

Homecoming '98: crowning kings and queens doesn't always bring out the best in students

By Amy Cappiello
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CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Homecoming is usually a time to bring together the past and the present so both eras can help celebrate the future.

But at some universities across the nation, the tradition of choosing a homecoming court has become such a sore subject that it dampens - either publicly or privately - the festivities for many.

Take the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana for example. It dumped its 62-year-old competition all together this year, reasoning that the exercise had become too competitive and controversial. The student-run Illini Union Board suggested the move.

"I guess that's just the '90s," said Willard Broom, the university's associate dean of students. "I just don't think that (the board) wants to create any kind of false hierarchy, or recognition for one individual that takes away from another equally deserving person."

Controversy indeed surrounded last year's king and queen, who, after receiving their crowns, opened their jackets to reveal T-shirts that read "Racial stereotypes dehumanize." They were protesting the school's use of a Native American mascot, Chief Illiniwek.

Broom said the incident had nothing to do with this year's decision, but many school officials,

students and alumni secretly grumbled that they didn't want a repeat performance.

Last year's queen, Madhu Goel, now a 22-year-old law student at the University of Chicago, agrees with the school's decision.

"I think that's very strong rationale," she said. "There are ways of recognizing people that go beyond the homecoming court. The students, they just see a picture of the 10 women and 10 men, and they vote. So in their minds it might as well be a beauty contest of something very superficial."

Trouble also plagues the homecoming court selection process at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As students prepare to select their 1998 queen and king - dubbed Mr. and Ms. UNC - rumor and innuendo are popping up on campus and off.

For the last nine years, UNC students have elected a black homecoming queen, usually nominated by the school's Black Student Movement. The race for homecoming king started only two years ago and, so far, both winners also have been members of the BSM.

Although no one would complain publicly about the elections, some in attendance on crowning day say certain students feel the selection process is flawed.

Tamara Bailey, president of the BSM, says the student discord is obvious.

"I'm looking at the whole Kenan Stadium, and 95 percent (of the audience) is not standing up in honor

of the people we just crowned," said Bailey.

In the past, racial tension over the selection process has led to snubbing, according to at least one black queen, who said she found it difficult to find volunteers for her service project because students resented that she had been elected.

Some students accuse the BSM of manipulating the pool of candidates to include only one black nominee for the title. The BSM's reasoning, critics say, is that black students will support the black candidate, while votes for the other candidates will be split.

Bailey says the reasons behind the BSM's success are obvious.

"There's a very, very low turnout for voting and maybe we just do a better job of getting our people to vote," Bailey said. "If UNC is tired of seeing the black candidate win, stop complaining. Vote. If (the other organizations) pull together their members, anything is possible."

Numbers play a large role in determining who is elected queen. University records indicate that out of a student body of more than 20,000, only about 2,000 students cast ballots for the homecoming race. An average of six candidates compete for a majority of that pie, and with a membership of around 500, BSM members - if they all vote — are able to have a large say in the election results.

"If there's a strong backing for one particular candidate, that candidate will be selected as homecoming queen," said homecoming co-director T. Pruitt. "If that organization has a

strong backing and all vote or a large percentage comes out, it's obvious that person will win."

Despite some complaints from students, Sue Kitchen, vice chancellor of student affairs, says the contest is run fairly.

"I think the process is clearly in the hands of students, and that's where it should be," said Kitchen, who served as a homecoming queen judge last year in response to concerns about the selection process.

"I had heard concerns (about) observations that it seemed that the queen who was selected was always African American, but I would point out that all sorts of people are selected who are Caucasian, and it's not a problem," Kitchen said.

This year, the Carolina Athletic Association is trying to involve everyone in homecoming by sponsoring several multi-cultural events designed to introduce the entire campus to the different communities represented within the student body. Students and administrators are hopeful for a unified showing of school spirit.

"I think it's ridiculous that people get upset because there's been a black homecoming queen for the last nine years," said Reyna Walters, who last year became the first black woman elected to be student body president. "I mean, think about how many years there wasn't a black homecoming queen. Of all the things people could get upset about, it's so petty. Out of all the things to get upset about, it's so stupid."

Two dozen monkeys break out of research center, returned home

College Press Exchange

NEW ORLEANS, La. (CPX) - Life was even livelier than a barrel of monkeys when two dozen primates broke out of a Tulane University research center and ran for some nearby woods, chased by workers trying to recover them.

By Tuesday morning, all but three of the rhesus monkeys had been returned to the covered outdoor corral where they live at the Tulane University Regional Primate Center. Workers captured them by baiting cages with fruit. The three hold-outs, apparently tired of playing in the woods without their friends, were actually trying to get back into the corral

by the end of the day. All were safely inside the corral on Wednesday.

The monkeys escaped by loosening the corral gate just enough to create a space they could wiggle through. Sunday's escapade was the first time the animals had broken out in such a large group, a research center official said. Once out, the monkeys stuck together, for the most part remaining out of sight.

The center holds about 4,500 monkeys, which it uses to research infectious diseases. The monkeys in the outdoor corral are used for breeding and are not disease carriers, center officials said. The primates also aren't dangerous unless cornered, they added.

Syracuse students sexually assaulted while sleeping

By Joy Davia
College Press Exchange, 1998

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Syracuse Police on Saturday charged a Syracuse University Food Services employee with sexually assaulting female students while they slept in their rooms.

Cedric Holmes, 27, of 116 Gorland Ave., used his employee I.D. card early Saturday morning to access the Brewster/Boland complex through the Brockway Dining Center loading dock, SU spokesperson Kevin Morrow said.

"He climbed into bed with several young women and reportedly molested some young women," SU spokesman Kevin Morrow said. "He had a knowledge of the residence hall and knew that some young women left their doors unlocked." Holmes is charged with nine counts of second-degree burglary, four counts of first-degree sexual abuse and five counts of first-degree attempted sexual abuse, Syracuse Police Sgt. Sam Galvagno said.

Holmes is currently in police custody, Galvagno said. "The intruder has a past of entering the dorm, specifically unlocked doors," Galvagno said. Holmes allegedly entered the complex at about 5 a.m. with the intention of locating a female friend, Morrow said. His attempts to locate the friend were unsuccessful and Holmes proceeded to walk throughout Boland Hall breaking into unlocked dorm rooms, Morrow said.

Holmes was intoxicated at the time of his alleged entries, Morrow added. Karen Chesley, an undecided freshman in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and The College of Arts and Sciences, said Holmes broke into her room and attempted to get into her bed. "I woke up when I felt someone starting to get on my bed," said Chesley, a Daily Orange contributing writer. "I looked up and saw someone looming over me." Chesley said she "ran to turn on the lights," and asked the man why he was in her room. The man said, "sorry, wrong room," and ran out, she said.

"I was stunned and at first I thought it was a dream," she said. Residents who were confronted by Holmes contacted Public Safety between 5:30 and 7:30 a.m., Morrow said. Following Public Safety's arrival, the Brewster/Boland complex was closed and a room-by-room search was conducted, he said.

Public Safety's search of the complex was negative, Morrow said. Police later spotted Holmes in a parking lot east of the Carrier Dome and approached him because he matched the suspect's description, Morrow said. Three students were asked by police to identify Holmes, but they did not make a positive identification and Holmes was released, Morrow said.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, Holmes called to work to say he would not be in, heightening police suspicions and prompting them to bring him to police headquarters for questioning, Morrow said. At police headquarters, Holmes admitted that he entered the residence

halls Saturday and sexually assaulted residents.

Chesley said it took two calls to Public Safety before an officer made it to her room. She made calls at 5:37 a.m. and 30 minutes later, after they did not respond. Public Safety was surprised about Chesley's concerns when she inquired about their whereabouts, she said.

"She said, 'oh you wanted to talk to someone? We just sent someone to look around your floor,'" Chesley said. Ten minutes after her second call, a Public Safety officer visited her room and asked "did he touch you in any sexual way?" Chesley said. After explaining her situation, the officer told her that this is a common occurrence, Chesley added. "They said, 'do not worry this happens all the time. He was probably just drunk and could not find his room,'" she said.

Students living in the Brewster/Boland complex said they felt violated by Holmes' alleged intrusion. "It makes me question the security and safety of our dorm," said Zakir Baig, a freshman speech communications major and Boland resident.

Jessica Washburn, a freshman psychology major and fellow resident, agreed. "I know a lot of people feel vulnerable and unsafe since this happened," she said. "We feel unsafe just walking to the bathroom or sleeping. This is where we live and it is crazy that a stranger can just walk up in to one of our rooms."

Dana Sacchetti, president of the Student Government Association, said 100 to 150 students attended an open forum conducted Sunday night in the Brewster/Boland complex. Students expressed a variety of security concerns, including Public Safety's "lackluster" response to their calls Monday morning, he said. "Students were very upset at Public Safety's response," Sacchetti said. "Students still have a lot of concerns that were not answered."

Students were also concerned that SU did not check Holmes' criminal record prior to his hiring — especially because he has been previously caught entering buildings illegally, Sacchetti said. "This is really troubling," he said. "With a background check, I think this person would not have been hired."

Background checks are a necessity because university employees have access to various buildings and residence halls, Sacchetti said. "It is frightening to me and to other students as well," he said.

Public Safety officials, Brewster/Boland complex staff, maintenance personnel and Brockway representatives attended the forum, Chesley said. Public Safety acted defensively when she asked about their response time, she said. "He said he could not imagine that it took them that long," Chesley said. "He said their response time is excellent." Public Safety told her that in "a situation like this, a few minutes can take an hour," Chesley said.

The Public Safety officer in attendance said Public Safety has a limited amount of officers and suggested that students petition the university if they feel that more officers are needed, Chesley said.

MIT fraternity disbands

College Press Exchange

BOSTON, Mass. - Prosecutors' case against the Phi Gamma Delta chapter at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has fallen apart because the fraternity has agreed to disband, leaving no one to defend the group against allegations that it played a role in the 1997 drinking death of freshman Scott Krueger.

The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, which spent a year investigating the events leading to Krueger's death, set legal precedent last month when it charged the fraternity with manslaughter and hazing. The day after the indictments were announced, the fraternity signed an agreement to shut down its M.I.T. chapter.

No one showed up for an arraignment last Thursday, leaving prosecutors to rest their case for now. A provision of the chapter's dissolution allows it to apply for university recognition again in the future, but the moment that happens, the fraternity can expect to be hauled back to court, said Pamela Wechsler, an assistant District Attorney. If convicted of both the hazing and manslaughter charges, the fraternity would have faced up to \$4,000 in fines.

"I wouldn't call it a failure," Wechsler said. "There may not be the same satisfaction from a trial, but we have really achieved the same result. They have acknowledged their guilt by closing down."

Wechsler also pointed to several changes M.I.T. has made in the wake of Krueger's death. Among them are new requirements that, starting in 2001, will mandate that all freshman live in campus dormitories and that all fraternities have live-in resident advisers. Before his death, Krueger had been a college student for only five weeks.

Krueger died after drinking himself into a coma in the fraternity house during a pledge event known as "Animal House Night." Fraternity members left him in a room by himself. Krueger was found amid beer bottles and vomit. He died a few days later with his family - including his twin sister - surrounding him.

Despite the chapter's dissolution and the new university policies, Krueger's parents say they're planning to file suit against the fraternity and M.I.T.

Enticing names help market courses to college students

By Ellen Warren
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

It's not that higher education is a business (though it is). And it's not that professors really have to market the courses they teach (though sometimes they do).

Perhaps it's just to liven up those dreary page after computerized page of course listings that abound at colleges and universities across the country.

For whatever reason, there are some deliciously bizarre and entertaining courses being offered by institutions of higher learning.

The trend may be for college kids to try and graduate with useful, saleable skills - a plus in a world where college costs continue to rise faster than inflation and student loans can linger into middle age.

But a meander through university Web sites, course guides and special mailings shows you can still find strange and unexpected learning experiences in college. In the classroom.

Consider Stanford University's philosophy department graduate seminar titled "Is Morality Too Demanding?" The course syllabus says, "Critics have argued that prominent moral theories require (people) ... to act in ways that are either impossible or, if possible, undesirable."

It is mere coincidence that the course is being offered at the university where the daughters of both Bill Clinton and Kenneth Starr are matriculating. Another Stanford offering, this one in the political science department, also has useful application to Clinton and Starr. Its title, simply, is "Punishment."

(On the opposite side of the continent, at Mt. Holyoke College, there is a course in the English Department that has Bill Clinton's name all over it: "The Art of Lying.") Stanford is in California, so it is fitting that another course offering is tantalizingly titled "The American Dream." For some, just getting accepted at Stanford - and being able to pay the tuition - would qualify for an A in that course.

("The American Dream" course is not to be confused with "The

American Suburb," which is among the course listings at Yale.)

One more course at Stanford, this one in the education department, is titled "Mind, Body, And Spirit: Spiritual Health Through The Life Span."

The description says this course is an "introduction to elementary spiritual practices," which would seem to translate into Prayer 101 - which probably has a number of adherents on the night before finals.

At Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Humanities 5301 is tucked into the long, computerized list of more routinely titled courses. The name of this graduate seminar is "Quest for Order & Happiness."

Regrettably, the man who teaches it, Kenneth Grasso, said that you can ace the course without ever actually achieving either order or happiness in your life.

"It's sort of a Great Books thing," Grasso said. "Most people come through college with an education that is spotty. Somebody can get a B.A. and think that Plato is a Disney character. This course gives them a chance to get caught up and read some of the Great Books."

"This semester we're doing 'The Republic,' selections from the Old Testament, Dante's 'Inferno,' a little bit of Ovid, Machiavelli's 'The Prince' ...

"You try to come up with an interesting title to get people to take (the courses) ... You need people in the classroom. The sexy title is a way of drawing in students."

Speaking of sex, at the usually staid University of Chicago, professor Wendy Doniger said she "used to teach a course on the Kama Sutra. Which had a lab. It was highly subscribed. I taught it without a lab and it wasn't nearly as successful."

Despite the intriguing title, the Kama Sutra was a course on South Asian texts in the school's department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations.

This fall, Doniger is teaching "The Mythology of the Bedtrick" in the master of liberal arts program.

Very liberal, one might say. But in fact, Doniger explained that "the bedtrick" is a time-honored

device in literature. Shakespeare's "All's Well that Ends Well," for example. It refers to "having sex with someone under the impression" of having sex with someone else.

In this course, students will read the Hebrew Bible, Shakespeare, a 9th Century Japanese novel and other texts.

If that sounds too highbrow, notwithstanding the sex involved in the readings, the University of Missouri offers "Introduction to Leisure Studies." Many parents of teen-agers and young adults would argue that their offspring already have the equivalent of a Ph.D in this subject.

But hold on. According to the course summary, Mizzou students will be examining "the history of recreation and the leisure movement" (there's a movement?) and "the theories and philosophies of play ..."

At Southwest Texas, haul yourself off the couch and get not only a bachelor's degree but also a master's in Leisure, apparently a growth field as Baby Boomers move into retirement.

Also in the leisure vein, Scottsdale Community College in Arizona offers courses in gambling and a full associate's degree in the subject - more demurely titled "Hospitality/Gaming Management."

Promising "Hands on practice with casino equipment," there is GAM 210, "Techniques of Dealing - Advanced Poker."

"Training includes ... Seven-Card Stud ... Hi-Lo Split and tournament dealing," according to the course description.

GAM 225 is a "Survey of Games," including blackjack, poker, roulette, craps and baccarat, that incorporates "methods and detection of cheating." Prerequisites? None.

There also are no prerequisites for what has to be a dream course: "International Casinos & Race Tracks."

This elective - yes, you do get actual college credit for this - offers "guided field trips" to gambling centers around the world.

Other electives in the gambling degree program include courses in slot machines, bingo and Keno.