

Carolina North

...mapping
research,
precarity and labor
in the 21st century
(global) university



3Cs Counter-Cartographies Collective
Spring 2008
www.countercartographies.org

We heard our local university was planning a major new research campus, called ***Carolina North***. Naturally, we wanted to find out what was up. But it was hard to get started!

We went walking in the woods where the university hoped to build its new campus...



Web Blogs

[Explore North Carolina](#)

www.visitnc.com Find where to stay, what to do. Order your free travel info today.

[Carolina North Home](#)

Carolina North will be first and foremost a campus, conceived in the academic mission and ideals of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. ...
cn.unc.edu/ - 6k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[North Carolina Government Portal](#)

Official State web site. Provides state-related information for citizens, visitors, and businesses about and available from state executive, judicial and ...
www.ncgov.com/ - 17k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University](#)

A&T, NCA&T, North Carolina A&T, North Carolina A&T State University, HBCU, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.
www.ncat.edu/ - 32k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[North Carolina State University](#)

Raleigh, North Carolina. News, resources, athletics, alumni, assorted general information for those considering or already attending the school.
www.ncsu.edu/ - 11k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

One of the 16 public state Universities of North Carolina, specializing in medicine and law. Apply online, register for classes, learn more about UNC-CH ...
www.unc.edu/ - 11k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[University of North Carolina - Official Athletic Site](#)

The University of North Carolina Athletic Association. The Official Athletic Site of University of North Carolina Tar Heel Blue.
tarheelblue.cstv.com/ - 64k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

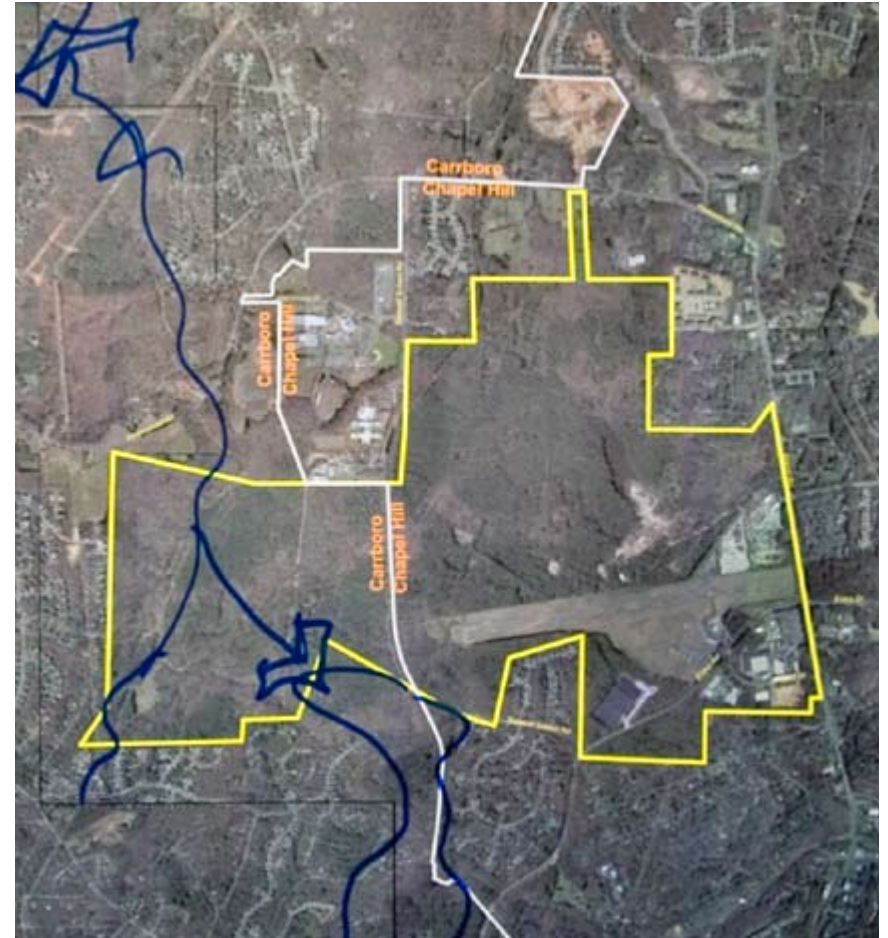
[North Carolina Public Schools](#)

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction implements the State laws and State Board of Education's policies governing ...
www.ncpublicschools.org/ - 16k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[North Carolina Hotels, Dining, & Entertainment - North Carolina ...](#)

Guide to travel, news, classifieds, and community services.
www.northcarolina.com/ - 47k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

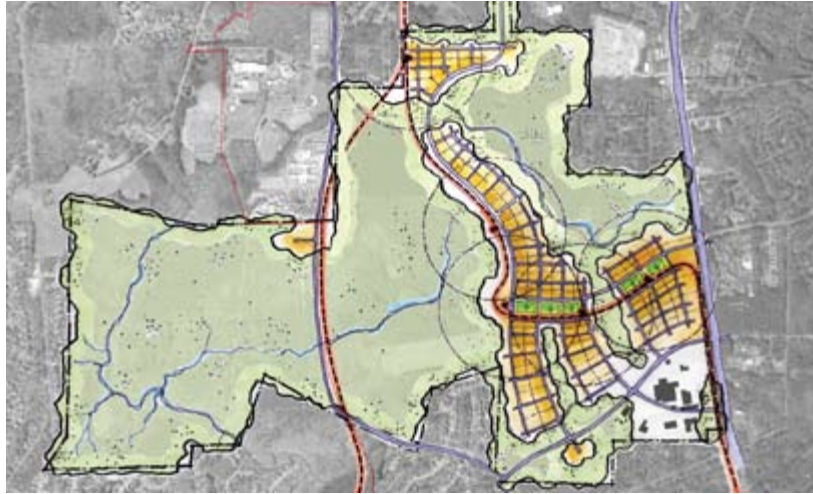
ever try googling
"Carolina North"?



The land outlined in yellow is the 'Horace Williams Tract', donated to UNC in 1940 by a former philosophy professor. UNC wants to build Carolina North on the Southwest end of the tract, where a municipal airport currently operates. The Horace Williams Tract is the last large piece of undeveloped land the university owns.

Meanwhile, planners were busy changing their minds about what exactly to build...

would the campus be “interwoven?”



“maybe we’ll use geothermal power!”

“we could put some recreational fields here...”

“... or a school! an experimental preschool! wait; never mind.”

“the new campus will be a space for public-private research partnerships”

“or maybe the law school will want to move there?”

aligned on an east-west axis?



In fact, it didn’t seem to matter that much to UNC’s administration *what* they were actually building at all. What was important was the idea of Carolina North as a frontier for the University.

But the main challenges to Carolina North were from environmental groups and the town government — who *only* cared about what UNC would build.

It seemed like everyone had already agreed that UNC would build something on the Horace Williams Tract; the debate was over how to build. And everyone was playing by the first rule of green capitalism — only talk about sustainability!

At every community forum Jack Evans, the Executive Director of Carolina North, and Luanne Greene, from the consulting firm Ayers/Saint/Gross, hauled out maps of water usage, bus routes, pedestrian walkways, and 'working green spaces'. There were lengthy arguments about the exact number of parking spaces the new campus would need, before any final plans had even been drawn.

By framing the debate this way, UNC made it seem that the only valid community opposition could be over environmental concerns, while at the same time making serious opposition over environmental concerns near impossible.

What about corporate control of research? How will this influence the fact that Carrboro is turning into a bedroom community for Chapel Hill? Where will the 9,000-some construction workers live? Who will get the construction contracts? Why do we need research labs so much more than classroom space?

I don't know about any of that....

...but check out my carbon footprint!



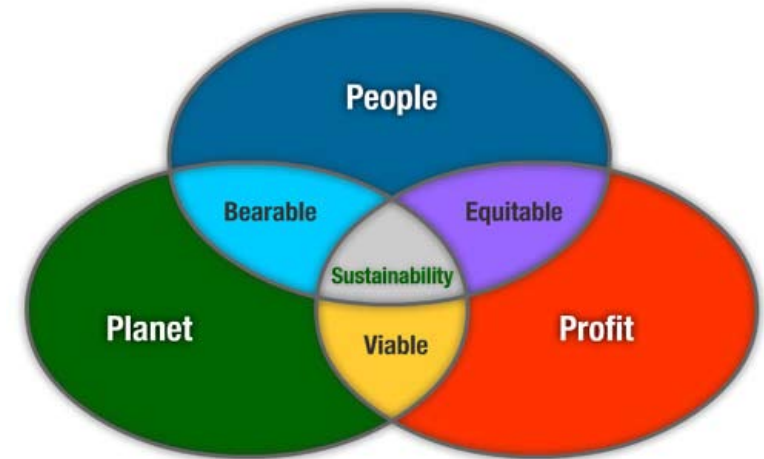
If the Carolina North team was good at one thing, it was talking about sustainability... even their maps were green!

they're getting better at it, too... here's one of the concept plans from a report from 2000



...and here's one from 2007 — looks much more natural, no?

...and since there's no clear definition of what 'sustainability' even means, the University could set its own criteria for the new campus being sustainable.



Many of the administrators we talked with were getting their ideas from John Elkington, a business and management consultant whose company *SustainAbility* promotes a concept called the 'triple bottom line': that a sustainable business simultaneously focuses on "people, planet, and profits". To them Carolina North would be a sustainable campus not just because it minimized environmental impact, but because it produced new business and profit opportunities for researchers at the University.

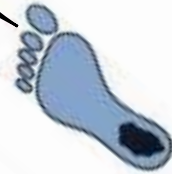
It turned out that, to the University, *sustainability* meant **sustaining capitalism!**

But we still didn't know *why* UNC wanted to build Carolina North... how would the university benefit?

Meet **Jack Evans**, Executive Director of Carolina North...



...what we have in Jack Evans is a quarterback, someone who will be calling the signals, actually planning and coordinating the planning of all of our team



Jack started out in the business school (specializing in Total Quality Management). He's been in and out of the University administration for years, and these days he's not only UNC's faculty representative to the NCAA, but also the Executive Director of Carolina North.

...and **Tony Waldrop**, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development




when he was an undergraduate, Tony ran so fast that he set a **31-year world record** for the indoor mile...

...what's with all these sports connections?




Tony is a North Carolina native, who started out at UNC as a Morehead scholar in the 1970s. Before becoming the Vice Chancellor for research, his last job was overseeing the development of a research campus at University of Illinois.

So why build a new research campus?



UNC has a responsibility to help meet the state's **economic development needs...***

**"UNC Executive offers Primer on Carolina North".
Chapel Hill News, 7/29/2007*



...Having a research campus where interdisciplinary academic research collaborates with private industry will dramatically affect our ability to achieve even greater success to **benefit the people of North Carolina and beyond***

**"Total Research Revenues Reach All Time High at UNC". Newsletter of the UNC General Alumni Association, 8/23/2006*



...Carolina North will connect the university's research programs to the economic well-being of the region and of the state by **creating and nurturing new businesses** and working with established companies to bring UNC research discoveries to the market

The first thing planned for Carolina North is the "Innovation Center at Carolina North". It's what's called a business incubator, a building that's set up to provide for start-up businesses (in this case biotech companies), by providing ready-made lab space, offices, and advice.

The idea is to encourage faculty members and others to start new spin-off companies by lowering the risk and costs involved.

A big disadvantage for us is that we don't have what other big research universities have...



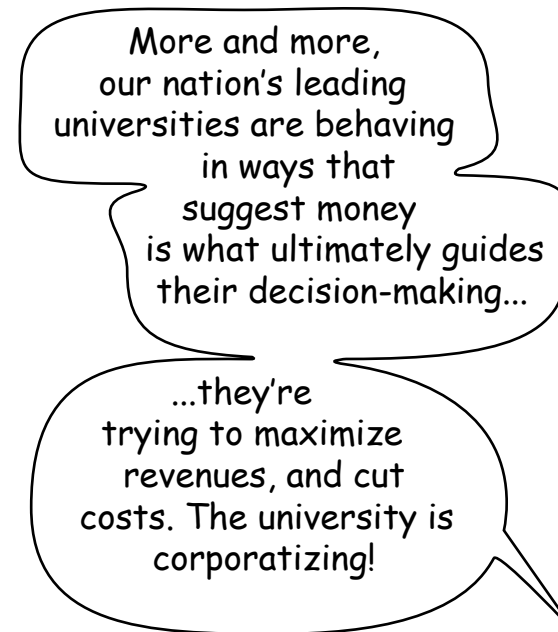
...that is, **an incubator facility** and a research campus where we can attract corporate partners.

Jack and Tony were especially fond of this sort of argument, using Powerpoint slides with rankings to claim that UNC was falling behind other major research Universities (see the appendix for some examples).

Why was everyone involved with Carolina North talking so much about business and the economy?



We looked back at the history: advisory boards and committees all had strong representation from Chapel Hill's Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Board. Of course, Jack Evans and others in the University administration had business backgrounds too, and on UNC's Board of Trustees, one of the most important local developers and businessmen, Roger Perry, had just recently been appointed chairperson, and was strongly pushing for Carolina North.



Jennifer Washburn lays out part of this thesis in *University, Inc.* David Noble also talks about how new distance learning and internet learning initiatives are turning the university into a "digital diploma mill", in a book titled *Digital Diploma Mills*.



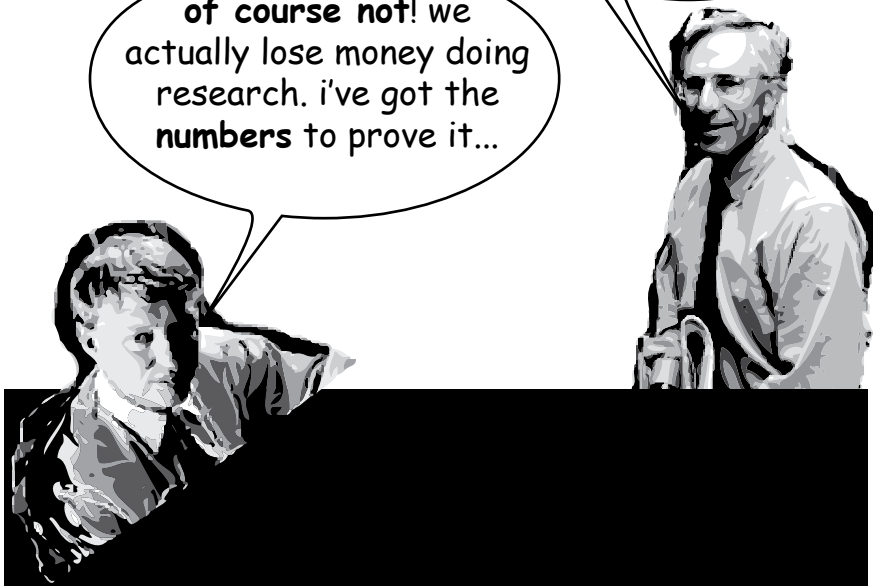
Jack and Tony had talked a lot about intellectual property and selling research...

... but was the University really turning into a factory?

besides, selling research is part of our **public service mission**...

...without us, how would new ideas make it from the **ivory tower** to the **real world**?

of course not! we actually lose money doing research. i've got the **numbers** to prove it...



plus capitalism isn't really about **factories** anymore, or even commodity production...

...at least, not in the United States...

...these days, all the money is in **service work**. even traditional manufacturing companies like IBM are retooling themselves as service providers.



Service work has always been a part of the university: think dorm rooms and dining halls. Actually, square-foot-wise, housing and feeding students is the *largest* thing on campus.

But universities aren't particularly *efficient* or *profitable* at feeding and housing students compared to other service companies (in fact, UNC outsources its cafeterias to one of the world's largest service companies, Aramark)...

...a university trying to make itself relevant in the new economy needs to provide other sorts of services.

UNC has been exploiting folks who work in the student service sector ever since the first students brought personal servants with them to campus...

...especially in our Aramark-run cafeteria, where workers don't have stable hours or employment. They can't get health insurance... their positions are being made precarious



There's also a strong history of service worker organizing at UNC. In the 1970s, cafeteria workers joined forces with the newly-radicalized Black Student Movement in a massive strike which led to the National Guard being called into campus. They won wage increases and more respect from management, and in response the University promptly outsourced cafeteria operations.

These days, housekeepers, groundskeepers and cafeteria workers are actively organizing (the photo above is from a rally for cafeteria workers in 2004)...

And you might say that grad students have the most precarious jobs of all — once you get a PhD (if you make it that far) you're automatically fired!



Let's see... I get paid to do my own research if i can find a professor to support me from their funds... ...but there are no clear guidelines for who gets funding and who doesn't. so my salary has a lot to do with how good I am at getting other people to like me.



I got into grad school in the first place based on how well the faculty members thought I would fit into the department ... of course I have to produce 'actual' research too, but that also means convincing the professors in my department that the research I want to do is interesting and important...

...or just studying exactly what they tell me to study

Was something changing about the University?

For one thing, we knew that nationwide, university administrations were bigger and more powerful than ever, and more and more administrators were coming from corporate backgrounds. At UNC, administrative offices were taking up a larger and larger percentage of total space on campus.

A lot of that growth came from new offices dedicated to research, technology licensing, economic development, industry collaboration, and 'community engagement'.



before I was hired in 2003, my office was called the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research...

...its mission was "to promote the overall research strength of UNC-CH and the **individual scholarly activities** of its faculty and students"...

...now I'm the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, and my job is "to support the university's research mission and lead the university's efforts in economic development ... encourage **interdisciplinary activities** across campus and foster programs that **promote economic progress**"

Remember Tony Waldrop? his job was created in 2003 as part of the administrative boom, and has gained several new sub-offices since then.

And those new administrative offices had helped create all sorts of new programs...

...special dorms for 'service and leadership', 'connected learning', and (of course) 'sustainability learning'

...an interdisciplinary program in Cultural Studies (which paid for this research!)

...minors in Social Entrepreneurship, Arts Entrepreneurship, and plain-old business Entrepreneurship

...grants for graduate students to craft interdisciplinary dissertations

And new buildings...



an undergraduate library built to foster collaboration, with its own 'collaboratory'



the proposed Innovation Center at Carolina North

Collaboration... Entrepreneurship... Engagement...

...in other words the way the university had operated for at least the past thirty or forty years. Faculty members, especially in the sciences, had acted like entrepreneurs ever since they started being able to get large federal grants for their individual research projects (starting in the Cold War era). Students have always collaborated — how else to manage taking five courses at once and working a job on the side? And entrepreneurship — how did Microsoft start? Or Google? Or, more locally, SAS Institute?

Networking between students was nothing new. Faculty members doing research for corporations was nothing new, neither were ideas fomented on campus turning into start-up corporations and non-profits...

...but now administrators wanted a cut of the action. They wanted to find ways to manage, make visible, and promote all the relational, affective work already going on on campus.

Maybe that was why administrators wanted so many new buildings...

A new 'incubator' would bring faculty start-ups onto campus so that university administrators could have some management and oversight (and increase their share in the profits and status thus generated). The new 'collaborative' library made great photos of sociality on campus for university promotional material. Formal support for interdisciplinarity came along with new administrative expectations that faculty members would build inter-disciplinary ties and teach "linking" inter-disciplinary courses. Our university's new Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement kept track of existing engaged research so that the university could justify its connections to the state in funding disputes with the legislature.



It was starting to make sense why building a new research campus seemed so necessary and inevitable to the university administration. But administrators weren't the only ones on board with the plan...

...everyone had their own reasons!

The Board of Trustees was concerned that UNC was "the only major research university without its own corporate research campus"....

...and they saw it as UNC's responsibility to the state of North Carolina to become not just good, but great.



we'll have to untie the one arm we have tied behind our back [in competition with other universities]

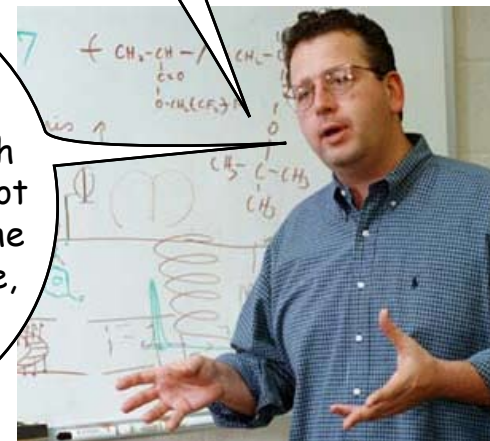
...we've got to transfer that bucket of value that we have to the people of the State of North Carolina

Trustee (and developer) Roger Perry, speaking at a July 26, 2007 Board of Trustees Meeting about the plans for Carolina North

Some faculty members argued that fostering innovation would drive economic development, and that UNC needed new lab space designed for innovative collaborations...

...and they were worried about rankings

most federal funding goes to the top 20 research universities. we've got to make sure, for the benefit of the state, that we're in the top 20.



Professor Joe deSimone, a "green chemist" and the founder of numerous spin-off corporations, interviewed in August 2007 (paraphrased)

the big corporate R&D labs are gone... anything early or risky belongs in the university

we've got to make it easier for folks to fail

Companies wanted to move on-campus so that their offices could have a collegial atmosphere, with plenty of 'elbow-rubbing'...

at
the same
time that
universities are
'corporatizing', we
see 'collegialization'
of high-tech
industry...

...firms are organizing
themselves into
collaborative teams, and
"engaging in activities that
more closely resemble
those found in university
laboratories, centers,
and research
institutes"



Daniel Lee Kleinman and Steven P. Vallas. "Science, capitalism, and the rise of the 'knowledge worker'", in *Theory and Society* 30(4), 2001

**...building a new
campus could make
everybody happy!**

Especially us!



By the end of the second phase of construction, Carolina North will generate nearly \$1 billion of business income for construction firms (but only \$300 million in pay for the 8,876 construction workers who will actually build the new campus) — at least, according to a University-commissioned economic impact study.

and that's the
way it is...



at least, for now...

Tim Stallmann and Craig Dalton
3Cs Counter-Cartographies Collective
www.countercartographies.org
tim.stallmann@gmail.com