

# Student life at UNC

Excerpt from Board of Trustees Minutes, December 3, 1802.

## As you read...

### RULES AND BEHAVIOR

We can learn a lot about a society by studying its laws — but we have to be careful. Historians debate what it means when a society passes a law. If a certain behavior is banned, we might guess that the behavior must have been common — otherwise, why pass a law? But sometimes governments make laws against something that merely *might* happen — something that most people found particularly dangerous or disgusting. And some laws — like speed limits — are widely disobeyed without any consequences.

We can look at these rules governing student behavior at UNC the same way. They were passed by the trustees of the university in 1802, so we can use them to get a picture of what student life was like at that time. They certainly describe what the trustees *wanted* student life to be like. But what was it *really* like?

When you read the rules, ask how realistic they were, and whether any of them seem to contradict one another. For example, the third rule says that students should be quiet and respectful at all times, but later rules ban swearing, drinking, and cockfighting. What do you think was really going on when the faculty weren't looking?

You might also ask:

- What was a student's day like?
- What were the trustees' biggest concerns about student behavior?
- Which of the rules seem overly harsh to you? Which seem lenient or too easy?
- Which do you think would still be appropriate today? Why?

# [Cost of Attending the University]



Figure 1. Person Hall, completed in 1797, served as the first chapel at the University of North Carolina.

The Trustees of the University sensible of the ill consequences produced by Students having more money at their disposal than is sufficient to meet their necessary disbursements during the Session, have directed that circular<sup>r</sup> letters should be addressed to the Parents of the Young Gentlemen, containing a list of the established and ordinary expenses of the University, with a hope that the indulgence of the Parents would not exceed those limits so far as to furnish a temptation to dissipation, misapplication of time, and a relaxation of morals.

## Expenses of 1st Session

Board .....	\$34
Tuition .....	\$12
Room rent .....	\$34
Library .....	\$0.50
Servant hire .....	\$0.50
Washing & mending .....	\$5
Wood & Candles .....	\$2
Bed hire .....	\$3
<b>[total]</b> .....	<b>\$58</b>

## Expenses of 2d Session

Board .....	\$24
Tuition .....	\$8
Room rent .....	\$1
Library .....	\$0.50
Servant hire .....	\$0.50
Washing & mending .....	\$4
Wood & Candles .....	\$1
Bed hire .....	\$3
<b>[total]</b> .....	<b>\$42</b>

And to prevent the evils that may result from improper credit being given to the Students by Shopkeepers and others in the Village, the Trustees recommend in the strongest terms, that you should forbid all purchasing on credit, even necessaries, without the approbation of the principal Professor.

## [Rules governing student life on Campus]

The Trustees desirous of maintaining in our national Institution correct principles, pure morals, and a proper reverence for religion, have steadily enforced those regulations which appeared best calculated to promote those important purposes. But experience has shewn the difficulty of imposing salutary restraints upon minds accustomed only to unlimited indulgence; and they are also aware that many of the Students are under impressions that their Parents and Guardians do not wish to see them placed under these restrictions; although they may be dictated by morality, or indispensable in the conduct and discipline of a public Institution. They have therefore directed, that an abstract<sup>2</sup> should be made for your information, of the laws respecting some of the Collegiate duties,<sup>3</sup> and the moral and religious conduct of the Students, under a firm persuasion that these regulations will be seriously enforced by your advice and positive injunctions. As the government of the University must principally depend on a just sense of the importance of character and the influence of moral principle, it cannot fail to derive essential support from the sanctions of Parental opinion and authority.

1. There shall be monthly meetings of the Faculty<sup>4</sup>, at which every Professor and Tutor shall make a Report on the conduct and scholarship of the Students, and particularly of those who are under his charge: and the opinions which the Faculty shall then form shall be a history of the character and scholarship of every student to his parent or guardian and to the Trustees.
2. The President shall read or say public prayers every evening in the Chapel at five o'clock, except on Saturday evening; and in his absence one of the Professors or Tutors shall perform that duty. In the morning prayers shall follow after the reading of a chapter, or part thereof, in the Old or New Testament, by the Professors and Tutors in turn.
3. The hours of study shall be from the time of morning prayers till eight o'clock; from nine till twelve in the forenoon, and from two till five in the afternoon; and at all other times the Students shall observe a proper silence and a respectful deportment.
4. Every student shall regularly and punctually attend the recitations of his class at the place appointed by his Instructor, and at the time when the bell shall be rung to give him notice. His Professor or Tutor shall call him to account for absence or delay in the presence of his class, and shall be the Judge of his excuse; and if a good reason be not shewn for his delinquency he may be ordered at any time before the Faculty to answer for it.
5. If any Student shall be habitually indolent or inattentive to business, or shall be absent from prayers, from recitation, or public worship, or at any other time when it shall be his duty to attend, he shall be punished according to the aggravation of his offence.
6. Nothing indecent, profane or immoral shall at any time be delivered on the public stage, under penalty of such censure as the Faculty or Trustees shall judge proper.
7. Every Student, whether in the College or in the village, shall attend public prayers morning and evening in the Chapel, and during the worship, shall refrain from all noise, conducting himself with such decorum and reverence as is suited to these solemn services. On Sunday it shall be the duty of every Student to be present at the reading or delivery of a sermon in the Chapel, at the hour appointed by the Faculty for

that purpose. No whispering, talking, laughing, or indecent behavior of any kind shall be manifested on such occasions.

8. The Students shall attend such instructions in morals and religion as their Professors and Tutors, or the Faculty jointly, shall appoint on Sunday. And if any Student absent himself, or evade such instructions, or conduct himself indecently while attending them, he shall be punished by his Instructor or by the Faculty, according to the nature of his offence, due regard being paid in this as well as in all other cases to the rules hereafter prescribed, pointing out the different degrees or grades of punishment which the Faculty shall be at liberty to inflict.
9. At all times the Students shall conduct and express themselves respectfully towards the Faculty, and towards every member of it.
10. No insult shall be offered by a Student, or by any number of Students, to the people of the village, or of the country around the University, or of any other place.
11. No Student, who does not live in the village, shall go into it on any account in study hours without leave from the President or some member of the Faculty.
12. A Student shall not make horse races, nor bet thereon, nor shall they keep cocks or fowls of any kind, or for any purpose<sup>5</sup>.
13. No Student shall raffle, play at cards or dice, or bet at any game, without being punished by the Faculty according to the aggravation of the offence.
14. No Student shall keep a dog or fire arms; nor shall he use fire arms without permission from someone of the Faculty.
15. No Student shall have spirituous liquors in his room without particular permission from the President or from some member of the Faculty.
16. Every Student who shall be guilty of intoxication, shall receive an admonition before the Faculty for the first offence, and on repetition of the crime, shall be publicly admonished or suspended, according to the nature and aggravation of his conduct.
17. Should a combination ever be formed by any number of Students to transgress the laws, or to prevent their execution, or to shew disrespect to the Faculty, or to anyone of its members, or to introduce disorder in any shape, the Faculty shall either punish the whole body according to their demerits, or they shall select such as appear to be most active and forward, as the sole objects of punishment. The Faculty shall choose either of these methods as to them shall appear most expedient.
18. All swearing and profane, blasphemous, or impious language shall be utterly excluded from the University. The Student who shall be guilty of these practices, and on being warned to forsake them, shall still persevere, shall be admonished, suspended, or expelled according to the extent of his offence.
19. On Sunday the Students shall refrain from their ordinary diversions and exercises.
20. If any Student shall use any indecent gesture or language to any other Student or person, he shall be liable to be admonished.
21. If any Student shall be convicted of lying he shall be admonished; if he shall be guilty of direct and malicious falsehood, he shall be suspended or expelled, according to the nature of the offence.
22. The Students shall keep their rooms clean, and shall not put or procure to be introduced into the College filth of any kind.
23. It is recommended to the Students to be plain in their dress; but it is required of them always to appear neat and cleanly; and if any Student shall be grossly negligent in this

respect, it shall be the duty of the College officers to admonish him for it, and see that he preserve a decent appearance.

24. At the ringing of the bell the first time in the morning, all the [Students] shall rise. As soon as the Bell shall ring a second time, they shall repair to the hall without delay, and attend prayers.

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## Notes

1. A circular is a letter distributed to a large number of people, in this case the parents of UNC students.
2. An abstract is a summary of information.
3. Collegiate refers to a college and its students.
4. The rules weren't numbered in the original document. We've added the numbers to make them easier to read and discuss.
5. Students would have kept "cocks or fowls" for fighting, and therefore for gambling — not for eggs, though it seems the trustees banned that too.

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### Figure 1 (page 2)

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