

Protests in Brevard and beyond Over 3,000 Forest Service employees fired

Madeleine Pollock
Staff Writer

Around 200 people gathered at the entrance to Pisgah National Forest and thousands at national parks across the United States Saturday to protest job cuts for forest service workers.

“I attended the protest in Pisgah because I believe that protecting the natural lands is something that everyone should be doing,” said sophomore Sidi Podolan, one of multiple BC students who attended the protest. “Growing up, my family would visit Pisgah and other surrounding forests every summer so it’s also a deeply personal effort to me.”

According to The New York Times, the Forest Service oversees about 278 million acres of public land, and in the last two weeks, the Trump administration and Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency have fired over 3,000 U.S. Forest Service employees, sparking outrage across the nation.

Protest has been taking many forms, like how laid-off workers in Yosemite hung an upside down flag in front of the El Capitan vertical rock formation, as historically an upside-down flag signifies distress.

Near Brevard, the U. S. Forest Service is in charge of Pisgah and Nantahala National For-



A group protesting cuts to federal park and forest employees hung an upside-down flag signalling distress at Yosemite National Park on Feb. 22.

ests, where they supervise educational programs, public safety, conservation efforts, search and rescue, fire control, among other things.

Most cars, cyclists and forest-users that passed by on U.S. 276 on March 1 honked or cheered in support, whereas some made rude gestures

at the protesters.

So far, the effects on Brevard have been minimal; however, some students were concerned that the firings could harm BC’s wilderness leadership and experiential education program.

WLEE Coordinator and Professor Jennifer Kafsky addressed some of those concerns, saying, “Right now I don’t foresee any particular issues because we have a special use permit. I think where we possibly might see changes is just in our connections with the U.S. Forest Service. If they have staff limitations there will be challenges that they have to face and that could trickle down to us.”

She says that the WLEE program will “keep doing what we’re doing and be really supportive of our partners and land management, while also be contingency planning so that if something does happen unexpectedly then we have a plan.”

Service has always been part of life at BC, and because of the firings, Kafsky says WLEE will be “even more engaged at the program level to try to give and do service because the places that we love are going to be more taxed.”



Protesters line the road at the entrance to Pisgah National Forest on March 1. (Photo by Sidi Podolan)

Political science students to present at UN event March 17

Brevard College has been invited to host a parallel event at the United Nations 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) titled *Breaking Barriers: Addressing the Challenges for Women and Girls in Appalachia* in Political Representation, Health, and the Environment.

The event will take place on March 17, 2025, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (Eastern Time) and will be held both at Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina, and virtually at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

This event is organized by students in Brevard College’s Political Science 290 Special Topics class. The discussion will highlight the unique challenges faced by women and girls in Appalachia, focusing on the intersections of political participation, healthcare access, and environmental justice.

“This initiative provides an opportunity for students to bridge theory and policy, engaging in a classroom-to-policy learning exchange,” said Dr. Ameena Zia, Brevard College adjunct professor and UN NGO Representative at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Dr. Jordan Kuck, associate professor of History and chair of Humanities, is proud of the work that Dr. Zia is doing. “Dr. Zia is such an innovative teacher,” said Kuck, “and I am delighted that she is helping our students connect local with global.”

Dr. Zia has served as a UN NGO Representative at ECOSOC (United Nations Economic and Social Council) since 2015, when the UN Global Goals were adopted by over 180 countries. A longtime advocate at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, she currently serves on the Advocacy Committee of the US Women’s Caucus.

The theme of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women focuses on assessing the challenges affecting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as their contribution to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The event is open to UN Member States, international NGOs, policymakers, academics, students, media representatives, and the general public.

The initiative is led by the Blue Ridge Impact Foundation, a member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/ NY). As a stakeholder at the United Nations, the foundation advocates for education for peace and strives to make a positive impact on individuals worldwide through learning.

THE CLARION

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Dr. Laura Vance retires from higher education after three decades of teaching

Zoe Hughes
Managing Editor

Dr. Laura Vance is retiring after 30 years of teaching in higher education. At Brevard, she served as the Division Chair of Social Sciences.

Vance started her teaching career at Georgia Southwestern State University in 1994. She then moved to the Western North Carolina area where she taught at Warren Wilson College from 2007 to 2018, before beginning her career at Brevard.

“My favorite memory is watching the programs and faculty grow and thrive in the social sciences,” Vance said. “In the last seven years, they have really come into their own and become strong, popular, solid programs.”

Vance said that what initially drew her to Brevard was the college’s impressive reputation. “Every college I’ve encountered claims to value undergraduate education, but in my experience, Brevard actually does—they reward faculty for teaching well, they emphasize teaching and faculty evaluation, and they try to recruit good professors. The professors here are, as a group,

the best I’ve encountered in higher education.”

After a long career of teaching, Dr. Vance says that the most fulfilling part of teaching for her is the “spark” from students when they find something that they find interesting.

“I teach general education classes. Typically, students are intrinsically interested in their major. Teaching general education, you’re teaching students who maybe don’t know much about the discipline... But then, if you can take those students and kind of see them become really interested in something... that’s what makes it fun.”

After retirement, Vance says that she is looking forward to being able to hike more often and hone her woodworking skills. But, she is not done using her professional skills. “I’m interested in finding more ways to benefit non-profits that work on issues that are long-term concerns to me; especially things like domestic violence and sexual assault.”

The Clarion staff wishes Dr. Vance a happy and fulfilling retirement!



Dr. Laura Vance

Fire, fire, no fire

Frequency of Jones fire alarm system alarms residents

Abigail Callahan
Staff Writer

Fire alarms are a normal part of the college dorm experience, yet residents of Jones Hall are constantly having their days and nights interrupted by them; they go off so often that they might cause residents to not take them seriously, which is a huge safety concern.

Christie Cauble, Director of Community Living, discussed the frequent fire alarms in Jones dorm, estimating between 10 to 20 alarms this semester, with up to two in one night. The main causes include student activities like smoking,

using steam-producing items, and burning candles. Cauble said, “They’re sensitive fire heads, it’s regulated by the fire department.”

Cauble acknowledged the student’s complaints, noting that the alarms should ideally not go off unless during a routine fire drill or an actual emergency. “Ninety percent of the time it’s set off by something a student is doing in their room.” There was only one main emergency out of all the fire alarms in Jones this year.

The fire department regulates the sensitivity of the fire alarms, limiting the school’s control over the issue. Reducing the number of alarms is an ongoing challenge; however, steps will be

taken with students, such as issuing warnings for student behavior, and may include fines for repeated offenses.

Cauble noted that the number of alarms varies by dorm, with Jones having the most this year, while Beam had a higher number last year. The Jones Hall RA’s want to ensure the health and safety of the students living in the dorm and it will take everyone working together to eliminate excessive fire alarms. This would be a welcomed outcome for the local fire department, building maintenance, and the residents.

Brevard College celebrates legacy of musical excellence

Kyle Stefanick
Staff Writer

When Brevard College opened its doors in 1934, music was an integral part of the educational experience, designed to enrich the cultural landscape of the institution. Over the years, the music program has evolved significantly, resulting in the establishment of the Wind Ensemble—a group that not only showcases musical talent but also encourages community engagement and collaboration among students.

Music at Brevard College: The Early Years

In the late 1940s, the foundations of music at Brevard College were set with a focus on instrumental education. The 1947-48 catalog introduced woodwinds in the “Instrumental Supervisor’s Course,” establishing a requirement for a “brass and woodwind class.”

However, offerings were limited, with hands-on music classes primarily covering voice, piano, and violin. The early music program laid the groundwork for a growing interest in ensemble performance, but it was still in its infancy.

The Rise of the Wind Ensemble

The 1960s marked a significant turning point for the music program at Brevard College. In 1960, *The Clarion* mentioned the Wind Ensemble’s participation in a chapel program, highlighting its emerging role within campus life.

By 1963, the *Pertelote Yearbook* provided the first formal recognition of the Wind Ensemble, indicating its establishment as a vital part of the college’s musical framework.

By 1967, the Wind Ensemble was first noted to consist of a small yet dynamic group of musicians, featuring a brass quintet alongside a woodwind octet.

This configuration not only highlighted the diverse range of instruments but also provided students with a unique opportunity to collaborate closely and explore a variety of musical styles. The ensemble encouraged participation from students, allowing them to join for class credit or voluntarily, fostering a sense of community and artistic expression.

Current Status of the Wind Ensemble

Currently, the Brevard College Wind Ensemble consists of skilled brass, woodwind, and percussion musicians who actively participate in a variety of performances throughout the academic year. The ensemble serves not only as a training ground for developing musicians but also as a vital contributor to the college’s cultural initiatives.

By performing a diverse repertoire, the Wind Ensemble enhances the college’s artistic offerings and creates opportunities for community engagement. This commitment to musical excellence not only hones the participants’ skills

but also curates a deeper appreciation for the arts within the college and the surrounding community.

Looking Ahead: The Future of the Wind Ensemble

As the Wind Ensemble moves forward, it stands poised to embrace new opportunities for growth and collaboration. With advancements in music education and evolving musical trends, the ensemble aims to expand its repertoire and explore new performance techniques.

By continuing to have an inclusive environment, and encouraging student and community involvement, the Wind Ensemble seeks to inspire future generations of musicians at Brevard College.

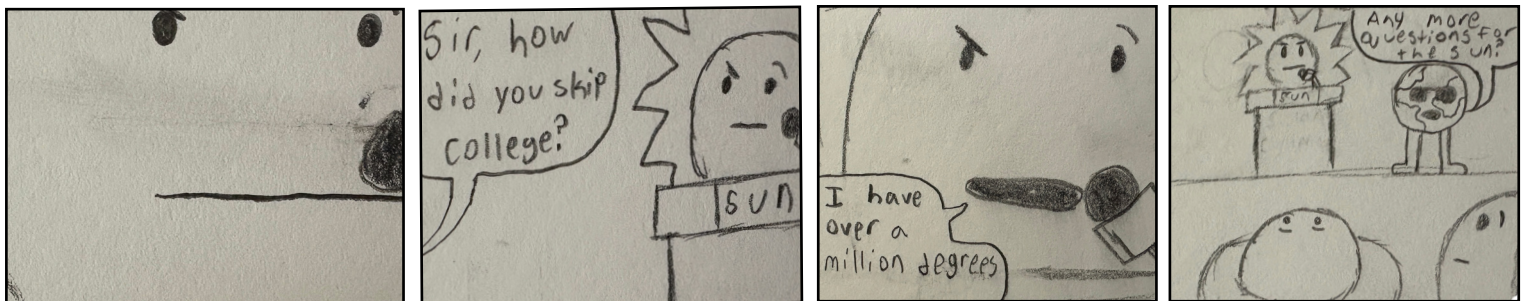
As we reflect on the journey of the Wind Ensemble, we are filled with gratitude for the musicians who paved the way for our current achievements. Their dedication and passion for music have established a rich legacy that continues to inspire today’s students.

We honor their contributions as we embrace the future, recognizing that our present success is built upon their hard work and commitment to building a vibrant musical community. The history of our ensemble not only reminds us of where we came from, but also motivates us to carry forward the heritage of innovation and collaboration here at Brevard College.

‘Hot stuff’

Kathleen Benedict
Written by

Hank Tarte
Illustrated by



USA South Conference in photos

The Brevard College women's basketball came up just short in the USA South Conference championship game on Saturday, March 1, falling to the top-seeded Southern Virginia 45-57. Here are some photos from the game, which took place at Knight Arena in Buena Vista, Virginia. (All photos by Aleica Janeiro via Flickr)



Communications major spotlight: Kathleen Benedict

From Greenville to Brevard: the journey of harnessing communication for positive change

Kailey Ward
Contributor

Kathleen Benedict, a communication major at Brevard College, hails from Greenville, South Carolina, and is driven by a deep-seated desire to use her communication skills to provoke positive change.

Benedict's journey to Brevard and her dedication to communication studies are rooted in a unique connection to the area and a recognition of the field's versatility.

"During my adolescence, I found sanctuary in the woods here," Benedict explained. "When it came time to choose where I would leave home, Brevard seemed like the only appropriate choice." This connection to the natural beauty surrounding Brevard College played a significant role in her decision to pursue her education here

Benedict's choice to major in communication stems from her appreciation for the field's broad applicability. "We spend four years learning the world's most transferable skills and how to recognize the vaguest of communication styles," she said.

This understanding of nuanced communication and the ability to adapt to various situations

gives her confidence in her future employability. "As a communication student, I feel confident I will be highly employable by the time I'm done at Brevard."

Her time at Brevard has been transformative, allowing her to discover new facets of herself. "Through opportunities dealt to me at Brevard, I have come to realize that perhaps I am not the person I thought I was," Benedict reflected.

"Brevard has allowed me to create space for the most bountiful of changes in my life." This included a pivotal shift from WLEE to Communication Studies, allowing her to blend her passion for outdoor adventures with her creative inclinations.

Benedict's primary goal as a communication student is ambitious and inspiring. "My main goal as a communication student is to allow my brain to be cracked open and rearranged," she stated with conviction. "I would love to just absorb all the knowledge the Communication Studies department has to offer and then expel it on the world in hopes to create change, invoke positivity, and unite."

Looking ahead, Benedict envisions a period of exploration and self-discovery after graduation. Recognizing the value of education, she also acknowledges the need for personal growth. "As

much as education is a necessary stepping stone, there are few things that allow me to continue forward with it. When I'm finally done, I would love to wait on my next career move."

Benedict's story reflects a passion for communication, a commitment to personal growth, and a desire to make a positive impact on the world. Her journey at Brevard College is preparing her to achieve her ambitious goals.



Kathleen Benedict.



'We teach growth mindset, and we must model it'

State senate bill proposes to eliminate standardized testing for teacher preparation programs

Autumn Jones
Editor in Chief

A North Carolina bill proposed on Thursday, Feb. 27, suggests that standardized testing requirements for future teachers in licensure programs could be eliminated.

Dr. Betsy Burrows, Professor of Education and Director of Teacher Education at Brevard College, and Professor Jessie Tucker, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education were interviewed to discuss the potential impact of this legislation.

According to The News & Observer, the legislation would eliminate standardized testing for students in teaching preparation programs, and for getting an initial teaching license.

"There is too much emphasis on these tests," said Tucker. "This emphasis can cause a barrier, which may be an obstacle to becoming a teacher."

The teacher shortage in North Carolina public schools is one of the reasons behind this bill. According to Elevate K-12, at the start of the 2023-24 school year, there were 2,840 teaching vacancies, which accounted for 3 percent of all positions.

"There are other ways to assess knowledge rather than an anxiety-inducing, high-stakes test," Tucker said. "Their GPA, teacher evaluations, interdisciplinary connections, cooperating teachers, and demonstration of growth in classes can play a huge role in how we examine understanding."

Burrows talked about the teacher shortage saying, "I don't want one score on a high-stakes standardized test to keep potentially strong and effective teachers out of the classroom when we have such a severe shortage of teachers. However, we should keep strong rigorous standards for our future teachers."

By moving away from standardized tests, the bill opens up opportunities for more well-rounded assessments. Reforms would reduce the financial and emotional burdens on aspiring educators, ultimately fostering a more diverse, capable, and motivated teaching workforce.

"All of our accredited NC Educator Preparation Programs require a 2.75 or higher GPA for entering the program, and require licensure students to take at least 24 credit hours or more in their content major with a grade no lower than a C," Burrows said.

To become a teacher in the NC public school system, you must have multiple hours of observation in local classrooms, and have a full semester of unpaid student teaching experience, creating lesson plans and executing them as a licensed teacher would (under the supervision of a teacher mentor and your college professor.)

"Critical thinking can be emphasized if we let go of the abuse, misuse, and over-use of standardized testing—this does not mean get rid of assessments," Burrows said. "Quick and easy results do not tell us enough."

At Brevard College, there are around twenty students in the teacher licensure program, with ten more seeking admission. Due to Hurricane Helene, eligible education institutions, including Brevard College, are not currently requiring future teachers to participate in the Praxis Core at this time, which is a required assessment to gain acceptance/entry into a

teacher licensure program.

As one of the ten seeking admission, I can speak from personal experience about the alleviation of some of the stress by not having to take the Praxis Core to gain admission.

While we do not know if or when this bill will be approved, it is a vital step in the right direction of giving our students the teachers they deserve.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL DRS35095-NG-10

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FILED SENATE
Feb 27, 2025
S.B. 204
PRINCIPAL CLERK

Short Title: Remove Testing Requirement for Teacher Lisc. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators McInnis, Johnson, and Moffitt (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO REPEAL THE STANDARDIZED TESTING REQUIREMENT FOR TEACHER
3 LICENSURE AND TO PROHIBIT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION FROM
4 ADOPTING RULES OR POLICIES IMPLEMENTING A STANDARDIZED TESTING
5 REQUIREMENT FOR TEACHER LICENSURE.
6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:
7 SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 115C-269.15(a) is repealed.
8 SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 115C-269.25(g) is repealed.
9 SECTION 1.(c) G.S. 115C-270.15 is repealed.
10 SECTION 1.(d) Article 17E of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by
11 adding a new section to read:
12 "**§ 115C-270.15A. Prohibition on examination requirements.**
13 The State Board of Education shall not adopt any rules or policies requiring any applicant for
14 a teacher license pursuant to G.S. 115C-270.20 to complete a standardized examination as a
15 condition for receiving a teacher license."
16 SECTION 1.(e) G.S. 115C-270.20(4a) reads as rewritten:
17 "(4a) Limited license. – A three-year renewable license issued to an individual who
18 meets the requirements of this subdivision. A limited license shall only be
19 requested by the local board of education currently employing or seeking to
20 employ the individual and shall be used for continued employment only in
21 that local school administrative unit. The State Board shall not require
22 individuals to demonstrate preparation through achieving a prescribed
23 minimum score on a standardized examination for a limited license. To
24 receive a limited license, one of the following shall be met:
25 a. In-state licensee. – Both of the following are met:
26 1. The individual was issued an IPL or RL, but failed to fulfill
27 examination requirements under G.S. 115C-270.15 licensure
28 requirements adopted by the State Board after three years of
29 licensure.
30 2. The local board of education submits to the State Board an
31 affidavit stating that the teacher is currently employed by that
32 local board, is an effective teacher, and will be encouraged to
33 continue to pursue a CPL. The affidavit shall be signed by both
34 the principal and superintendent for the school to which the
35 teacher is currently assigned.
36"



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North Carolina State Senate bill 204 proposes elimination of Praxis Core, filed Thursday, Feb. 27, 2025. The Praxis Core grants entrance into the teacher licensure program for the state.

NFL free agency rankings: QBs, RBs, and more

Ace Evett
Staff Writer

The NFL trade window has now begun, unfolding paths for both NFL franchises and athletes. Since the period for signing new contracts doesn't start until Mar. 12 at 4:00 p.m. ET, this leaves a period of uncertainty for fans, teams, and athletes looking forward to next season because much is still unexpected.

Top free-agent quarterbacks

Sam Darnold has emerged as one of the most impressive free agents this offseason. His improved decision-making skills alongside augmented leadership capabilities mean that he is poised to dominate the quarterbacks market this season.

Justin Fields has been known for his passing accuracy and all of his spectacular rushing skills. His unique blend of skill sets makes him an as-

set to any team looking to acquire a resourceful quarterback.

Russell Wilson showcased his mastery of the game once more during his championship run in 2024 with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Arguably the certainly experienced player can assist the majority of franchises in dire need of strong ownership and sound management.

Top free-agent running backs

Najee Harris may not have the highest yards-per-carry average, but his versatility and ability to catch balls from the backfield make him a solid target for teams looking for an agile running back.

Aaron Jones remains active on the field and brings forward a proven record with him which could help in the cases where seasoned runners may be required.

Nick Chubb, a top free-agent, has been consistently powerful on the ground which makes him

great for teams seeking to fortify their running game and has been consistently outstanding throughout his career.

Top free-agent receivers

Tee Higgins is among the highest-yield free agents right now due to his youthful vibrancy and production as a solid contributor for the Cincinnati Bengals who helps stretch the field with his reliable contested catches.

Chris Godwin, known for his strong hands and route running precision, spent his past few seasons battling a bundle of injuries, but it still makes him the best out there.

Davante Adams, a six-time Pro Bowl winner, undergoes teams easily and prefers a veteran presence within the franchise. Having recently been released by the New York Jets, he becomes an attractive option to teams looking for consistent production.

Brevard football brings spring season to an end

Sammy Vargas
Staff Writer

The Brevard Tornados football team wrapped up a successful season last November, falling just short of a conference championship. In February, they got back to work for spring practice to kick off where they left off.

While many of the team's athletes are participating in other sports, not allowing them to participate in spring ball, others are grinding back on the field hoping for an even more successful season next fall.

Despite the on-and-off again cold, wind, and rain, one football player expressed his eagerness saying, "Even though it's cold, I have missed football more than anything these past couple of months." Another said, "It's my last spring practice season, so I am going to take advantage of it to not only make myself better, but my teammates as well."

With there being a limited practice schedule

of only 16 days, players and coaches are taking advantage of the short time they have to get better every practice. But with other spring sports being in season, the Nados football team has been practicing under the lights which has some of our players fired up. "Being under the lights just gives me a feeling that you can't explain to someone who hasn't experienced it."

Many players seem to love late-night practices, but one thing players haven't liked is the temperatures dropping double digits when the sun goes down. One practice in the spring ball schedule had to be moved due to cold temperatures at a low of 11 degrees and a feels-like temperature of 3 degrees. Some athletes from warmer parts of the country have stated they have "never played football in weather like this."

Now that spring practice for the football team is coming to an end, how will the players continue to work and perfect their craft till August? Will their hard work give Brevard the conference championship?



A few of the BC Football coaches huddle up during a sunlit practice (Photo by Tony Belcher via Flickr).



BC Football players cheer each other on before getting back to their practice itinerary (Photo by Lex MacLauchlin via Flickr).