residents. Those relocated to Hilton Charlotte University Place

Continued on p. 4



Phase XVI residence hall | Photo by Sunnya Hadavi

Continued from p. 3

hotel have their entire fall 2023 housing covered by the University. Those relocated to other on-campus housing received a $1,000 credit and are charged a reduced housing rate of $3,380, the lowest on-campus housing cost, for the fall semester.

"Although I got $1000 back, I feel as though this is not enough to make up for my housing situation," said Palaparthy.

HRL will provide move-in assistance to relocate students when Phase XVI is complete, according to Aug. 10 emails sent to residents. HRL is also providing storage for residents' belongings.

"The University has taken an understanding approach of how we can make sure that students who couldn't live in the Phase XVI housing are able to still have a smooth transition to live on campus and to live within Charlotte without feeling slighted," said Olusesi.

Even with the delay, Phase XVI residents are trying to make the best of the situation.

"I came in with a really negative mindset regarding being placed in temporary housing. The thought of another roommate and moving mid semester wasn't how I pictured my first semester going," said first-year Phase XVI resident Peyton Davis. "Yes, I originally wished for Phase XVI to be completed, but now I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm so thankful for the community that I've built in Houlshouser within this short period of time and sad I'll have to leave."

HRL will notify students once Phase XVI is complete.

The Niner Times will provide more updates as they become available.



SIGMA KAPPA CHAPTER GOES DORMANT AFTER THE 2023 SCHOOL YEAR

Jenny Kase | Asst. News Editor

UNC Charlotte's Sigma Kappa (ΣK) chapter, established in 1989, has gone dormant following the spring 2023 semester due to low recruitment numbers and housing debts.

A member of Sigma Kappa, who chose to be anonymous, discussed her experiences and what led to closing the chapter. The chapter finalized the decision after discussing their outstanding debt to housing for empty room fees.

"In early March, our advisors came to our chapter meeting to talk to us about housing fines. We were about $113,000 in debt to housing for empty room fees. Those started wracking up about four or five years ago from COVID, and generally [members] do not want to live in the sorority house, which is not uncommon," the source said.

Many PHA (Panhellenic Association) sororities face debt due to empty room fees. The members are responsible for paying fines to cover the rooms since the houses belong to sororities, not university housing.

Sigma Kappa experienced low recruitment numbers, particularly in the 2022-23 academic year, that reached a breaking point.

"It became too much. It got to the point where I was the one to stand up and say at what point do the fines become too much, and we close the chapter," the source said.

From that point, conversations commenced, evoking discussions and meetings to finalize the decision to go dormant.

Several factors contributed to low recruitment numbers, such as problems at the system level and battling stigmatization from students and other PHA organizations.

The low recruitment numbers have been significant for the PHA, specifically Sigma Kappa. During fall 2022 recruitment, Sigma Kappa was unable to meet their member class requirements.

"OFSL [Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life] did nothing to help us get the numbers that we needed. We only got a new member class of eight when the minimum was around 20," the source said.

The broader Greek life culture on campus also contributed to low recruitment numbers and negative stigmas against Sigma Kappa.

"To the PHA, there's a stigma that we're, quote-unquote, the weird or fat girls. It's a little bit rude. It's something that has been going on for a long time," the source said. "I don't think it's true that we're the weird girls. It's just this weird stereotype that does not make sense."

Members became exhausted from battling stereotypes and judgments, according to the source. Despite reactions Sigma Kappa faced from other organizations, the chapter has made a lasting impact on its members and the community.

"Sigma Kappa gave me a home, community and comfort that I had people on this campus. I had a family here, and I know that holds true for many of our sisters. It shows you that other people share the same values, majors, likes and dislikes. It really gives you a sense of comfort," the source said.

In light of the recent news of the chapter's closing, Sigma Kappa is taking this experience and growing from it.

"We definitely learned to let things go. We realized that it's okay to stop fighting and it's okay to give in. We didn't give up, we've been working on this for years, and it became too much. We learned that preconceived notions about us as people, just to let it go. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what other people think or say," the source said.

Sigma Kappa has recently received an influx of love and support on social media following the release of this information to the rest of the PHA.

"I don't know how truthful any of this is, to be completely honest," the source said. "In my time in Sigma Kappa, I have not felt support from the PHA or OFSL entirely. We get funny looks. We get whispers. Now it's all these nice words saying we will be missed, and it's a bit of whiplash, but I do think there will be a hole in the Greek community."

Members of Sigma Kappa hope to see changes within Greek life in general. They want other chapters to avoid facing the treatment they did with other organizations.

"I hope that Greek life makes some changes. Sigma Kappa has gotten the short end of the stick. We've been cheated out of recruitment, looked down on by PHA, called weird by fraternities, left out of things and just not treated fairly," the source said.

It is still being determined whether the chapter will return to Charlotte any time soon. Nonetheless, they hope the future is bright for Sigma Kappa and its emerging chapters.

"I hope Sigma Kappa comes back. I hope the girls in the future are still the nice girls, the people that hold the door for you, ask you how your day is going, smile and wave, and are genuinely nice people. I hope that doesn't change," the source said.

WHAT IS PHA?

Panhellenic (PHA) is one of the five Greek Life councils at UNC Charlotte. The council houses the following sororities:

- Alpha Delta Pi
- Alpha Chi Omega
- Chi Omega
- Delta Zeta
- Kappa Alpha Theta
- Kappa Delta
- Zeta Tau Alpha

PHA organizations begin recruitment Labor Day weekend. During Formal Recruitment, prospective members meet with and have the opportunity to learn about Charlotte's sororities through speaking with members of various chapters.

For more information, go to PHA's Instagram account @charlottepanhellenic.



Salad being prepared at the Social 704 Preview Day | Photo by Richard Nuzzo

NEW LOOK, SAME TASTE: SOCIAL 704, A LARGER CROWN COMMONS

Haywood Hayes | Staff Writer

Social 704, the renovated space of the former Crown Commons with construction and food quality improvements, is a larger Crown Commons with new furniture and torn-down walls. But future improvements still need to be made.

The space

The Popp Martin Student Union dining hall renovations started on April 9, but the planning for its renovations started four years ago. During the planning process, many factors were taken into consideration to improve the experience.

"We felt that [the space] was very closed in," said Jody Thompson, director of Auxiliary Services. "The ceilings were low, a lot of closed-off stations, so we wanted to open up the space and make it more enjoyable and [a space] where students can hang out instead of going to eat then leaving."

Students recognized these changes and saw their feedback being implemented.

"Renovations were much needed," said third-year Abdoulaye Ndiaye. "[There is] much more space and it looks like a real cafeteria."

"I like it a lot. There is a lot more light in the space, and it's much more open," said second-year Jessica Moses.

Upon entering Social 704, students and guests can see inside the entire space and see all it has to offer from the entrance. The number of food stations have expanded and students have a greater variety of food to choose from.

The former Crown Commons had a wall blocking the view so no one could see inside it. There was originally only one line to go in, producing much traffic, but now there are multiple lanes for students and guests to enter the space.

Social 704 has a lot more space than Crown Commons. In the renovations, walls were torn down, and the patio space decreased so that the space could have an open concept. This was done so that students could congregate more and not feel sectioned off from their peers.

"It was kind of like a series of rooms you could dine in rather than having and handling one large open space," said Thompson. "So we wanted to have as few walls as possible to allow for other things to be in the space."

Though students can congregate more in Social 704, even with the walls being torn down for an open concept, the space is still crowded. It can be hard to find seating, leaving some students having to eat standing up.

"They need to make the space bigger if they ever in the future decide to renovate it again. It's not big enough to hold the capacity of students that we have," said second-year Lexi Johnson.

The food

The food quality has improved as well. There are now more options for students who are vegetarians and vegans. There is also a station with food free from the top nine allergens.

There are still concerns about whether the quality of food will last, though improvements are acknowledged.

"The food is a little better, but I do fear that it's going to be a one to two-week thing, and it's gonna go back to how it was before," said Moses.

Continual feedback

Staff members like Thompson and Katie Turner, director of Marketing for Business Services, want students and guests to continue to give feedback for the space's improvement.

"The feedback is so important. I always tell people if you don't tell me, we can't make the program any better," said Thompson. "Our dining partners are very receptive to feedback. They want to make sure that they're meeting the students' needs."

"If there are things that they don't like, they have a direct line to us and then we can respond to that and make adjustments," said Turner.

For more information about on-campus dining, students should download the Dine on Campus app. The app provides dining hall hours, menus and a space for students to leave feedback for improvements to dining halls like Social 704.

CHARLOTTE PRIDE HIGHLIGHTS LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVITY AHEAD OF PARADE

Bethany Ivan | Staff Writer

The Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade took place Aug. 19-20 in Uptown Charlotte and celebrated the city's organization, groups and communities. Since the organization's start in 2000 and its first parade in 2001, the event has become one of the largest celebrations in the Carolinas.

UNC Charlotte alumna and Charlotte Pride Communications Manager Liz Schob joined the organization in December 2022. She said that being part of Charlotte Pride drives her passion for community, one of the most important factors to both her and the organization.

"To me, community is all about having a sense of belonging and being around people who see and value you as your authentic self," said Schob. "Being involved with the Charlotte Pride community means that I can be who I am authentically and celebrate who I am every day."

Aside from the festivities, Charlotte Pride is also involved with various LGTBQ+ organizations, where inclusiveness has always been one of its main values. There are many organizations and programs that provide support and showcase LGBTQ+ youth, along with Charlotte Pride.

Volunteers participate in organizations and events, such as job fairs and Reel Out Charlotte, which is the city's annual LGBTQ+ film festival.

"Volunteers are the heart of Charlotte Pride, and we couldn't do any of this without them," said Schob. "Our core group of volunteers meets monthly to plan everything we do throughout the year."

Charlotte Pride also celebrates and showcases the unique and artistic voices in their magazine, Charlotte Pride Magazine, which highlights the talent and leadership of the LGBTQ+ community as well as different opportunities to get involved with programs that the organization offers.

"Like other premium arts, entertainment, leisure and lifestyle publications, Charlotte Pride Magazine includes interviews with artists, entertainers and high-profile community members, as well as features on the top trends and community icons popular each year," said Schob.

"The magazine also offers a wide breadth of useful information about Charlotte Pride's programs, events and highlights community leaders, award winners, scholarship recipients and more."

The LGBTQ+ community has been no stranger to prejudice in the last few years, but that does not stop Charlotte Pride from recognizing and celebrating its community and its commitment to advocate for its visibility.

"The LGBTQ+ community, unfortunately, is very familiar with facing discrimination and bigotry, but the past few years have been especially tough," Schob said. "On the surface, Pride seems like one big party, but it's so much more than that. It's about saying, 'We're here, and we have the right to be in the same spaces as everyone else. We will not hide. We're proud of who we are.'"

"It's important to have intentional time for us all to come together and celebrate our community." said Schob. "It feels like I read about a new attack on the LGBTQ+ every day, but being able to celebrate Pride in such a big way in the Queen City is so important because it reminds us all that there is still love, goodness and joy in the world."

Charlotte Pride has continuously grown within the last couple of years and has been constantly outdoing each celebration after the next. The number of people attending Pride in Uptown Charlotte showcases community support and celebration of the accomplishments and growth





Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade 2023 | Photos by Jacob Scannell (top) & Jade Suszek (bottom)





Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade 2023 | Photos by Bethany Ivan (top) & Jacob Scannell (bottom left & right)

in the community.

The first gay Pride parade was in 1981, and the first Charlotte Pride was in 2001.

"Charlotte Pride has come a long way since those early days, and I'm proud of where we are going," said Schob. "We've become such a huge part of the fabric of this city, and it's wonderful to know how much Charlotte has embraced us. Every year, we grow, and I'm very excited about the plans we have to be bigger and better than ever."

At the parade, many attendees enjoyed performances from artists such as Big Freedia, Greyson Chance and Trina.

Along with its programs and celebrations of the LGBTQ+ community, Charlotte Pride continues to increase ways to advocate for LGBTQ+ youth and organizations and even expand ways to increase inclusivity, awareness and support systems.

"We will have a lasting impact because so many people look to us as a leader in the community," said Schob. "We've been around for decades and are very proud of the legacy of LGBTQ+ advocacy we've built in the Queen City."




ΣΓΣ


RACING


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PHOTOS: NATIONAL PAN-HELLENIC COUNCIL HOSTS ANNUAL NPHC YARD SHOW

Photos by Richard Nuzzo

Jenny Kase | Asst. News Editor

On Sunday, Aug. 27, UNC Charlotte's National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) hosted their annual Yard Show from 2-5 p.m. at the Starquad.

The NPHC Yard Show is a yearly welcome back to school event hosted by Charlotte's historically African-American sororities and fraternities. The organizations exhibit their culture and pride by showcasing student entertainment, storytelling and artistry.

Yard Shows hold a cultural significance in the NPHC community, granting attendees the experience of witnessing and learning the culture of historically African-American sororities and fraternities.



ELON MUSK'S REDIRECTION OF TWITTER COULD SEND THE PLATFORM TO ITS SPIRALING END

Ruhshona Soledjonova | Opinion Editor

For many, X, formerly known as Twitter, was home to rapid communication and the exchange of ideas among a world of unique individuals. In the hands of Elon Musk, this popular social media platform is now taking a turn for the worst.

Musk, who bought Twitter last year, has made significant changes to the platform by changing Twitter to X. Musk's concept of making X an "everything app" raises concerns for the future of Twitter because it could mean more transformations that ultimately fail users.

Currently, this change means that users are still encouraged to tweet and retweet messages, but the rebranding of the name also implies tweeting more than 140 characters.

In a recent tweet, Musk said, "Twitter was acquired by X Corp both to ensure freedom of speech and as an accelerant for X, the everything app. This is not simply a company renaming itself, but doing the same thing."

Some say that 2022 was the last 'normal' year for Twitter and even argue that the app will never be the same under Musk. His approach towards bettering the app by allowing people to say absolutely anything they want did quite the opposite with increased misinformation, spam bots and hate speech.

The frustrating part of Musk's goals for the platform is that he seems more talk than bite.

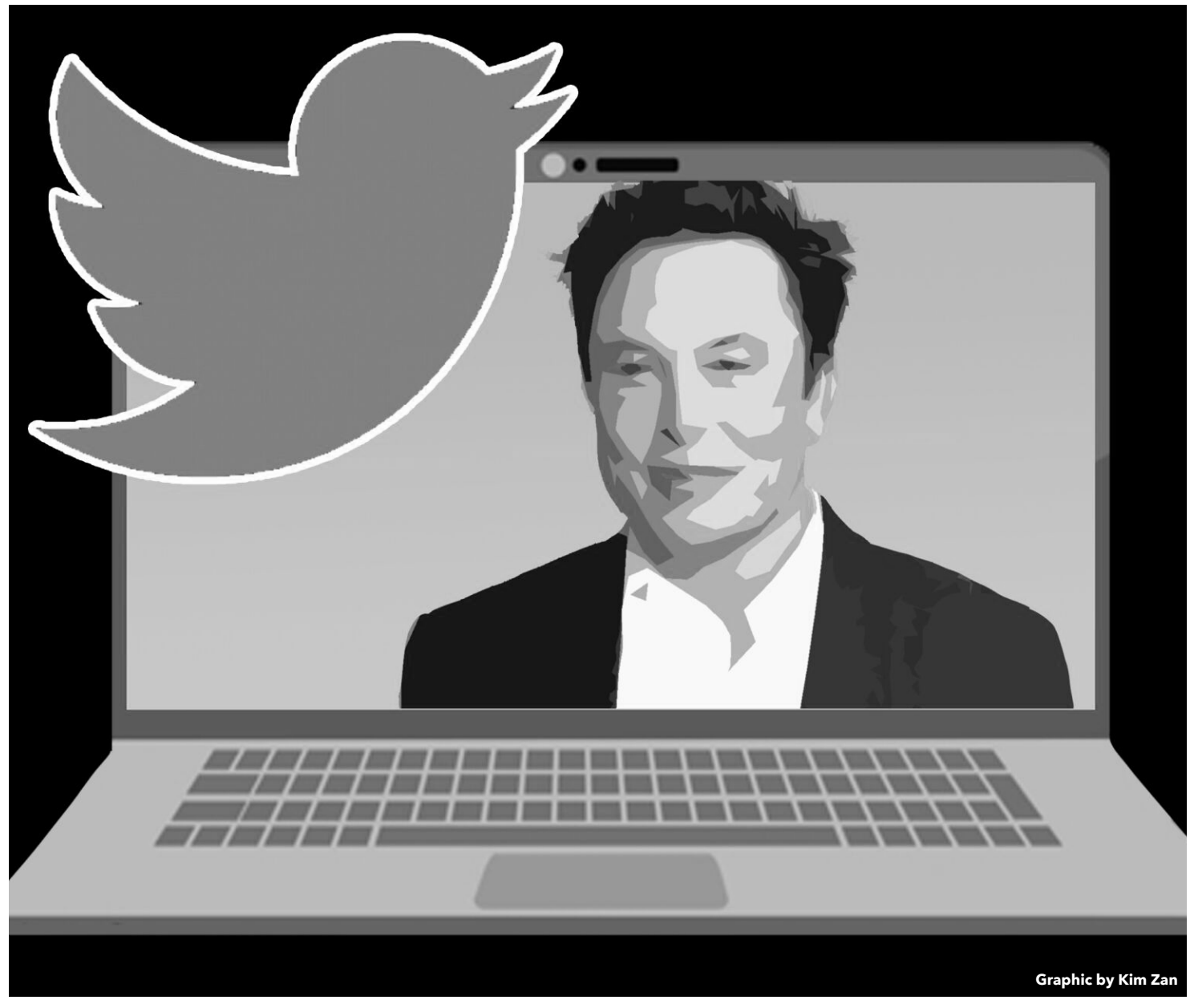
In one year, Musk has fired roughly 80% of its staff, leaving 1,500 active workers. He has also implemented monthly subscriptions for the blue checkmarks that have left no meaning or purpose and sneaky, behind-the-scenes tinkering with the algorithm by getting rid of content moderation rules.

Shaping X to become a multifunctional financial web is something that other companies and platforms like Instagram's Threads, Facebook-Meta and even TikTok are pursuing. However, these altercations for bettering the product the way Musk intends to is only driving users away.

Users are quick to notice when something is not cooperating to their liking and can move on to the next hot item in a heartbeat. This shift has already begun, with Mark Zuckerberg's Threads hitting 100 million users in its first week.

This shocking record triggered Musk to madness as he pushed for legal action and sparked an even bigger feud with Zuckerberg. Unfortunately, Musk announced that ad revenues are down 50% as of July 2023.

Social media consumers fear for the future of X, as it once was a comfort place for many and one of the most used platforms, which might not make it much longer.



Graphic by Kim Zan

BOOK BANS SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED FOR THE NEED FOR CREATIVE LIBERATION

Amna Noyal | Staff Writer

Books can question social conventions and alter viewpoints. However, many books have unfortunately been prohibited throughout history. Book bans should be discouraged because maintaining literary freedom is essential for society to thrive.

Books have historically been used as tools for cultural development, spreading knowledge and human expression. The most controversial books are those written by members of the Black and LGBTQ+ communities or that tell the stories of those groups.

Most of these books were labeled inappropriate because many thought they were sexually explicit, contained sexual imagery or made sexual allusions. Many books that discussed the LGBTQ+ community and allegedly fostered anti-police attitudes were also challenged.

Books are used to build critical thinking skills and as drivers for developing informed opinions. Readers are exposed to various perspectives by examining a wide range of themes and perspectives that encourage them to challenge existing assumptions.

Book bans limit readers' access to this intellectual stimulation, denying them the chance to engage with complicated concepts and make their own reasoned decisions.

George Orwell's "1984" is a book that was banned and, in turn, led to many issues. When "1984" was first published, governments and institutions were suspicious of its depiction of authoritarianism and tried to censor it.

The publication of this work was banned, preventing readers from reading thought-provoking literature and participating in critical debates about the nature of power, freedom and the perils of uncontrolled authority.

At UNC Charlotte, the Critical Media Literacy Collaborative (CMLC) educates students on the importance of reading literature and how to consume digital media.

"The Critical Media Literacy Collaborative is a group of faculty, staff and students at UNC Charlotte working to increase awareness of digital media literacy," said Natalie Ornat, Atkins Library staff and member of the CMLC.

Ornat said that challenges to books in public libraries and K-12 schools have increased exponentially, with many of these challenges and successful bans targeting materials sharing the stories and voices of members of the LGBTQ+ community and people of color.

In fall 2022, Ornat taught a course exploring why books are being banned and what that means for societal fears and anxieties.

The issue of book bans is not as simple as what we see or hear about; rather, the issue is deep-rooted and can affect our personal lives.

Ornat urges us to take action and interest in this upcoming phenomenon in the book world.

"We can become more understanding, more empathetic, particularly through fiction reading," said Ornat.

Books have the amazing power to take readers to new worlds and introduce them to lifestyles outside of their own. Literature encourages empathy and understanding by presenting readers with many kinds of characters with their separate experiences.

"Books operate as mirrors and windows. When we see ourselves reflected in the pages of a book, we can feel validated and accepted, especially when our wider society may not give us that same acceptance," said Ornat.

Book bans and censorships limit this capacity by limiting readers' exposure to various realities and obstructing the growth of tolerance and compassion.

For the values of critical thinking, cultural preservation and empathy against censorship to be stood by, book bans must be discouraged. We can foster a setting where ideas can be freely exchanged, where society can advance, and where people can become more knowledgeable members of their communities by embracing literary diversity.

Defending literary freedom while abolishing book bans should be important for the wide range of perspectives books provide, as they are the key to a more promising and inclusive future.

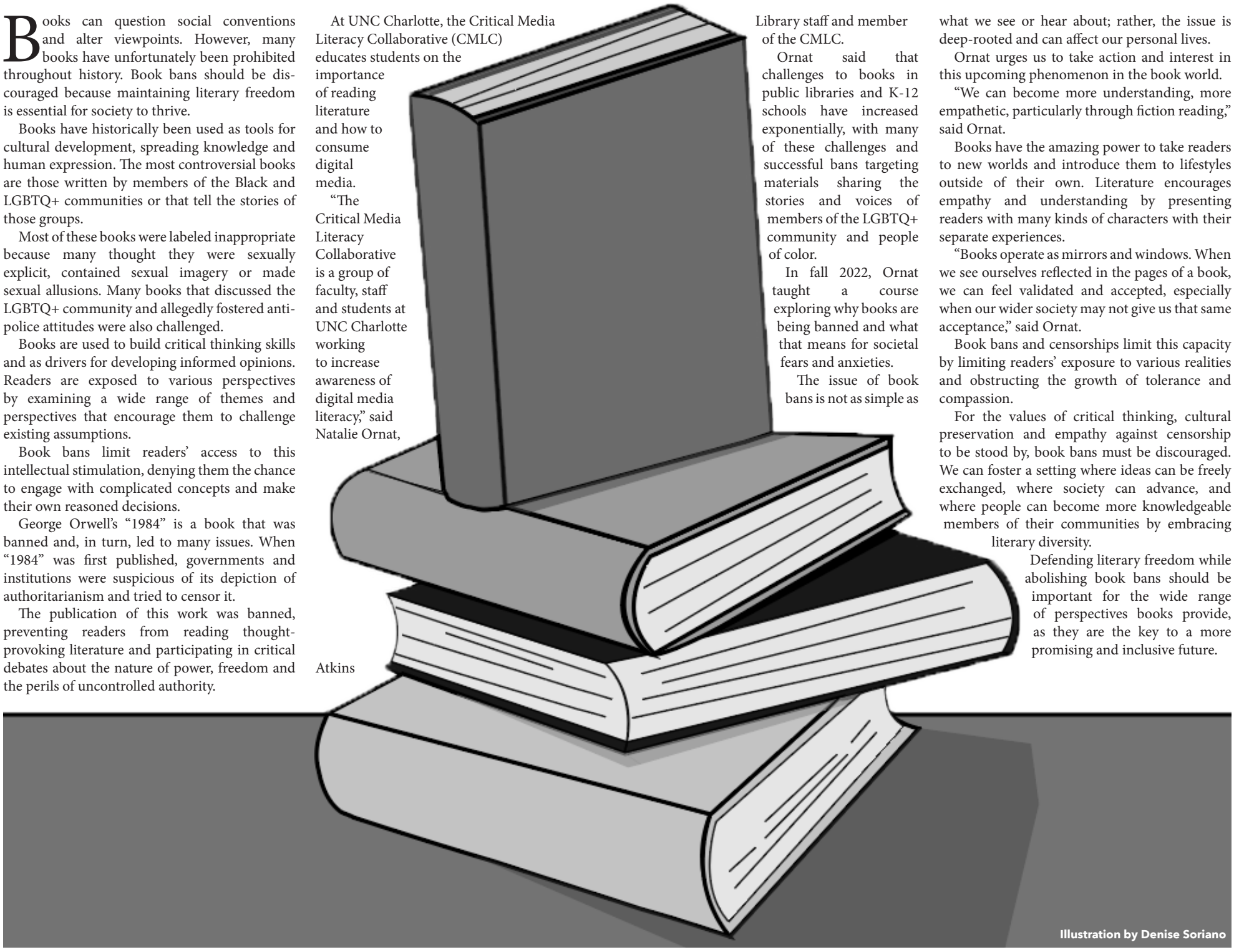
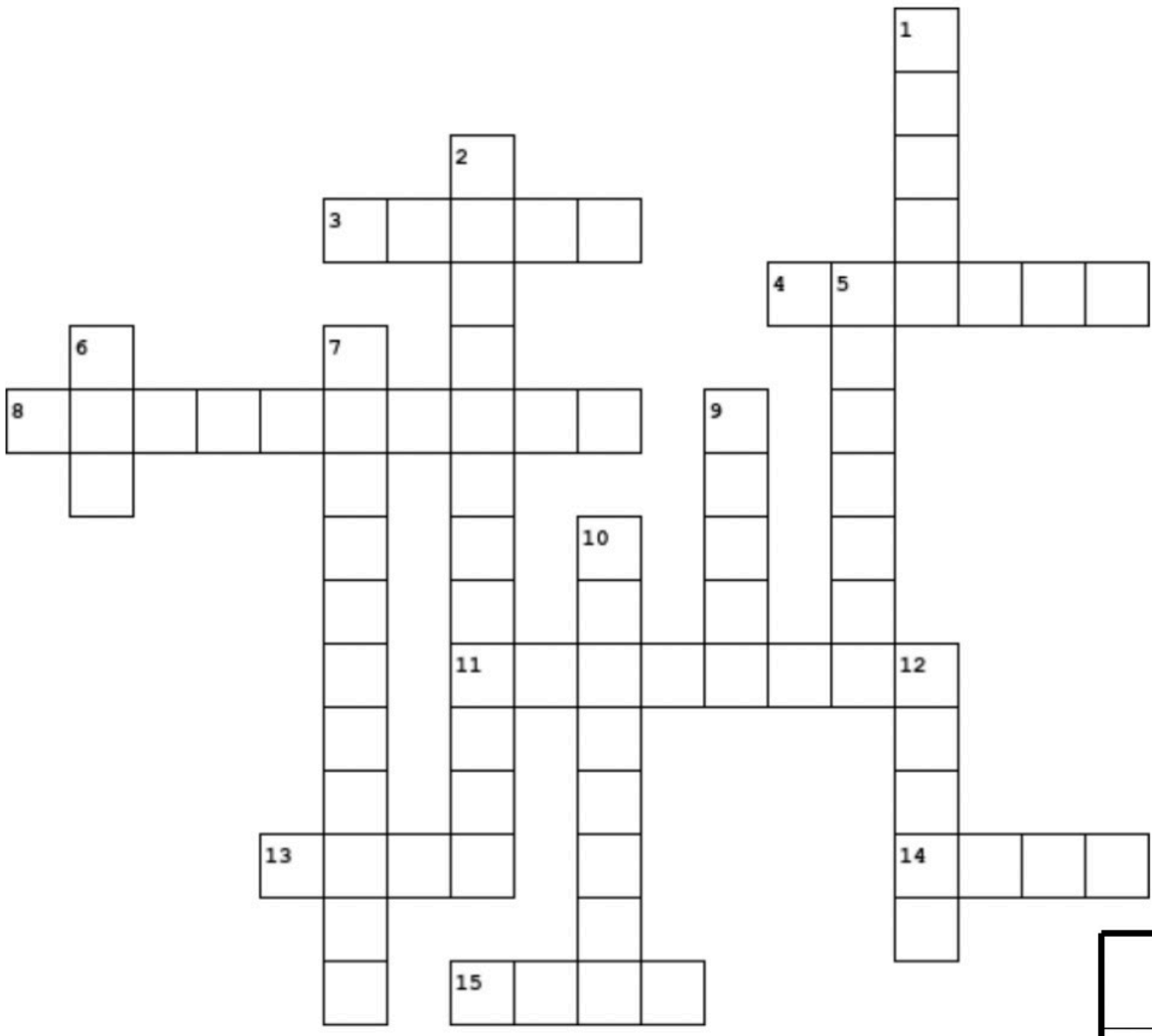


Illustration by Denise Soriano



Crossword by Niner Times Editorial Board

CHECK THE 9/12 ISSUE FOR THE ANSWERS TO THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU!

NINER TIMES CROSSWORD

Down

1. What the Q stands for in LGBTQ+
2. Charlotte Volleyball Invitational MVP
5. Last name of Charlotte's current undergraduate student body president
6. Amount of stories that Phase XVI will have
7. UNC Charlotte's vice chancellor for student affairs
9. First opponent for Charlotte men's soccer
10. Charlotte's welcome back program that kicks off the semester
12. College Sigma Kappa founding university

Across

3. _____ Commons: The name of Social 704 before its renovation
4. _____ Mann: Led the nation's first board of education in Massachusetts
8. The name of the historic black fraternities and sororities
11. New _____ Contracting that is building Phase XVI
13. _____ Musk: Current Twitter/X CEO
14. New Charlotte football coach
15. Acronym for the Greek council that hosted the Yard Show

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DID YOU KNOW?

BALD EAGLE CRIES ARE OFREN DUBBED OVER WITH THE CALLS OF RED-TAILED HAWKS IN MOVIES AND TV SHOWS.

SEND US A LETTER TO THE EDITOR!

IS THERE ANYTHING ON YOUR MIND ABOUT THE NINER TIMES, CAMPUS, CHARLOTTE OR OUR COMMUNITY? GET YOUR THOUGHTS OUT THERE BY SENDING US A LETTER!

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FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM CHARLOTTE VOLLEYBALL'S OPENING INVITATIONAL SWEEP

Joey Ellsworth & Itza Ochoa | Sports Editor & Asst. Sports Editor

Charlotte volleyball started their season with a strong start, going 3-0 in the Charlotte Invitational on Friday, Aug. 25.

The 49ers took down Charleston Southern University, Elon University and Coastal Carolina University for a combined total score of 9-3.

Here are five takeaways from their season opening.

Sophie Whalen is back

Whalen is leading the charge for the 49ers, providing a significant effort to the Charlotte victories. Whalen was named the MVP of the invitational as she earned her 1,000th career dig in the win over Coastal Carolina.

Whalen tallied 323 digs in the 2022 season and has already begun the new season with 61 digs just from opening weekend.

Starting strong may be a key factor to success

With three wins to start the season, the 49ers gain significant momentum as they have a large portion of the year ahead. The strong start may give them the confidence they lacked last year and lift them to a better finish as the season reaches its end.

The 49ers only gave up one game against Charleston Southern and Elon. Although Charlotte fell in two sets back-to-back against Coastal Carolina, they managed to push a fifth set to win 3-2.

No Foster, no problem

Charlotte suffered the loss of big-named players over the summer, such as Emani' Foster. Foster set several records during her time as a 49er, including a career-high of 28 kills in one game. It was a question of how the team would perform in the new season with missing components.

Middle blocker Lara Kretschmer gave the team the confidence boost needed by opening the season with 10 digs and 21 blocks, helping lead the team to an undefeated weekend start.

The 49ers can handle the spotlight

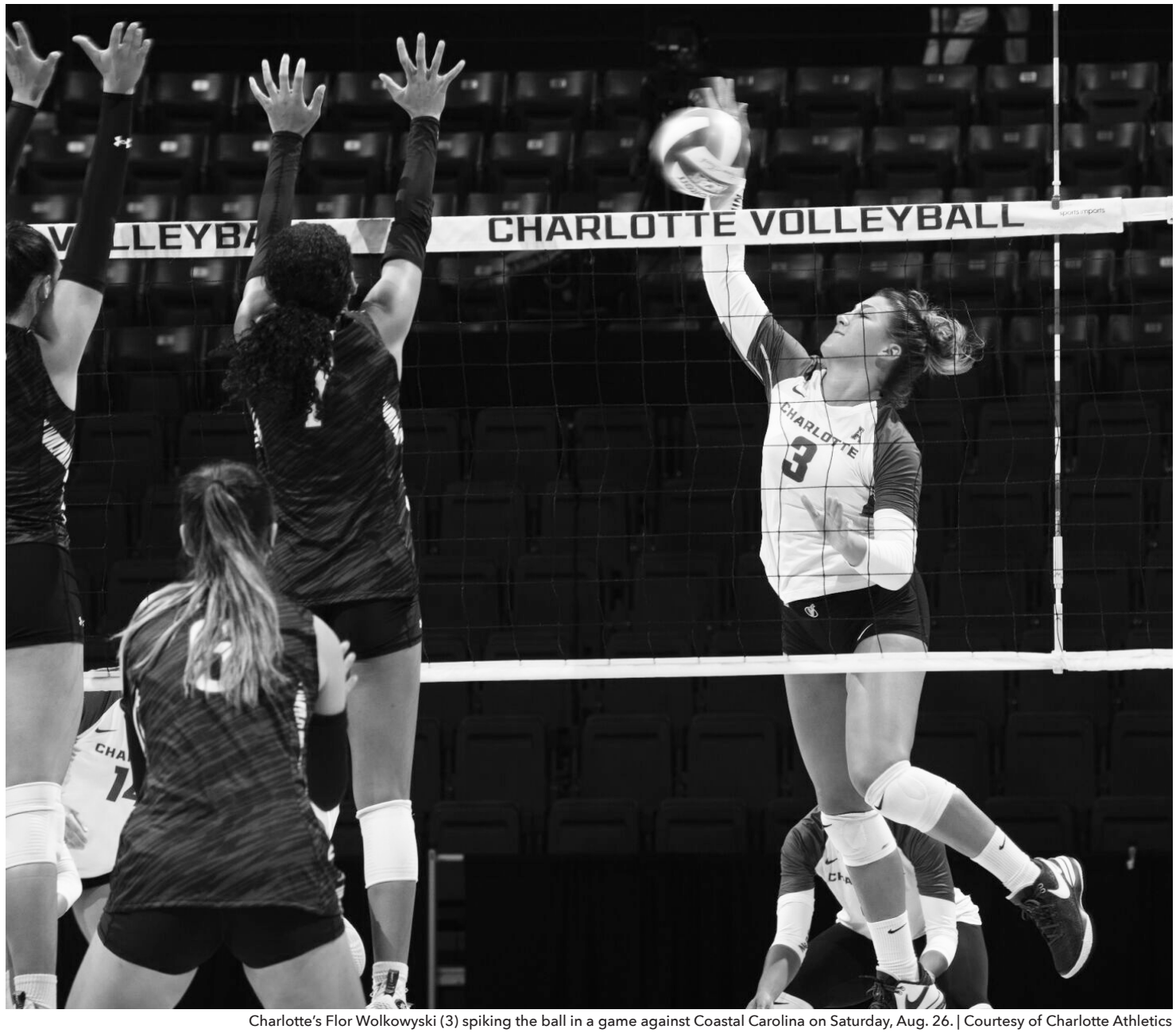
The Charlotte Invitational was broadcast on ESPN+, which showcased the effort that Charlotte can handle the pressure and pull away with victories.

With many ESPN+ broadcasted games later on in the season, the 49ers showing they can get it done in the spotlight early in the season gives good signs for the future.

Continuing the trend

The 49ers have had winning records in their opening invitationals each year since 2018, when they split their four games 2-2.

Charlotte successfully went 4-0 in the Charlotte Invitational back in the 2022 season, going 12-2 in total sets.



Charlotte's Flor Wolkowyski (3) spiking the ball in a game against Coastal Carolina on Saturday, Aug. 26. | Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

A HOPEFUL FUTURE: A Q&A WITH CHARLOTTE FOOTBALL OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR MIKE MILLER

Joey Ellsworth | Sports Editor

The Charlotte football team is coming off a disappointing 2022 season, going 1-7 before firing Head Coach Will Healy. They finished the year 3-9. Offensive Coordinator Mark Carney was also fired, and the new head coach, Biff Poggi, entrusted Mike Miller to take up the role, naming the Maryland co-offensive coordinator and Charlotte native as the 49ers' offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in December 2022.

"Mike's name was at the front of every conversation and recommendation when I spoke to people about up-and-coming play callers," said Poggi. "He has coached with Brian Daboll and Nick Saban at Alabama, Dabo Swinney and Mike Locksley. These men are some of the best in our profession. Mike is a great teacher and mentor. Players love him and he loves his players. We have a star in Mike Miller."

Miller sat down with the Niner Times to share his expectations for the 2023 campaign.

Niner Times: How have you been feeling about the team so far?

Miller: It's been good—a totally new team. We have acquired a lot of individual talent, and Biff is best at taking that individual talent and becoming a talented team. We're all coming from different programs, different journeys, different stories, different backgrounds. At our first team meeting, Biff said, 'The coach's job is to love the players and the player's job is to love each other.' That's what we've been doing every day. There's been growing pains, but it's been great. I am really excited about the season.

NT: You talked about the growing pains and the program's new look. How's the transfer been coming to Charlotte and being in a slightly different position now?

Miller: It's been great. I love it, love our staff. It's been a blast to work with them every day. The transition has been great. I was born and raised here, so coming back home has been really easy for me, my wife and our three children. I think my mom and dad are more excited than I was to come back here because they're with their grandchildren all day. My wife and I were here in our first year of marriage, so being back home has been really sweet for us. I drive by every day where I was a high school coach back in 2016, and I see the field where I cut the grass every day. And so it's kind of nostalgic being back home.

NT: Does that give it more of a connection when trying to prove what this team can do and make it more emotional for you?

Miller: I wouldn't say more emotional; it's got a special place in my heart. But it's been a lot of fun and it's gone by fast. It's been great to work with Biff. He's awesome. He's a mover and shaker and doesn't take no for an answer. I've loved being a part of this for the last eight months and I'm excited for the upcoming fall.

NT: The big story that Poggi talked about during the press conference for this year is a new team and overcoming a lot of criticism for the past year. How has that impacted you and your coaching?

Miller: We're aware of it, and to be honest, it's put an even bigger chip on our shoulder. Everybody here feels like we have something to prove. We want to block out the noise. I don't really care what other people are saying about us. We're focused on our progress and not only how we play, but playing to our standard. That's been a big theme on offense for us.

NT: On offense, have any players stood out to you so far?

Miller: I wouldn't say individual players, but more position groups. I've been pleased by the offensive lines, the tight ends and the backs. They've done a great job. Like the front seven, that's how we will be different in the conference, establishing the run first. The tight ends are really an extension of the offensive line and they have a really good group.

The backs have really done a great job of just understanding all the different runs schemes we have and the different gap schemes and protection. The mindset of this offense is to run the ball and enforce our will to defeat teams psychologically and physically and then take shots throughout the game. When they bring all the guys in the box, we're gonna throw it over their heads. We've been really pleased with how things have gone so far and are excited.

NT: Are there any players from Maryland you have experience with?

Miller: There's a couple of kids that came here from Maryland. It's been great to watch their development over spring and summer. Some of them I recruited to Maryland, so having them here has been a blast. Offensively, Ja'Khi Green is an offensive lineman who's done a nice job coming along. Joe Bearns, the fullback, has done a great job. He got here in the summertime.

Defensively there are a couple of guys, I feel out there like Isaiah Hazel, he's a safety. He's been doing a nice job from what I've seen on my side of the ball. Looking at the defense, there's T.J. Butler, who's a defensive end. They've all done a really nice job and I think it's been good for them too, being a part of this, coming together as a new team, new culture and a new identity.

NT: A lot of the squad has talked about how the goal is to win the conference championship. With you part of the Alabama team not too long ago, is there anything you've been able to take away from being a part of a national championship-winning team?

Miller: We talk about playing winning football on offense. Our five criteria for that are the sacks, the drops, the penalties, the fumbles and the interceptions. If we can eliminate those five things, we have a really good chance to win a lot of games. And that, to me, is how this thing is going to go. We got a really good defense and we have a special team. We're going to have an offense that controls the game, controls the clock, limits the other team's possessions, enforces our will, makes teams quit and at the end of the day, finds a way to win the game. That was everywhere I've ever been: Clemson, Alabama, Maryland and being a high school coach at Charlotte Christian.

It's been good to see that our guys understand that now. We're teaching them how to win, how important practice is and that Saturday is a reflection of what goes on Monday through Friday. Winning is a byproduct of our belief, our habits, our practice, our study and our preparation.

CLT CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

RECENT GAMES
AUG. 12 - AUG. 27

WOMEN'S SOCCER
Aug. 17: James Madison 3, Charlotte 2

Aug. 20: NC State 2, Charlotte 1

Aug. 24: Charlotte 3, Coastal Carolina 0

MEN'S SOCCER
Aug. 12: Charlotte 1, Coastal Carolina 0 (Exhibition)

Aug. 18: Louisiana Tech 4, Charlotte 3 (Exhibition)

Aug. 24: Canceled

VOLLEYBALL
Aug. 25: Charlotte 3, Charleston Southern 0

Aug. 25: Charlotte 3, Elon 1

Aug. 26: Charlotte 3, Coastal Carolina 0

OVERALL STANDINGS
Women's soccer: 1-2, 0-0

Men's soccer: 0-0, 0-0

Volleyball: 3-0, 0-0

UPCOMING GAMES
Women's soccer:
Vs. UNCG on Thursday
Aug. 31 at 7 p.m.

Men's soccer:
Vs. Lipscomb on Sunday
Sept. 3 at 8 p.m.

Volleyball:
Colorado Classic Friday
Sept. 1 — Sunday, Sept. 3

CHARLOTTE MEN'S SOCCER SEASON OPENER CANCELLED SHORT DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

Billy McGee | Staff Writer

Due to inclement weather, the Charlotte men's soccer season opener against the University of Connecticut Huskies was canceled in the 65th minute. Before the cancellation of the match, the 49ers led the Huskies 1-0.

First half

The 49ers started the game off fast, registering four shots in the first 15 minutes of the match with only one shot off target. Three of the first five shots from the 49ers came from sophomore midfielder Brad Dildy, who registered shots in the eighth, ninth and 13th minute.

It would be a while before Charlotte could get another shot in the first half. Zamar Wood, who was subbed on in the 29th minute, got involved in the match quickly, forcing the UConn goalkeeper to make a save on his shot in the 34th minute.

The first shot on goal from UConn came in the 44th minute, forcing Charlotte goalkeeper Sebastian Cutler-DeJesus to make the save to keep the score tied 0-0 going into halftime.

Second half

UConn started the second half with a shot off-target in the 48th minute. Charlotte registered three shots in the following seven minutes, the first two off-target from Wood and freshman midfielder Natsuki Ogata. The third shot of the half for Charlotte came from junior forward Brigham Larsen, who found the back of the net to put Charlotte ahead 1-0 in the 54th minute. Senior forward Jonathan Nyandjo and Ogata assisted Larsen's goal.

The 49ers managed two more shots, with one on target in the 10 minutes following the goal before the match was canceled due to inclement weather.

Takeaways

The 49ers performed well on the attack, totaling 10 shots, with six on goal before the match was canceled. Seven different 49ers combined for the 10 total shots, with Dildy having the most shots with three.

The 49ers' defense also performed well, allowing five total shots from UConn, only one of which was on goal and keeping the clean sheet until the match's cancellation.

Two 49ers were given yellow cards, the first being freshman defender Andreas Evangelou in the 34th minute and the second was junior defender Daniel Moore in the 63rd minute.

Up next

Charlotte Athletics has said there are no plans to reschedule the match against UConn.

For their next match, Charlotte men's soccer will go on the road to take on the Wofford College Terriers on Monday, Aug. 28, at 7 p.m. The match will be available to watch on ESPN+.



Charlotte men's soccer sophomore midfielder Samy Kolby (8) looks to dribble past a defender in a game against the UConn Huskies on Thursday, Aug. 24 at TransAmerica Field. | Photo courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

PHOTOS: CHARLOTTE MEN'S SOCCER AGAINST THE UCONN HUSKIES





Photos by Chris Crews

Due to inclement weather, the Charlotte men's soccer team's season opener against the University of Connecticut Huskies was canceled in the 65th minute. Before the match's cancellation, the 49ers led the Huskies 1-0 after a goal from junior defender Lasse Laursen in the 54th minute.



