

# Students seek budget transparency

*Coalition works toward improved administrative communication*

**By Kendall Brooks**

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Following a student protest last semester regarding academic calendar changes, UNC Asheville administrators promised to keep in constant communication with students about their decisions, SGA President Cortland Mercer said.

“Trying to save money, the university looked at new ways to do the academic calendar,” he said. “And one of the ways to do that was to get rid of the reading day.”



John Pierce

A coalition group formed earlier this year to confront administration about their lack of communication with students, specifically in regards to the academic calendar, according to Mercer.

Many student organizations were involved in the coalition, including SGA and Students for a Democratic Society.

“In our meeting, we decided if we aren’t going to have the reading day, we have to have representation this year,” Mercer said. “We have a representative on the board in charge of the academic calendar, so we have a strong voice for students.”

SDS created a list of six points they wanted from administration that they presented to Chancellor Ponder earlier this year, one of the key points being transparency, said Sarah Buchner, president of SDS.

“One of the key things we discussed was the formation of a committee that involves student participation in designing the academic calendar and monthly budget forums,” she said. “We’re still struggling to make sure that happens.”

According to Buchner, the budget forums differ from student-wide meetings, since the focus is to inform students of budget concerns and allow them to voice their opinions.

“Aside from the transparency,

we’re fighting against tuition increases, or vertical budget cuts, especially to diversity and womens studies,” she said.

SGA and SDS work in conjunction on many issues, though their goals often differ, Mercer said.

SGA helps SDS participate in administrative meetings and voice their opinion, according to Buchner.

“Sometimes we work with SGA to get to administration, and sometimes we go straight to administration as students,” said co-chair of SDS, Rachel McLarty. “With our six points we went straight to the chancellor herself and read them to her.”

McLarty said student uproar last semester over the elimination of the reading day proved administration was not communicating clearly enough.

“There was some form of disconnect in the communication line to the broad student body,” she said. “They promised to work this fall to improve communication, and it’s only the second week, but we haven’t seen that yet.”

According to Mercer, the Vice Chancellor for Finance, John Pierce, came to their meeting strictly to discuss the new budget concerns, allowing SGA to relay information back to students.

Administration works closely with SGA to ensure that students can attain answers and communicate concerns.

“We’re the governing body of students, we’ve been elected, so it’s our job to serve on a lot of committees around campus to advocate for student needs,” Mercer said.

Students don’t like taking time to decipher what administration relays to them because it’s tedious, confusing and often not easily found, Mercer said.

“They do the best they can, and they’ve been working closely with SGA to keep us in the loop. We were involved with lobbying over the summer with the senate,” he said.

Student confusion with the budget drives SDS to lobby for clarification from administration about budget

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-Rachel McLarty,  
SDS co-chair

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terms, McLarty said.

“That’s why we need transparency, so that students can be involved and understand without being confused,” she said.

Open office hours guarantee students a chance to talk with all administration officials.

“We did get our foot in the door with the chancellor and our six points, but before that we struggled with getting appointments; we had to go during open office hours,” she said.

According to Mercer, the vice chancellor worked closely with SGA and kept them up to date with all the information he was getting from the General Assembly. Mercer and Pierce are attempting to start a budget forum to assist students

“I think the main problem is a lot of students are getting inaccurate information, and unfortunately I think that’s coming from the faculty who don’t attend the all-campus meetings or don’t know holistically what’s going on,” Mercer said.

Chancellor Ponder posts letters to the students on the UNCA Web site, but her sporadic posts frustrate SDS, Buchner said.

“We’re stuck waiting on more information before we can put out another statement. Everyone really is.”

# Swine

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caused by seasonal influenza virus,” Wilson said.

As of Aug. 3, there have been 105,882 cases of H1N1 in America. This is the highest number in the world, according to the World Health Organization.

“This virus is really very mild and it seems that in most cases the people that die from H1N1 have underlying illnesses,” Pyertitz said.

Several companies worldwide are conducting clinical trials in an effort to develop a vaccine, but currently issues of safety and functionality persist, according to Pyertitz.

“A virus has to be modified to prepare a vaccine virus strain. The vaccine viruses are injected into eggs where the viruses multiply. Viruses are isolated from egg white, killed, and their outer proteins are purified. These outer proteins are the immunogenic component of the vaccine. A vaccine is prepared and subjected to quality control and clinical studies,” Wilson said.

In the next few months students should be informed of the availability of the vaccine at Student Health Services.

Wilson said it should be free for students to obtain but is not sure that will be the case at this time.

Buncombe County health department announced in July H1N1 vaccines will be available late October to November.

Vaccine locations will give pregnant women, young children, elderly people, people with underlying health conditions and health care workers first priority. Until the vaccine arrives, Buncombe County health officials said health agencies should continue to use standard influenza precautions.

The usual flu vaccine will be available at Student Health Services for a small fee to students.

“Feel free to call or come by Student Health Services if you have any questions or concerns, and also keep up with the school Web site for updates on the H1N1 vaccine and other information.”

The number for Student Health Services is: (828) 251-6520.