

CAMPUS BRIEFS

National College Advising receives \$1.5 million grant

The National College Advising Corps, which partners UNC and 13 other colleges and universities, has received a \$1.5 million Social Innovation Fund grant.

The award, announced Wednesday, comes from New Profit, Inc. through the Pathways Fund and will place 50 additional recent college graduates from the programs' partner institutions into underrepresented communities.

Once placed, the advisers will help low-income high school students who are the first in their family to attend college to navigate the college selection and admissions processes.

The advisers funded by the grant will work through existing programs in North Carolina, Missouri, Rhode Island, Illinois and California.

Additional funds will create two new programs in California and New York City, communities identified as in need of advisers.

The National College Advising Corps partners with UNC, Brown University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Texas at Austin and University of Virginia, among other institutions.

Hot Google search words point to good investments

UNC finance professor Joey Engelberg has discovered stock ticker symbols that are popularly searched on Google can forecast an upcoming bump in the company's share price.

Search volume index could be a better predictor for near-term stock performance than traditional measures, which include news headlines and trading volumes.

Current ways of measuring investor interest in a stock assume investors take note of heavily traded or reported on stocks, but that isn't necessarily true.

In reality, many factors can affect the stock market — and big moves on the part of individual actors can make bumps that few people notice.

But by measuring the search popularity of stock ticker symbols, forecasters look at something investors are directly doing.

Engelberg came up with the concept for his research after the scientific journal Nature published a report connecting Google search trends with flu outbreaks.

This was Engelberg's first research on the connection between Google search trends and stock performance. He has recently expanded his studies to include product names such as iPads or Xboxes.

STATE BRIEFS

Student leaders to meet in Elizabeth City this weekend

UNC-system student leaders will congregate this weekend to discuss how to effectively represent students' opinions to the N.C. General Assembly and UNC-system Board of Governors.

The UNC Association of Student Governments, composed of student representatives from the UNC system's 17 institutions, will reopen discussion on two bills tabled at their January meeting.

One of the tabled bills outlines the association's priorities for the state legislature to address, and the other supports giving ASG President Atul Bhula a vote on the Board of Governors.

The association will consider feedback from delegates and student body presidents to finalize its list of legislative priorities, said Deanna Santoro, associate vice president of ASG's legislative and public affairs committee.

"It's obviously going to be extremely contentious," she said.

The priorities will serve as talking points representing students' opinions, Bhula said.

He said he thinks the bill will pass ASG's general assembly, but that the state legislature will grant a student vote whether the association passes the bill or not.

The N.C. Senate and House have already introduced bills that would provide the ASG's student member of the Board of Governors with a vote.

CITY BRIEFS

Registration for enrichment classes for summer begins

Registration for Summer Youth Enrichment classes for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools begins Monday.

Nearly 30 different sessions will be offered covering arts, culture, science, reading, writing, sports and fitness.

The classes are usually half-day and run for one to two weeks between June 20 to July 29.

Course fees range from \$60 to \$155 each.

-From staff and wire reports

Covenant scholars excelling

Increased retention and graduation

BY AMELIA NITZ

STAFF WRITER

Seven years ago, the University established the Carolina Covenant program to overcome the weight college tuition can place on students beneath the poverty line.

This week, the program that allows low-income students to graduate debt free exceeded expectations.

University officials said they were floored this week when a performance report card for the Carolina Covenant program revealed stunning increases in retention and graduation rates.

The report, which compared the entering classes from 2003 and 2005, found a 9.6 percentage point increase in four-year graduation rates, raising the rate to 66.3 percent. Meanwhile, the retention rate for covenant scholars jumped 4 percentage points, to 90.2 percent

The most drastic increase was the 27.2 percent point rise in graduation rates among male scholars compared to all male students. Male covenant scholars graduated at a rate of 67.2 percent, compared to 65.7 percent for female covenant scholars.

There are 2,200 Carolina Covenant scholars at UNC, 558 of whom are freshmen. The scholarship is given to any eligible student whose family's income falls at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Shirley Ort, director of the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid, said her office was excited by the results but unsure of their cause.

"There is a theory that young men are very responsive if you pay attention to them," Ort said. "We are wondering if the fact that we really watch the progress of students and intervene to provide assistance if needed makes a differ-

ence in this noteworthy finding."

Fred Clark, academic coordinator for Carolina Covenant, said he also thinks the attention given to students was a factor in the improvements.

"We try to make it as personal as possible by talking with students and families every day to individualize each scholar's experience," Clark said.

Clark added that the program is about more than just picking up a scholarship check, as it provides numerous social and academic opportunities, including dinners, movies, lectures and workshops.

Freshman Gina Barbato said the covenant is one of the best things that happened to her and that having no financial worries with regard to her education is an invaluable asset.

"If I always had to be worried about money and paying for school then it would definitely cut into my academics," she said.

Although the program cannot replace the student's expected family contribution, students are

awarded a combination of grants, scholarships, and work-study assignments to meet their financial needs without incurring debt.

To help Carolina Covenant scholars succeed, Ort said the program emphasizes removing financial stress, monitoring academic progress and getting students to engage with one another and the community.

Ort said she doesn't expect the program to be affected by the University's budget cuts because their cut will not come from funds designated toward student aid.

However, 59 percent of the Carolina Covenant financial aid comes from federal and state grants, which could be decreased, she said.

"The worrisome part is what happens with federal and state grants," Ort said, adding that she would seek out other sources of aid if those funds were cut. "Both are important foundations for the program."

Contact the University Editor at university@dailytarheel.com.



DTH/KATIE SWEENEY

Senior Chris Carter is a first-generation college student from Elkin and the first UNC student to receive the Gates Cambridge Scholarship. The merit-based award will allow him to complete a PhD of Political Science with a focus on Latin America at the University of Cambridge.

FIRST IN A GENERATION

Carter wins prestigious graduate scholarship

BY LAUREN RATCLIFFE

STAFF WRITER

Senior Chris Carter never had a choice.

His mother said she began reading to him from the day he was born — by age 3, he was reading on his own.

It was part of a plan: Get him to college.

Carter fulfilled that goal, enrolling at UNC as a Morehead-Cain Scholar. And beginning next year, he'll be going to graduate school as one of 30 U.S. Gates Cambridge scholars.

This May, Carter will become the first in his family to graduate from college.

His scholarship will allow him to pursue a fully-funded master's degree in Latin American studies at Cambridge University.

He said he never questioned his parents' plan for his future.

"From a young age, they ingrained it in me that 'You are going to college. You are going to make a better life for yourself,'" Carter said. "They sort of had all their eggs in one basket with me because I was their only child."

When Carter enrolled at UNC in the fall of 2007, he joined about 750 other first-generation students. They make up about 20 percent of the student body, said Cynthia Demetriou, director for retention in the office of undergraduate education.

She said added challenges when entering college can come from a non-college educated upbringing.

"There is a lot of navigating the higher education policies that first-generation families may not be familiar with," she said.

Brittany Greene, treasurer of Carolina Firsts, a club for first-generation students, said not understanding the process of getting into and paying for college was a challenge.

"A lot of first-generation students are from low-income families," she said. "I didn't understand how the whole FAFSA process worked,

and obviously since my parents hadn't gone through that they couldn't help me."

Darryl Gless, an English professor, said he feared failure as a first-generation student in 1964 at the University of Nebraska.

His brother had recently flunked out of college, and he didn't want to follow that path.

First-generation students at the University face a lower graduation rate than students whose parents have college experience. Only 67 percent of first-generation students graduate in four years, compared with 78.6 percent for others. Within six years, 82.3 percent of first-generation students have graduated, compared with 90.1 percent for other students.

Gless said first-generation students might feel pressured knowing that parent education level is a significant predictor of success.

"A sense that maybe you can't do it," he said. "That kind of anxiety can be destructive."

Demetriou and Gless said first-generation students might not have built-in support networks for adjusting to college work.

"I think the primary challenge is no automatic mentoring at home," Gless said.

Gless said he relied on teachers who pushed him, and said those teachers are one reason he won a Rhodes Scholarship in 1968. He said teachers often help first-generation students understand general college information.

"You look to find what you don't have in the family," he said. "In my case it was teachers."

First-generation status is something Carter said he thought might hinder him. But he said it has pushed him to succeed.

"It motivated me to work through things like my first bad grade," he said. "My parents didn't have this chance."

And, like Gless, Carter said a teacher took him under her wing.

Growing up in Elkin, Carter said his parents and teachers pushed him toward success.

Realizing the limited possibilities in the small western N.C. town, they wanted Carter to have broader horizons.

"Maybe they realized that Elkin limited their world view, and that not having access to education limited their world view," he added.

He said he pushed himself academically, even though his school offered a limited number of Advanced Placement courses.

"I was more fortunate to have really good teachers in high school who were willing to invest in me from the time I was a freshman," he said.

One of those teachers repeatedly told him she would make sure he won the Morehead-Cain scholarship.

"When I did," Carter said, "she said 'I told you so.'"

Carter said he's made the most of his opportunity at the University. He's traveled abroad during two summers and developed an unexpected passion for Latin America, which he will continue to explore at Cambridge.

He taught English in an indigenous Ecuadorian community one summer.

"It was quite a shock," Carter said. "The children don't know the customs that the parents know, and those things were really quite sad for me, but also quite intriguing from an academic standpoint."

The passion he developed for indigenous movements in Latin America led him to apply for graduate programs at Cambridge.

His mother, Debbie, said the scholarship's timing is perfect because money is tight.

"Right now it is a lifesaver because I lost my job in textiles," she said. "I had to go back to school to get re-educated and my husband just had a heart attack. It's a lifesaver financially."

Demetriou said Carter's personal success will benefit all first-generation students.

"He is a role model," she said.

Contact the University Editor at university@dailytarheel.com.

County sales tax back on the table

Quarter-cent tax could ease cuts

BY CHAD ROYAL

STAFF WRITER

Orange County officials are considering re-introducing a sales tax increase previously rejected by voters to help alleviate the economic impact of state budget cuts.

At Monday's meeting, Orange County Commissioners discussed re-introducing a quarter-cent sales tax referendum in the next election.

Commissioner Barry Jacobs said the revenue from the sales tax would likely go toward education and fostering economic development, which were slated to receive 42.5 percent of the tax revenue in November's original ballot item.

The sales tax increase, which was estimated to bring about \$2.3 million annually to the county, failed by just more than 1,000 votes.

Jacobs said the state budget includes about \$3 million in cuts for the county, but the impact would be hard to determine at this point.

"(The quarter-cent sales tax is) an alternative to higher property taxes," Jacobs said. "We could absorb a large hit from the legislature."

Commissioner Chairwoman Bernadette Pelissier said proposals in the state legislature that would take money away from education.

Gov. Bev Perdue's state budget proposal lowers county school construction lottery funds from 40 percent to 10 percent of net revenues and shifts other education-related expenses to counties.

Clarence Grier, the county's financial services director, said Orange County will experience a loss in revenue without the sales tax increase, becoming even more reliant on property taxes for income.

Grier said the county needs a way to offset this financial impact.

"The tax would be used to supplement that loss," he said.

Jacobs said the last year's political climate wasn't good for proposing a tax, and the referendum could have been better explained.

Last year's ballot only said what the tax increase was, not what its revenue would have been used for.

She said the sales tax could work this year because the county has more time to educate the public.

Last year, the time between the board voting to put the tax on the referendum ballot and the public weighing in on the increase in elections was only about 90 days, Pelissier said.

"There wasn't enough time to get the word out," she said.

Commissioners will solicit public opinion on the tax increase and the uses for its revenue before any further action is taken, Pelissier said.

"It's very important to let them know what commitment they have made, and what it will be spent on," she said.

Contact the City Editor at city@dailytarheel.com.

About the tax

- A quarter-cent sales tax on the ballot last year would have brought in an estimated \$2.3 million annually.
- The tax failed in the November election.
- The county is considering proposing it again due to pressure from state budget cuts, to avoid raising property taxes.
- The county would have more time to inform voters.

UNC to present '99 Ways to F@#K a Swan'

BY JESSICA BROADBENT

STAFF WRITER

An ancient myth, Michelangelo and a giant disco ball.

These all come together in this weekend's production of "99 Ways to F@#K a Swan," by UNC's Professional Actor Training Program.

The play, which explores human desire over several eras in human history, will be the first performance of the semester from the performing arts training program.

Written by Kimberly Rosenstock, the play is based upon the Greek myth of Leda and the Swan.

In the myth, Queen Leda is impregnated both by her husband

— the King of Sparta — and by Zeus, who came to her in the form of a swan. She lays two eggs, one from each man.

"The story of Zeus coming to Leda and seducing her on the riverbank was so brief, it seemed ripe for exploration which excited me a lot," Rosenstock said in an e-mail.

Mike Donahue, director of the play, further described the contemporary adaptation.

"It's about love and who we are attracted to and desire," he said.

The play moves between various different historical periods, from Ancient Sparta to Renaissance Italy to modern day Manhattan.

Graduate student Jim Kieffer,

an actor in the play, said with such a vast range of settings, the cast and crew aim to give a sense rather than a recreation of the period.

Graduate student Kelsey Didion plays one of the modern characters, a professor in Manhattan named Fiona.

Fiona's students are asked to create a story based upon the myth. She then becomes wrapped up in her student's story.

Between the nine actors, an amalgamation of 23 characters are portrayed.

Ray Dooley, a professor in the program, said that it is one of many organized by the department in order to network career-minded

professionals with playwrights.

Donahue knew Rosenstock at the Yale School of Drama.

When Dooley read the script, he saw that it had the perfect combination of male and female characters to fit the program's cast of students.

Both Didion and Kieffer are excited to be working in the space at the Kenan Theatre, even though it is smaller than where they rehearsed the performance.

"It's a very intimate space," Didion said. "We could trip over the audience's feet."

Rosenstock, who saw "99 Ways to F@#K a Swan" as the only possible title for her story, said she had to overcome her inhibitions about

SEE THE SHOW

Time: Today through Monday, 8 p.m. and Monday, 4 p.m.
Location: Kenan Theatre
Tickets: \$5

the vulgarity.

"If you are offended by the title, chances are, you probably won't appreciate the sense of humor in the play," Rosenstock said in an e-mail.

So far, the play has transcended its eccentric title.

"The play has a big heart," Donahue said.

Contact the Arts Editor at arts@dailytarheel.com.