



The East Carolinian

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PIRATES MAKE RETURN



East Carolina University students wait in line at Dowdy Student Stores to purchase course materials for the fall semester. HALIE MILLER | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

ECU hopeful for safe fall term

Breanna Sapp
TEC STAFF

As East Carolina University students begin in-person classes, university officials continue to work toward a safe semester with COVID-19 procedures and guidelines set in place intended to protect community health and promote face-to-face interaction.

Ron Mitchelson, co-chair of the fall 2021 planning team and interim vice chancellor for the division of health sciences, said the university has made

an effort to return to on-campus activities in a safe and effective way. He said in general, on-campus events will go as planned and are designed to keep students' health in perspective.

The university's preparations have improved from the previous year, Mitchelson said, and he remains optimistic that COVID-19 numbers will be much less dramatic than last fall. He said one of the biggest differences from the previous year is the number of vaccinated individuals and those previously infected, which will create a large

level of immunity, and he encourages the ECU community to continue to get vaccinated as classes begin.

"Being better data-informed is the key to our success this year," Mitchelson said. "This year is different than last year. We're smarter, we've got more capacity, we've got more vaccination. So, I'm confident."

Mitchelson said university efforts, such as residence hall wastewater surveillance and widespread contact trac-

> **SAFE** page A3

Students begin first day of class

Chris Young
TEC STAFF

As the fall semester begins today amid a push for vaccinations and the delta variant remains relevant, East Carolina University welcomes students back to its first primarily in-person semester since the fall 2020 semester.

Interim Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at ECU Grant Hayes said in an email statement students should expect a more familiar ECU experience on the first day of class. He said everyone is required to wear face

masks indoors to ensure student and faculty safety.

"(The university) has worked hard to provide in-person classes and campus events for the fall semester," Hayes said. "Professors have gone above and beyond in finding new and innovative ways to teach as a result of the limits imposed on in-person gatherings."

Hayes said the professors can use the techniques they learned last semester to improve the learning environment for students as everyone returns to face-to-face classes. He said classrooms and

lecture halls will operate at full capacity.

The best resource for ECU's COVID-19 protocols will be the Return of Pirate Nation website, especially the Community Expectations document, according to Hayes. He said key points include face coverings in all indoor spaces and the expectation to provide proof of vaccination or to participate in COVID-19 surveillance testing.

"Unofficially we (ECU) expect about 4,200 new freshmen at the school,"

> **FDOC** page A3

Brewster spikes concerns amid cancer deaths

Chloe Easton
TEC STAFF

George Martin
TEC STAFF



As Pirate Nation makes its return to campus this fall, concerns around the Brewster Building have resurfaced within the East Carolina University community which may link several pancreatic cancer deaths and diagnoses among faculty to the A Wing of the brutalist structure.

President of the ECU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), Karin Zipf, who is also a professor in the history department which resides in the Brewster Building, said the original concern around the building's safety sparked in 2019 when faculty members began to notice crumbling cement.

Once the cement began to fall on students, Zipf said this was an initial indication there might be an issue within the structure of the building. She said major renovations on the exterior of stairwells in each wing of the building also gave reason to believe there may be other safety issues among the A Wing, B Wing, C Wing or D Wing of Brewster.

"We've seen over the last several years literally crumbling of cement in that building, dangerously so, we've had students hit in the head with crumbling cement from the ceiling tiles, just a lot of crumbling cement and this was our first indication something was wrong," Zipf said.

The 2019 Indoor Environmental Assessment Report performed on the A Wing of Brewster, where most faculty offices reside, was conducted in response to multiple health concerns from faculty. Zipf said faculty inside the building started to piece their concerns together after the death of sociology professor Kenneth Wilson, as his death marked the fourth among faculty in Brewster due to pancreatic cancer.

Wilson's death preceded the deaths of Frank Murphy, associate professor of philosophy, Assistant Professor of Political Science Wen Wang and Professor of Economics Randall Parker who each worked within the Brewster Building and died from pancreatic cancer between the years of 2011 and 2019.

"These are my friends who are dying, I knew Randy (Randall) Parker, I didn't know Wang or Frank Murphy, but I have friends and colleagues who knew them well so when you start seeing people in your own age group in their 50s dying...you know these are all nonsmokers these are all...it didn't make any sense of a disease that only hits like .0013% of the population or whatever it is," Zipf said.

Although the 2019 Indoor Environmental Assessment

> **INSPECT** page A2

Football looks to 2021 season

Markayla McLinnis
TEC STAFF

The East Carolina University football team looks toward a full return in the 2021-22 season set to begin on Sept. 2 in a game against Appalachian State University at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina, after two seasons have been impacted by COVID-19.

The team will be led by head coach Mike Houston for his third season with the Pirates. The 2021-22 team will return nine starters on the defensive side and 10 return starters on the offensive side.

In the 2020-21 season, the Pirates had fewer games than usual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the amount of time the team has had together over the summer and while in preseason workouts, Houston said he is excited to be closer to the type of season the team is "accustomed" to with a 12 game schedule planned. Many players have been on campus since last semester and have continued to train with the team, according to Houston.

"We just want to build on the way we finished the

> **SEASON** page A7

Marching Pirates to take field

Hannah Bolick
TEC STAFF

The Marching Pirates will resume its full performance schedule this season which will kick off on Sept. 2 at the Pirates' first football game of the season against Appalachian State University.

Director of Athletic Bands Joe Busuito said in fall 2020 the band kept in contact through virtual meetings. He said that in the spring, the pep band met regularly in-person and recorded a performance with the dance and cheer teams.

The hope for fall 2021 semester is to resume a regular schedule on the field, Busuito said. He said there is a large volume of students who have never participated in a college band before.

"We have almost 100 students who are going to be freshmen in the band this year. 75% of the band has not been a part of a normal season for the Marching Pirates. So that being said, I also think that creates an enormous amount of opportunity for us to kind of cut some new paths forward," Busuito said.

The band is clear about procedure so the new individuals can integrate themselves seamlessly, Busuito said. He said



Members of the March Pirates rehearse for the upcoming semester during band camp. DESTIN | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

veteran members and student leaders who have experienced a regular season will be able to pass on the band's traditions.

Busuito said to keep students safe from COVID-19 is still an important consideration. He said while indoors, brass players will have bell covers on their instruments, all students will wear special masks and will be distanced. He said he does not expect any of the precautions everyone will take will be a hindrance to the band's experience this season.

"In the back of my mind caution is ever-present, but at the

same time I am really excited to get back to offering students an experience that they know and love," Busuito said.

Junior public health major and saxophone section leader Nikhil B. said plans for the upcoming semester look to be coming to fruition smoothly. He said the band will kick off this season with a joint halftime performance with Appalachian State University at ECU's first football game of the season on Sept. 2. Nikhil B. said there has been a lot of preparation

> **BAND** page A6

ONLINE

»NEWS: Career Services to host on-campus job fair

»ARTS: Local musician to host city's first 'Vibes in the Ville' event

SOCIAL MEDIA

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BRIEFS

CRW to host group fitness launch party

East Carolina University's Campus Recreation and Wellness (CRW) will host a group fitness launch party on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Eakin Student Recreation Center in basketball courts 5 and 6. Students will be able to participate in 20-minute segments of various fitness classes. Those interested in the event can visit the CRW website to register.

HSC to hold 'Welcome Back' event

East Carolina University's Health Sciences Campus (HSC) will host a "Welcome Back" event on Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Health Sciences Student Center. The event will have free food, T-shirts, activities and giveaways. The event will also celebrate the grand opening of the university's Purple Pantry.

CLCE to host fall 2021 open house

The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) will host a fall open house on Thursday from 3 to 6 p.m. in room 208 at the Main Campus Student Center. Guests of the open house will learn about programs, initiatives and have an opportunity to meet the staff. There will also be tours available to see the new Purple Pantry Express location.

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

If you feel there are any factual errors in this newspaper please contact Chloe Easton at editor@theeastcarolinian.com



CONTRIBUTED BY SPAINE STEPHENS

The School of Dental Medicine students provide dental care to a farmworker during the Sonrie Clinic on May 16 as part of their residency requirement.

HSC adjusts for academic term

University deans navigate return to face-to-face instruction, clinicals

Giana Williams
TEC STAFF

East Carolina University's Health Science Campus (HSC) has completed preparation as it eases into a new semester of in-person classes and clinicals with new requirements amongst partnered healthcare agencies amid the university's return after over a year of online instruction for students.

Dean of the College of Nursing (CON) Sylvia Brown said it was a challenge for students in the nursing department when the university closed down in the spring of 2020. The students were unable to do clinical at the time but were able to use some simulation labs virtually to get the required hours they needed to finish the semester on time.

This fall semester will be the largest fall enrollment in CON history with 1,411 students in the college, according to Brown. CON is optimistic about being able to complete clinicals this year, Brown said, because due to the COVID-19 shutdown, hospitals no longer allowed students into their facilities to complete clinicals.

"I don't anticipate that (hospitals no longer

allowing students) happening anymore because we've learned so much through this pandemic that we (CON) feel like we keep our students and faculty safe when they're in the clinical environment because so many are vaccinated now and they are wearing their masks," Brown said.

Brown said with the COVID-19 delta variant, many of the healthcare agencies the CON use now require nursing students to get the COVID-19 vaccine or provide a religious or medical exemption which is approved by the agencies themselves, not ECU or CON.

Students are required to upload a copy of their vaccination card into a system the CON uses which stores their students' health information because clinical agencies require students to have certain vaccinations, according to Brown.

CON hosted its student orientations on Aug. 18 and Aug. 19 and Brown said the CON stressed the importance of getting the vaccine during the orientation. The CON will continue to provide information to the nursing students that is accurate by giving the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and any documentation of reference that supports the vaccination.

"So the student would have to make that determination (to get the vaccine). If they don't want to adhere to that and they can't get the exemption, then that's going to be problematic for them to be in the nursing major," Brown said.

Jason Higginson, executive dean of the

Brody School of Medicine (BSOM), said with Vidant Medical Center being a BSOM clinical learning environment, Vidant has set a timeline for compliance with its vaccine requirements. In order

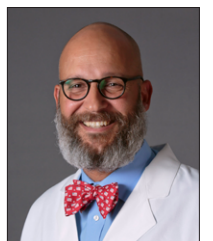
for BSOM students to remain in Vidant's clinical spaces, they have to comply with the hospital's rules and guidelines.

"We (BSOM) are working with the university to discuss the best way forward and they (ECU) are working with the UNC (University of North Carolina) System's office to discuss what is the best approach for those (non-clinical) students and to keep them safe and to keep the other folks within the School of Medicine safe," Higginson said.

This writer can be contacted at news@theeastcarolinian.com.



Sylvia Brown



Jason Higginson

ONLINE | FULL STORY

ECU SCUBA DIVING

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INSPECT continued from A1

Report performed on the A Wing of Brewster concluded there were "no significant health issues at the time of the assessment," the recent diagnoses and death of sociology professor Kathy Jones, who died on July 23 from pancreatic cancer, gave reason for the ECU Chapter of the AAUP to call for reinvestigation of the Brewster Building, according to Zipf.

The ECU chapter of the association sent a letter to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Safety and Auxiliary Services, William Koch, and Assistant Director Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Phillip Lewis on July 13 with multiple requests based on the chapter's concerns.

These requests asked for further assessment of possible toxins within the building, a case study analysis of severe illnesses among faculty lead by Director of ECU Prospective Health Paul Barry and a consideration from the University of North Carolina System to place Brewster at the top of its list for replacement. However, the first request from the chapter has been refined to ask for an evaluation of the building by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

"First of all they (ECU) know there is asbestos in the building and they never tested (in 2019) either the water or the air for asbestos, if you take a look at that report asbestos is never mentioned," Zipf said.

Additionally, Zipf said the building has experienced several mitigations of asbestos in the B Wing, C Wing and D Wing when the university decided to expand more classrooms within Brewster over the years. Faculty within the building received emails from the university to remain clear of these wings during the asbestos mitigations, which Zipf said proves there is a presence of the carcinogen in the building.

Zipf claims throughout her 20 years spent in the building, she once had a now-retired colleague warn her not to drink the water in Brewster. She said one connection she began to make during this time, may link the water quality to the illness among faculty, but she said she does not have the credentials to validate this claim.

"Now, I am not a scientist, so don't take this as fact, but from my understanding when asbestos is in water it can cause pancreatic cancer," Zipf said. "But a lot of these water pipes, once upon a time, were lined with insulation that contained asbestos and one of the toxicologists who I talked to at the North Carolina Department of Human Health and Safety (NCDHHS) said that could have been the case."

On Aug. 19, Barry and Koch sent an email to the ECU community at the request

of Chancellor Philip Rogers to provide an update on steps the university will take for further assessment of the building and inform students of the inspection from 2019. The email said the assessment from 2019 involved inspection of the building's HVAC, plumbing, CO, CO2, relative humidity, temperature, gamma radiation, radon, water quality analysis and volatile organic compound sampling.

The assessment done by EH&S in 2019 found there is no evidence that the health issues reported by faculty are related to the A Wing of Brewster. The email said the university will also hire a consultant for a third-party building hazard assessment, which will include a comprehensive asbestos assessment.

"We will continue to work with subject matter experts - local, state and national - to assess the building to provide timely answers to our campus community. We and our staff remain committed to the health and safety of our campus and all who learn and work here," the email said.

Jamie Smith, deputy director of ECU News Services, said in an email statement there are no current significant health concerns in Brewster, according to the assessment done by EH&S.

Smith said EH&S has continued to obtain information on the building and work with the NCDHHS. At the recommendation of the NCDHHS, ECU contacted NIOSH to request a Health Hazard Evaluation of the building on July 28.

"NIOSH has not yet responded to our July 28 request for a hazard assessment. We will find out a timeline when they contact us," Smith said.

Press Assistant with the NCDHHS Catie Armstrong said in an email statement that the department has had multiple conversations with university faculty on their concerns about Brewster.

The NCDHHS also had an industrial hygiene team review the 2019 indoor environmental quality assessment conducted by EH&S at the request of ECU. Armstrong said the industrial hygiene team has also offered to do a walk-through of the building to follow up on the review.

"It (the environmental quality assessment) was determined to be thorough and comprehensive, with conditions representing a typical building that is 50+ years old and no indication of hazardous operations previously conducted there," Armstrong said.

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Jamie Smith



HALIE MILLER | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

Members of East Carolina University's Alpha Gamma Delta chapter gather outside the sorority house decked in purple and gold apparel in preparation for fall 2021 recruitment.

Fraternity and Sorority Life prepare for fall

Breanna Sapp
TEC STAFF

East Carolina University Fraternity and Sorority Life officials and members continue to prepare for a safe and enjoyable experience for incoming students as the organizations anticipate in-person recruitment and activities this fall.

John Mountz, director of Student Engagement and Fraternity and Sorority Life, said the Fraternity and Sorority Life department anticipates a fairly normal fall recruitment with the return of in-person activities and events. He said organizations will observe social distancing and encourage the usage of face masks, though recruitment processes are different for each council within the department.



John Mountz

The Panhellenic Association (PA) will be the first set of recruitment events to occur on campus, Mountz said, which allows students to meet various ECU sororities from Aug. 26 to Aug. 31. Mountz said the Interfraternity Council's (IFC) recruitment will take place

from Sept. 7 to Sept. 17. Though the IFC follows a similar registration process as the PA, Mountz said students are self-led and will instead visit chapters individually until they make a decision on an organization.

"Each council's process is designed to work for their organizations, as well as the students that are interested in joining those organizations," Mountz said.

The Multicultural Greek Council will host an in-person Cultural Greeks Invitational on Sept. 9, Mountz said, and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) will host its annual Meet the Greeks event on Sept. 18.

The pandemic has also created flexibility for Fraternity and Sorority Life organizations, Mountz said, and groups may continue to take an online approach to encourage proactive participation from members as COVID-19 numbers rise in the area.

Though participation numbers for recruitment are currently hard to estimate, Mountz said there has been a lot of interest generated by the pandemic as students look forward to meeting others on campus. He said he advises students who plan to par-

ticipate in recruitment to do research on organizations they may be interested in and to ask themselves what they want out of their experience.

"I think there's going to be a lot of interest in students in getting connected, whether that's with groups of people, student organizations, fraternities and sororities, it doesn't matter," Mountz said. "We're going to do our best to help those students find what it is they're looking for."

President of the IFC Michael Wright said fraternities follow a formal recruitment process that begin with four informal in-person events to allow students to meet various chapters within the council, followed by preference nights that are conducted on an invite-only basis.

"The way that our formal recruitment process works is that if you come into college, you come to ECU and you don't know anybody in any fraternities," Wright said. "That's perfectly fine because every single potential new member is required to meet every single fraternity and that's the best way to have these young men find their best match."

Chorey Moore, NPHC social media

chair, said the NPHC has planned a "Greek Week" from today to Aug. 29 that allows all nine chapters to hold events on their prospective days.

Moore said the NPHC hopes to use this year to bridge the gap between various Fraternity and Sorority Life councils. He said the council hopes this will create an effort to highlight the variety of organizations offered on campus and promote unity and inclusivity between Fraternity and Sorority Life.

"Our 'Meet the Greeks' this past year during COVID(-19) was online, so it really wasn't the same experience as being in-person and being able to interact with all the different organizations and new members," Moore said. "So, this is definitely going to be the first semester back that students will be able to interact with the other organizations and really just experience the NCHP in-person."



Chorey Moore

This writer can be contacted at news@theeastcarolinian.com.

SAFE continued from A1

ing, allows officials to spot hotspots before they can spread. He said if the university identifies a cluster within a class or residence hall, classroom activities will be moved online until students have tested negative.

Students should not become complacent as the pandemic continues, Mitchelson said, though he encourages students to enjoy gatherings and activities as the semester begins. He said he recommends students continue to wear a face mask and remain cautious of who they come in contact with for longer than 15 minutes.

Though the COVID-19 delta variant has created a cause for concern throughout the area, Mitchelson said he believes the university will manage through any peak in positive cases with the amount of data they've collected in the past year.

"One of the things we're committed to is managing our way through that peak. Of course, we have the isolation and quarantine space to help us, but we are also watching the data at the building level (and) the room level much more carefully," Mitchelson said. "Our public health officials will be watching this data as it unfolds."

Associate Provost for Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research Ying Zhou said in an email statement that the fall 2021 semester will continue to look different for students as they begin in-person classes, with approximately 75% of courses held in-person, both single and double occupancy dorms in residence halls and in-person student services and student-led organizations. She said vaccinations are highly encouraged by the university to ensure a smooth and safe return to campus and for those who are not vaccinated will be tested on a regular basis.

Zhou said the return to an in-person environment is essential in order to create a sense of normalcy on campus. She said due to the delta variant and recent spikes in COVID-19 cases, ECU requires face masks in indoor spaces. The university will continue to monitor university, local and national data, Zhou said, and more information can be found on the Return to Pirate Nation website and within ECU's Community Expectations.

"Our intention is to remain on campus and in-person throughout the semester, but we do have contingencies in place for different levels of infection in our community, such as we have asked faculty members to keep course materials updated online in case students need to miss class to isolate or quarantine," Zhou said in the email statement.

William Koch, vice chancellor for campus

safety and auxiliary services and co-chair of the university's COVID-19 Coordination Committee, said the university has learned a lot about their management of the virus over the past year as local data collection has improved and vaccines have become readily accessible. The university will continue indoor mask usage, Koch said, and vaccines are widely encouraged and offered by vaccination clinics available on-campus.

Students have been greatly involved in the fall semester's planning process, Koch said, with Student Government Association President Chandler Ward's role within the fall 2021 planning team and student representatives who were on each of the subcommittees. He said students and parents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback following the planning team's online presentation forum.

Koch said ECU has created a COVID-19 safety metric that takes population, vaccination and case numbers into account to assess different stages of COVID-19 safety. The safety metric will be used as a tool for the COVID-19 Coordination Committee to determine the threat of case surges, Koch said, and the committee will complete a drill of this process to test its efficiency.

"Especially with the surge that we're seeing right now, we would expect with students coming back, being more together, and trying to get back to a normal semester, we're going to have an increase in cases," Koch said. "I think that'll be manageable, but I think this is not the time to let down our guard."

Freshman social work major Kayley Collins said she's ready to get back to in-person classes, as COVID-19 caused her to lose a lot of memorable opportunities during her senior year of high school. Last year's case numbers at the university have created some concern, Collins said, though she hopes vaccinations amongst the ECU community will help keep any surges down.

Collins said she understands the university's pivot to indoor mask usage and is excited for the opportunity to meet new people on campus regardless. She said she hopes the ECU community continues with precaution throughout the school year and remains courteous of each other's health and safety.

"I understand (students gathering), we're all young and we want to enjoy our life," Collins said. "But we definitely just all have to be safe and look out for one another."



William Koch

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HALIE MILLER | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

East Carolina University students converse with one another on the the main campus mall.

FDOC continued from A1

Hayes said. "It will be a larger class than last year and a total enrollment of 28,500 plus at ECU this fall."

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Virginia Hardy said Student Affairs hopes the fall semester will be as traditional and similar to previous ones as possible. Hardy said ECU is ready and excited to have students back on campus for the term.

Hardy said because COVID-19 is still a concern, all students and employees will be required to wear face masks inside the buildings on campus. She said classes for students will be held primarily face-to-face.

"All residence buildings will operate at full capacity and the dining halls, as well as other eating venues, will be open to all students," Hardy said. "All activities or programs will be going on and students will have access to services like tutoring and counseling."

Hardy said COVID-19 still plays a large role in decisions made by ECU. She said as delta variant cases rise, the university will continue to stay vigilant and try to mitigate 0cases.

ECU keeps the community's health and safety in mind in its choices and actions, Hardy said. She said COVID-19 policies will be monitored and updated based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and mandates.

"The semester will be different because the school semester will be face-to-face as opposed to the all online semester students and staff had last year," Hardy said. "Policies and outlines for this semester can be found on the Return to Pirate Nation site."

Junior film major Mitchell Summers

said he is excited for the first day of classes and hopes that the campus experience for the fall semester will be in-person throughout the entire term. He said he has been working all summer and hopes to have a change of pace when classes start.

Summers said he hasn't done much to prepare for the return of classes but is glad he won't have block style courses and online instruction like last year. He said with the return of football and other sports, he is just excited to get out and new meet people as well as experience the pirate pride among the student population.

"I wouldn't say I'm ready for classes to start, but it will definitely be nice to be back on campus with everyone else," Summers said. "The incoming freshmen are lucky because they didn't have an online semester in college."

Summers said he hopes he will be as successful in face-to-face classes as he did with the online classes in the spring 2021 semester. He said it was a lot harder to miss a class that he didn't even have to get out of bed to attend.

The first day of class will be different for everyone on campus, Summers said, because even though the freshmen haven't experienced college yet, other university students had an entire semester away from ECU's campus and its community. He said he doesn't believe anyone is ready to be back on campus for the fall.

"It'll definitely take some adjusting to get used to face-to-face classes again," Summers said. "I don't even think professors will be used to it right away and the whole situation feels brand new again."



Mitchell Summers

This writer can be contacted at news@theeastcarolinian.com.

OUR VIEW

ECU to see safe, successful academic year

As the first day of class at East Carolina University begins today, students have officially returned to campus for the fall 2021 semester with a sense of hope for re-engagement and normalcy in the near future.

ECU has continued to prepare for a safe return to campus as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. The university has worked diligently over the summer months with its fall 2021 planning team's weekly meetings to ensure that efficient safety guidelines and classroom protocols are in place.

The Return of Pirate Nation website is updated to display new and improved safety guidelines and students are encouraged to visit the website whenever questions about the semester and their safety arise.

The first day of class is always an exciting, yet sometimes nerve wracking, experience. Freshmen get to see their first college lecture hall, meet their professors for the first time and see dozens of new faces across campus. Others are returning to campus after a long year and a half of uncertainty and virtual learning. This is a year filled with excitement as students become engaged for the first time while others learn to re-engage.

We, the editorial staff of The East Carolinian, hope to see a safe and successful semester ahead and are confident in the safety protocols and guidelines put forth by the university to keep the campus community safe.

As you navigate the semester, whether it is your first year here at ECU or your last, be sure to utilize the many campus resources the university has to offer. This includes the Pirate Academic Success Center, the Center for Counseling and Student Development, Career Services and many more. Remember to follow the safety guidelines throughout your time on campus and have a safe, fun and successful year.

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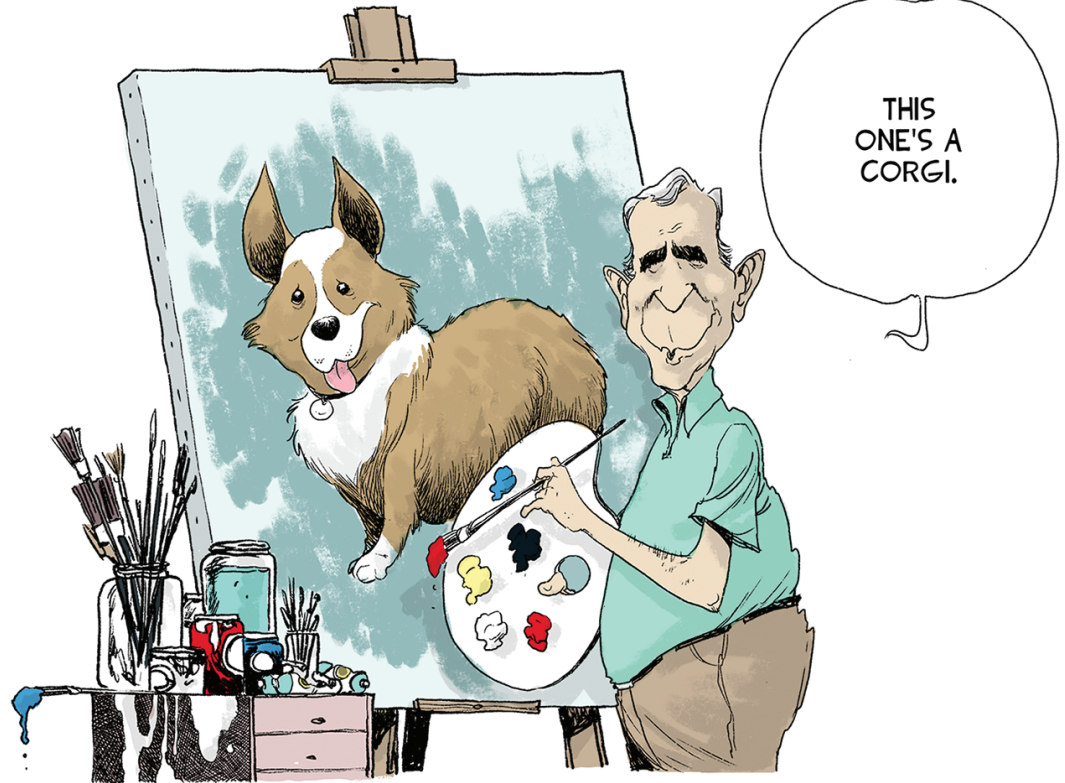
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SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



THE ARCHITECT OF THE AFGHAN WAR OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS ON THE WITHDRAWAL

Community begins to buzz

Pirate spirit remains undaunted upon students return



Philip Rogers
GUEST COLUMNIST

Can you feel it? It's the first day of class, and for the first time in far too long, the campus here at East Carolina University is buzzing. You've moved into your residence hall or your apartment and (hopefully) you've found your way to your first couple of classes. There are new friends to meet and old ones to reconnect with after months of separation.

For me, it's my first time as chancellor to see the mall filled with hammocks, laptops and frisbees, to see the student centers fully open and to hear a campus full of the sounds of teaching, learning and research. I can hardly contain my excitement about the return of Pirate Nation, and I couldn't be prouder to represent ECU as we begin this academic year.

There's a word we use to express the Pirate spirit: UNDAUNTED. You have persevered throughout the past year and a half as the routines of life and education have been turned upside down. As our campus reawakens, it is time for you to engage (or re-engage) in the many opportunities and resources available to you throughout our institution.

The events, the energy and the people on our campus are such an important part of the ECU experience. I hope that you enjoyed events like Raid the Rec and Pirate Palooza this past weekend, and I look forward to seeing you at some of the many events planned for this fall — and in Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium for some ECU



East Carolina University resumes on-campus classes and activities as the fall 2021 semester begins.

football! If you haven't had the chance to be one of 50,000 Pirates cheering on the purple and gold, you're in for a treat, and if you have, well, I'll see you Sept. 11 for our home opener.

As a part of the ECU student body, you are in for a lot of fun and a world of opportunity. This is a transformative place. It has helped transform my life, and you will not leave here the same person that you are today. But along with being part of the ECU community comes responsibility as well. We work hard to ensure that our campus is vibrant and inclusive, a place where all students, faculty and staff feel welcomed and comfortable. Everyone has a role to play in making sure that holds true by showing respect to each other and to our institution.

It also means doing our part to protect each other by following the guidelines and procedures that will help slow and eventually stop the spread of the coro-

navirus. We've learned a lot in the last year, and those lessons have informed our preparation for this fall. As of the start of the semester, masks are required in indoor spaces on campus for students, faculty, staff and visitors regardless of vaccination status. Masks are not required outdoors but are encouraged, especially in crowded areas. And I strongly urge you to get vaccinated if you haven't already. Vaccinations are available on campus, they're free, and they're the best way to protect yourself and those you care about.

As your chancellor, I welcome you back to Greenville, North Carolina, back to campus and back to class. I am deeply invested in your success and I'm excited for what this semester has in store. Best of luck to all of you as we begin this journey of a new academic year together. Go Pirates!

Philip Rogers is the chancellor at ECU and a guest columnist.
To contact him, email
opinion@theeastcarolinian.com.

Welcome home Pirate Nation



Virginia Hardy
GUEST COLUMNIST

Welcome home, Pirate Nation! We have all weathered the storm over the last 18 months and are so excited for your return! Over that time, we have heard so many of your stories and experiences, and we want that to continue. Joyner Library archivists are working to document the pandemic story for future generations. I encourage you to share your stories to the library via journal entries, photographs, poetry, video recordings, artwork or screenshots of social media posts. Sharing can be therapeutic.

Similarly, I encourage you to take full advantage of The Pirate Experience. The Pirate Experience means being engaged, developing personally and academically and finding ways to be challenged and inspired. The best way to do that is to get connected early in the semester. Participate in a student organization, intramural, student activity, club sport or service project that mirrors your interests.

Over 500 registered student organizations and hundreds of events exist on Engage. If we don't have something that meets your interests, we will help you create it.

Invest in yourself and take advantage of the available resources and opportunities. For example, Career Services offers valuable resources as you plan your career

“A new academic year and a new semester mean a fresh start. Let's make this a wonderful year and know that as #ECUunited, we will get through this together.”

-Virginia Hardy

path. Take advantage of Handshake and career fairs where you can find job and internship opportunities. Connect with the Pirate Academic Success Center to help you academically. One of the best ways to be informed is to get involved. Get out of your comfort zone and discover the unique campus opportunities via Engage.

ONLINE | FULL STORY

We also want you to be motivated to take care of yourself during your college experience. Don't forget important things like healthy eating and ample sleep along with going to class, studying, going to class and going to class. Self-care and well-being are important parts of The Pirate Experience. Visit the Eakins and Health Sciences Student Recreation Centers for a fitness class, early morning swim or a basketball game. If you are not feeling well, then visit the Student Health Center where caring healthcare professionals are there for you.

Yes, college is stressful. There are exams, projects, early and late classes, disagreements with roommates and many other things. Don't get overwhelmed and finish strong. Develop relationships with your professors, advisors, staff members or

resident advisor if you live on campus. Call home and talk to mom and dad or make an appointment to see one of our experienced licensed therapists in the Center for Counseling and Student Development. Know you are never alone.

COVID-19 and its variants are still a concern for the campus community. We are continuing to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely, and we encourage everyone to follow the Return of Pirate Nation website that will have the most up-to-date information prioritizing the health and safety of our campus. All students, faculty, and staff are strongly encouraged to protect themselves and other members of the university community through compliance with university, state and federal health mandates.

A new academic year and a new semester mean a fresh start. Let's make this a wonderful year and know that as #ECUunited, we will get through this together.

Virginia Hardy is the vice chancellor for Student Affairs at ECU and a guest columnist.
To contact her, email
opinion@theeastcarolinian.com.



GEORGE MARTIN | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

Chloe Easton makes her return as the Editor-in-Chief of The East Carolinian this summer as she welcomes East Carolina University's community back for a safe and successful fall semester.

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

The East Carolinian provides the university with relevant information

Chloe Easton
TEC COLUMNIST

Welcome back Pirates!

I would like to introduce myself as the returning Editor-in-Chief of the official student-run newspaper for East Carolina University.

For those who made the return to campus and for those who recently joined Pirate Nation, I know we are all eager to take some of our first steps on campus again in over a year. With our return to campus, TEC is here to provide you with the most up to date information for our community to remain safe and stay informed. Although TEC is comprised of hard working staff members, we are students first and understand your needs and desires for transparency from the university.

Going into my final semester here at ECU, and as I look back at my time spent here, I reflect on the opportunities and experiences it has provided me that made me into the person I am today. When I first stepped

on campus in 2017, I will admit I felt out of place. The transition is not always easy, but the best advice I can give to you as you return is to find a group or organization to be involved with. Pirate Media 1 has provided me with not only a plethora of experiences within student journalism, but a family here at ECU.

As you attend your classes and events around campus, please remember the health and safety of others. The guidelines put in place by ECU are meant to keep both students, faculty, staff and their friends and family safe. With the surfacing of the delta variant and the constant increase of COVID-19 cases among the country, we must remember to always wear a face mask when indoors, keep social distancing methods in mind and obtain your vaccine offered on campus.

The time you spend while in college will not always be the easiest. Your major will probably change a few times, you may drop a difficult class, you may change your perspective on life or even change those in your close circle. Don't get me wrong, you will also grow to

find your passion, take some of your favorite courses, find your path and meet some of your best friends. Keep in mind when things do get tough, there is always good to come. So, don't stress over the changes you may face during your time here at ECU.

TEC and myself are committed to serve Pirate Nation as the most reliable and informative news source, especially during this time, to help keep our community safe and informed. From coverage on city to campus events, TEC will continue to provide new students and those returning with the information they need. Myself, as well as my staff, are excited to be back on campus, in the newsroom and out on the field providing news to fellow Pirates.

Stay safe and have a great year!

This writer can be contacted at
editor@theeastcarolinian.com

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Tryouts are held in the Pirate Media 1 newsroom in Mendenhall on the main floor. Bring a pencil and a Blue Book.

No experience needed. All majors welcome!

DATES:

Monday, Aug. 30
OR
Wednesday, Sept. 1
OR
Thursay, Sept. 2

Pick a time between 9 a.m. to noon or 2-5 p.m.

Students must have a 2.25 GPA or higher in order to apply. Contact dovet@ecu.edu for more information on the Magazine Academy.

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YOUR CHOICE!

Tryouts are held in the Pirate Media 1 newsroom in Mendenhall on the main floor. Bring a pen/pencil and a bluebook. One hour is allotted for tryouts.

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED!
ALL MAJORS WELCOME.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CANDIDATE PROGRAM CONTACT **CHERIE SPELLER** AT SPELLERCH16@ECU.EDU

FALL • 2021

The East Carolinian

STUDENTS MUST HAVE A 2.25 GPA OR HIGHER TO APPLY.

EVENTS

TODAY

Coffee + Paddle

Blackbeard Coffee Roasters
203 E 5th St.
8:30 to 10:30 a.m.
252-714-5836

Trivia Night

Pitt Street Brewing Company
630 S. Pitt Street
7 to 10 p.m.
252-227-4151

TOMORROW

Board Game Night

Well Played Games
1400 Charles Boulevard,
Suite 130
6 to 9 p.m.
252-378-2098

WEDNESDAY

Umbrella Market

Five Points Plaza
Fifth and Evans St.
5 to 8 p.m.
252-561-8400

Jazz and more with Park

Avenue South
Nino's Cucina Italiana
511 Red Banks Rd.
7 to 9 p.m.
252-298-2879

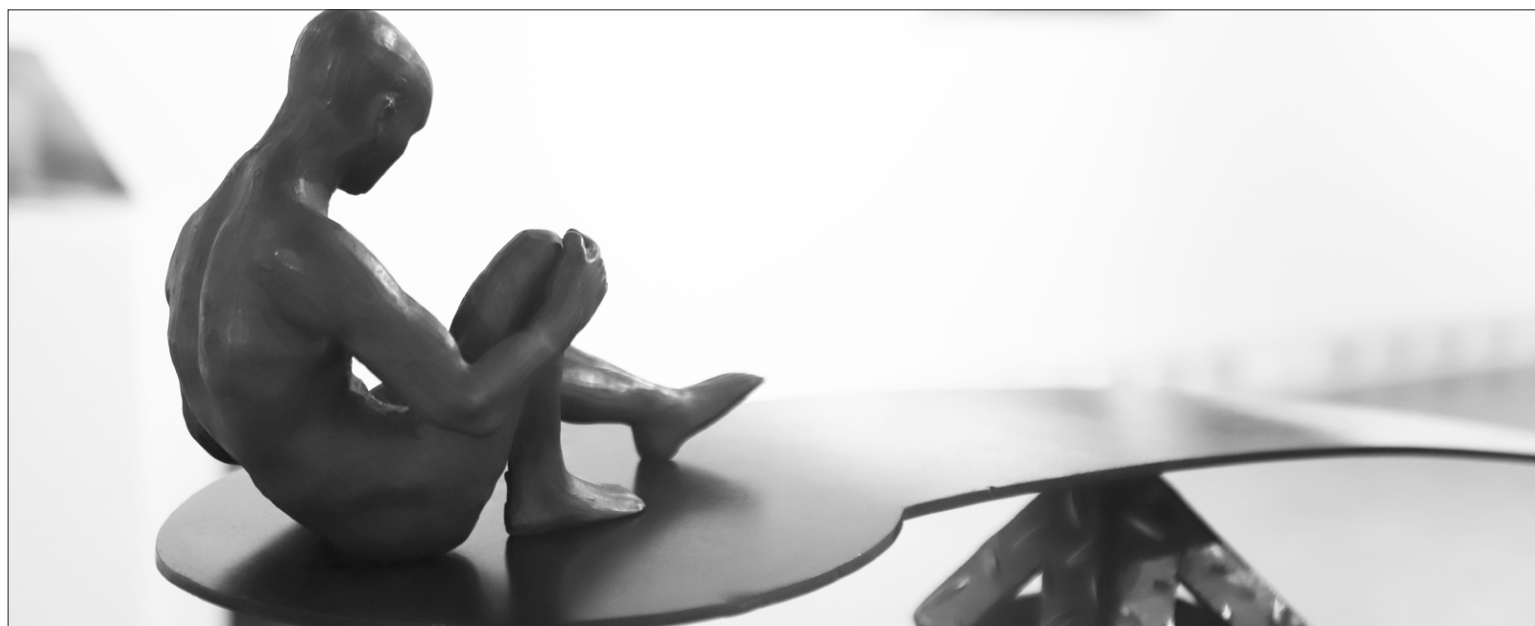
THURSDAY

Pitt Street Run Club

Pitt Street Brewing Company
630 S. Pitt Street
6:15 to 9 p.m.
252-227-4151

Dixie Belle Demo Night: Glazes

Funky Junk
809-A Red Banks Rd.
6 to 8 p.m.
252-916-8860



Sculpture "Projection of the Shadow" by alumnus artist Kevin Vanek will continue to be on display in the Gray Galley from today through Sept. 24.

HALIE MILLER | THE EAST CAROLINIAN

Alumni exhibit showcases art Gray Gallery features pieces by former SoAD students

Emily Peek
TEC STAFF

East Carolina University's School of Art and Design (SoAD) will showcase an Alumni 2021 Exhibition opening from today through Sept. 24 with a reception on Sept. 3 that will feature work from about 130 SoAD alumni artists across three venues.

Curatorial Technician for the Wellington B. Gray Gallery Maria Modlin said the exhibit will be held at Emerge Gallery and Art Center, Janice Hardison Faulkner Gallery and Joyner Library. She said SoAD has tried to hold an Alumni Exhibition every five years, though COVID-19 postponed the event.

Modlin said the exhibition will feature paintings, textiles, sculptures, prints, graphic designs, ceramics and metal work.

"It's (the exhibition) a big mix of art. We do have about 11 different programs in the school of art and historically it was, sort of, less programs but there were specializations so now everything is divided," Modlin said. "It's a big mix of students that goes back to 1970 through last year."

Modlin said while the alumni exhibits have been popular in the past, this year's event did not get as many submissions due to the pandemic. She said some artists who were not able to submit their work have expressed that they look forward to viewing the show.

"The exhibit is always fun when we do the alumni because we tend to get a lot of alumnus in for that exhibit, it tends to be really

busy and it's just a great time seeing everyone," Modlin said. "COVID-19 has affected the show aside from it being postponed a year but we're still looking forward to it."

While anyone is welcome to attend the event, Modlin said guests will be required to wear face masks and further safety precautions may be posted as the university announces policies for the fall 2021 semester.

Modlin said SoAD was able to host two senior exhibitions at the end of the spring 2021 semester, but was limited to a capacity of 25 and could not hold a reception.

"Prior to that (the senior exhibitions) we hosted a thesis exhibit that was up for a few weeks for four or five students that were graduating and again we couldn't hold a reception," Modlin said. "What we did for them was they did their gallery talk online."

Modlin said parts of the Alumni 2021 Exhibition may be posted online, though it is uncertain whether there will be a live stream or recorded copy of the event. A decision may be made the week of the event, she said.

As certain courses within SoAD were able to hold in-person classes for the 2020-2021 school year, Modlin said she feels concerned about the return to campus for the fall 2021 semester because

of the COVID-19 delta variant.

"Prior to the (delta) variant I felt more comfortable, right now I am concerned and I think that's globally," Modlin said. "It's just a wait and see."

Assistant Director and Graduate Programs Coordinator for the SoAD and Interim Assistant Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication Seo Eo said the Alumni 2021 Exhibition is a great opportunity to reconnect SoAD alumni and showcase their work to current SoAD students.

Eo said while COVID-19 posed a challenge for participatory courses such as those offered through SoAD and the School of Theatre and Dance, SoAD's main mission with a return to campus is to ensure the health and safety of students, staff and faculty.

"I mean COVID(-19) for the past year and a half, it affected everyone, so we are developing, we have developed ways to best interface with the community and students and understanding the fact that there are some things we can't do," Eo said. "We had a very drastic and forced paradigm shift last year. I feel like we've had, fortunately and unfortunately, a good practice last year."

Eo said unless there is a major change in the university's COVID-19 guidelines, he feels as though SoAD is prepared to hold courses in-person as planned with masks, social distancing and is prepared to offer content online if adjustments need to be made.

Students within SoAD have

produced great work throughout the obstacles COVID-19 brought, Eo said. He said students reflected their feelings and experiences about COVID-19 in their work.

ECU alumnus and Studio Manager of Clayworks in Charlotte, North Carolina, Brett Beasley said he graduated from SoAD in 2017 with a master of fine arts and a concentration in ceramics.

"The exhibition will show all disciplined artworks, mine happens to be ceramics and I would assume there's photo and print-making and everything else," Beasley said. "The piece that I submitted was a sculpture, it's an abstract sculpture."

Beasley said he used reactive, bronze and foaming glazes to add visual characteristics to his sculpture. He said he picked up ceramics in high school as a fun outlet and has now been working in the field for 12 to 13 years.

While he is happy to showcase his piece in the Alumni exhibit, Beasley said his main motive is to inspire current SoAD students.

"It's good for the youngins to get a look at, to see what is possible," Beasley said. "To see somebody that's been 10, 20, 30 years doing ceramics or painting or whatever their media is and realize that's awesome."

This writer can be contacted at arts@theeastcarolinian.com.



Maria Modlin



Brett Beasley

SoTD prepares to welcome back audiences

Emily Peek
TEC STAFF

East Carolina University's School of Theatre and Dance (SoTD) prepares to welcome audiences back to its theater for the fall 2021 season of plays, dance concerts and musicals.

Coordinator of Operations and Outreach for SoTD and Patron Services Manager at ECU/Loessin Playhouse Stephanie Slusser said in an email statement the SoTD's fall 2021 semester expects to have an audience back in its theatre as it follows COVID-19 policies.

"The ECU/Loessin Playhouse season of performances will comply with NC state guidelines and ECU campus guidelines," Slusser said. "Ticketing for all performances in the 2021-2022 ECU/Loessin Playhouse season is general admission, so if we have to spread out for social distancing we can."

While social distancing is not currently required by campus protocols, Slusser said she is prepared to make changes that will ensure the safety of students, faculty and audience members. She said some SoTD performances will be available to stream online.

The SoTD will open its season with "The Visit," a play by Friedrich Durrenmatt, adapted by Maurice Valency and directed by Guest Director Kimille Howard, Slusser said. The show will run from Sept. 29 through Oct. 3 at McGinnis Theatre and will cost \$10 for ECU students, \$12 for faculty and staff and \$15 for the general public.

Slusser said in November, the SoTD will showcase "Head Over Heels," a jukebox musical that exclusively features music from The Go-Go's based on a story by the English poet and scholar Sir Phillips Sidney.

"It's kind of a fantasy-like, romantic comedy type show but the fun thing's that it's all Go-Go's music," Slusser said.

The SoTD's fall dance concert will be held at Wright Auditorium on Oct. 23 and Oct. 24, Slusser said. She said the performances will feature multiple dance styles such as modern, jazz, tap and ballet from faculty, student and guest artist choreographers.

Director of the School of Theatre and Dance Jayme Klinger-Host said she is excited to welcome patrons back to the theater. She

said she is also excited that this will be the 60th season of shows for SoTD.

"We hope to invite everyone back to their



Jayme Klinger-Host

subscription seats in the fall of 2022 because a lot of our patrons are so loyal to us and come to all of our shows and have their specific seats that they like," Klinger-Host said. "Having the general seating helps

us be a little more adaptable incase we need to adjust to new state or national guidelines about (COVID-19) occupancy levels."

Klinger-Host said her faculty has worked hard throughout the summer to prepare for the fall 2021 semester. She said the Return to Pirate Nation document has enabled the SoTD to follow safe protocols as it returns to normal operations.

Junior dance education major Kelly Holt said the dance program within the SoTD focuses on jazz, modern and ballet, with provided tap and pointe courses. She said as a student in the dance program, she has oppor-

tunities to work with the theatre program as theatre and dance students can audition for each other's shows.

"We're (the dance and theatre programs) very well meshed together and we (students in the dance program) have opportunities to work with the theatre students, so freshman year we all take a theatre technology class," Holt said. "It's a way for us to all learn about theatre and also for us to interact with them which I appreciated."

Holt said she appreciates that her time in the dance program has allowed her to learn about and interact with theatre students.

Holt said in the fall dance concert she said she will understudy a guest artist as well as perform in a tap piece. She said she is considering choreographing a piece for the concert.

"It's really exciting (performing under a guest artist) because we (SoTD) get to bring in people this year which is also great," Holt said.

Holt said she feels comfortable with a return to the SoTD for the fall 2021 semester.

This writer can be contacted at arts@theeastcarolinian.com.

BAND continued from A1

already for the joint performance.

Students had to go through the process of obtaining a university excused absence and COVID-19 precautions had to be coordinated as well, Nikhil B said. He said a lot of preparation has been put into the upcoming season as a whole.

"The thing I am looking most forward to would be getting back out there on the field with my peers. It was definitely something that we missed last year, it's just one of the best things about being in band is being out there, all your friends around you," Nikhil B. said.

The first show of the season is a tribute to frontline workers, Nikhil B. said. The second show will be 80's themed and he said the band even has some new stand tunes. He said he encourages everyone to come to the games safely to support the band and football team.

Senior political science major and color guard captain Kailey Lawing said that while the past modified semesters had been hard, Busuito worked hard to maintain the band's community and to keep members from leaving the band in the wake of COVID-19.

"I know like a lot of programs have suffered this past year and a half and a lot of bands have no members now because

no one wants to march in this type of environment and all that. It's really different but it's also been kind of eye opening to how important the arts are and what it's like without them," Lawing said.

For the past few semesters color guard has had to choreograph abbreviated routines to be performed only in the stands, Lawing said. She said she looks forward to performing full choreography in uniform and participating in game day traditions like the march up the hill and tailgate band.

This writer can be contacted at arts@theeastcarolinian.com.



Christian Powell, who graduated in spring 2021 with a masters in music performance, plays The Dreamer in the prerecorded opera "The Dreamer" which will premiere on Friday at 7:30 p.m. CONTRIBUTED BY DANIEL SHIRLEY

SoM opera 'The Dreamer' to look inward

Kyle Arnoe
TEC STAFF

"The Dreamer," an opera that will be performed by the East Carolina University Opera Theater, will hit the virtual stage on Friday at 7:30 p.m. as an original work by an ECU faculty member following the dream of its title character as she deals with the nightmares within.

Director of "The Dreamer" and associate professor of vocal studies at the ECU School of Music Daniel Shirley said the 40 minute production, which will be available on the SoM YouTube channel, follows the introspective trials of its titular character, The Dreamer, as she navigates through a nightmare about personal trauma.

Shirley said the premiere will be complemented by a live viewing at the Fletcher Recital Hall, a free and public event where the cast will also gather to watch the opera for the first time.

"The Dreamer" has been in production since January 2021, Shirley said, and is the original product of a collaboration between Mark Taggart, the composer of

the opera and a professor of music composition at ECU, and the opera's writer Ann McCutchan. Shirley said the work, which features 16 ECU students on its cast, was written with COVID-19 restrictions and virtual screenings in mind.

"What she was able to capture in that libretto (opera script) was really kind of nightmarish, there's all this haunting, hypnotic repetition of individual words and sounds of words. The way that she breaks up the words is really chilling," Shirley said. "And so Dr. Taggart took those words and he set them to music and he was able to create sort of an aural nightmare scenscape with those words."

Shirley said COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing offered unique opportunities, rather than hindrances, to the opera's creation.

No two characters are present at once on screen due to social distancing requirements, Shirley said, and the unique filming style offered a chance to add emotional depth and intimacy to supplement "The Dreamer's" introspective nature.

"Aside from just learning the music, the dramatic rehearsals really took the shape of guided meditations where each person, each cast member reflected on their own life experiences and how those life experiences can be translated into their parts in "The Dreamer," Shirley said.

Mark Taggart, composer of "The Dreamer," said in an email statement he created the opera as both a reaction to and in mind of the constraints of COVID-19 and the unrest of 2020. Taggart said this is the second time he's worked with McCutchan, and hopes to continue to collaborate with her.

Taggart said the composition of "The Dreamer" was something he lived, not just worked on, as the involved process of creating cohesion between narrative, music and emotion demanded his full attention.

"What guided us was our effort to try to come to terms with what we all were experiencing in the summer of 2020. We needed to respond to the urgency of the times and try to make sense of it. What story could we

tell, and how are we to go about it?" Taggart said. "The next step was to create the libretto. Ann (McCutchan) and I had a few Zoom meetings where we set up the parameters of our story."

Aiyana Mourino, sophomore music education major and cast member of "The Dreamer," said her character is one of six who guides The Dreamer as she navigates her dream.

Mourino said the production was unlike anything she'd been a part of, as she's never worked on something prerecorded. She said the amount of work that has gone into the opera by the cast and crew has culminated into a one of a kind show.

"This is probably, you know, one of the first, if not like the first, at least at ECU definitely the first, filmed opera, completely incredible production quality, super super special, and it's like a once in a lifetime opportunity to see," Mourino said.

ONLINE |
FULL STORY

This writer can be contacted at
arts@theeastcarolinian.com.

the BIG VAPE THEORY

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East Carolina University volleyball senior outside hitter Sydney Kleinman bumps the ball to return a serve as the Pirates play the University of South Florida Mustangs on Feb. 18.

ECU Volleyball set to begin fall season

Pirates will start 2021-22 schedule with road game against Liberty University

Brendan Cavazos
TEC STAFF

East Carolina University volleyball will start its regular season with an away game against Liberty University Friday.

After a delayed 2020-2021 season due to COVID-19, the team will be back under head coach Adler Augustin. He led the team in 12 games last season and finished with a 4-8 record and a 1-7 conference record.



Augustin Adler

The schedule for the 2021 spring season included several two-game series for the Pirates, which ended in an 0-2 defeat on several occasions over the course of the season.

However, ECU was able to secure its first win over the University of North Carolina since the 1978 season on Feb. 5.

The game on Friday will be the regular season opener for the Liberty Flames as well.

Last season, the team posted a record of 5-9 and went 5-7 in conference play. During the first half of the 2021 spring season for the Flames, it was a struggle at home court as they lost the first five games in Virginia. However, the team was able to pull out two wins in the final two home contests.

The Pirates will welcome back two fifth-year seniors in outside hitter Sydney Kleinman and right side Bri Wood. Both athletes will return for another year after the pair went for 309 kills and 250 digs combined last season, according to ECU-Pirates. Both Wood and Kleinman are on the way to reaching 1,000 digs as a Pirate, and could become the sixth and seventh players to do so.

Wood was named to the All-American Athletic Conference preseason team on Aug. 18 and she also earned All-American Athletic Conference First Team honors during the spring season.

Another returnee is senior outside hitter Natalie Tyson, who was the team's leading

scorer in the spring. She was also one of five on her team to play in all 47 sets of last season's 12 games, in which she finished with 119.5 points on 105 kills, averaging 2.23 per set, according to ECU-Pirates. She also collected four double-doubles in the spring.

Senior setter Janiece Jefferies will also return this season for the Pirates. She was named the AAC Defensive Player of the Week for the week of March 22.

ECU volleyball will also welcome several new faces including a new transfer from Florida South Western State junior middle blocker Kainie Cummings. She stands at 6 feet, 4 inches and helped her previous team reach a fourth place finish in the Florida College System Activities Association (FCSAA) State Tournament.

In addition, the Pirates will be joined by 10 freshmen in total; setter Payton Evanstad

from Faribault, Minnesota, outside hitter Izzy Marinelli from Yardley, Pennsylvania, right side Sophia Kruczek from Cary, North Carolina, defensive specialist Alex Singleton from Spring, Texas and middle blocker Amelia Davis from Denver, Colorado.

Outside hitter Merritt Woodson from Jarvisburg, North Carolina, setter Kenzie Beckham from Austin, Texas, defensive specialist Anaiah Jones from Charlotte, North Carolina, middle blocker Aaliyah Griffin from Bowie, Maryland and defensive specialist Tia Shum from London, Ontario, will also join the team as freshmen.

The Pirates will be ready for action on Friday for the season opener of the 2021 season and will head to Lynchburg, Virginia to face the Liberty Flames. The game is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. and will be available to stream on ESPN+.



Janiece Jefferies

This writer can be contacted at sports@theeastcarolinian.com.

SEASON continued from A1

season last year," Houston said. "It's refreshing to have the experience coming back. I thought we were playing very well at the end of the year with great physicality and I really love the way we were playing defensively."

The football season will officially begin Sept. 2 at the Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the Pirates will play the Appalachian State Mountaineers. The team will play four non-conference games against Appalachian State University, the University of South Carolina, Marshall University and Charleston Southern University before it faces off against eight conference teams.

The regular season will end on Nov. 26 in a conference matchup against the University of Cincinnati. In the Associated Press (AP) polls, Cincinnati was ranked No. 8 in the preseason top 25. The

Bearcats were the only American Athletic Conference (AAC) team to make it on the list this season.

"The preseason polls don't matter, it is the post-season polls that do. It absolutely means nothing because all I think it is maybe a little bit of a distraction," Houston said. "This is a tough league that has a lot of depth and it is going to be a freaking dog fight every week."

To prepare for the preseason scrimmages and for the season to officially begin, on Aug. 4 the Pirates had their first official practice. This practice took place on the Hight Field inside the Cliff Moore Practice complex. On Aug. 6 the team moved to the next phase of camp which included shoulder pads. The first full pad practice took place Aug. 10 and the first scrimmage was held on Aug. 14.

Houston said the team has improved and he felt as if his players would be ready for the season opener.

Starting junior quarterback Holton Ahlers was impressed by his teammates and felt confident about how the team will play when the regular season officially begins. Both Houston and Ahlers spoke about the talents and effort of freshman tight-end Shane Calhoun.

"I think he's (Calhoun) the best tight end in our conference. There is nothing he can't do. I trust him and I know he can make any play happen," Ahlers said. "Any first scrimmage you're gonna have things you gotta fix and stuff like that but I mean the team was physical, we played with a lot of energy and just have a lot to learn from watching the film to get better."

Calhoun hails from St. Augustine, Florida, where he was a three year letterman underneath coach Sean McIntyre. He stands at 6-foot-2-inches and weighs in at 243 pounds.

Ahlers will be one of the team's leaders as he enters his junior year as starting

quarterback. In his collegiate career, he has completed 556 of his 974 passes and he has



Holton Ahlers

thrown for 7,093 yards including 51 touchdowns. In carries, he has gained 1,060 yards and will be one to keep an eye on as the season begins.

"It's the greatest sport in the world and we came here to do it. We've got depth all the way around and we got size, it's fun to go out there and compete," Ahlers said when asked about the season so far.

The Pirates will head to Charlotte to play App State in the 2021 Duke's Mayo Classic on Sept. 2. Kick off is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

This writer can be contacted at sports@theeastcarolinian.com.



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