

City relatively safe, police say



● *Crime rates similar to other urban areas with high population*

By JENNIFER ROBINSON
FOR THE GAMECOCK

The Columbia Police Department says, despite recent reports of felonies and date-rape drug busts, that "Columbia is not any more dangerous or crime-ridden than any other city of its size."

USC Police Department's jurisdiction encompasses a square bordered by Gervais, Pickens, Blossom, and Assembly streets. Elsewhere in the city, the CPD is in charge.

The CPD held a meeting March 15 with SLED officers and local bar and restaurant owners to discuss the drugs and other issues.

"This is not a problem isolated to Five Points. The media concentrates on Five Points, and certainly a lot takes place there, but it also happens at private parties," Columbia Police Chief Dean Crisp said in an interview with WIS Television earlier this week.

Public information director Scott Garrett said the CPD used incidence reports as a way to spot high-crime areas.

"We look at regular reports to determine where our attention should be placed, and if certain areas have an increase in reported incidents, that's where we'll start concentrating our efforts," he said. "It's called crime suppression."

DEAN NEISTAT/THE GAMECOCK

Columbia police patrol the Five Points area on Wednesday afternoon. The city has seen an increased number of date-rape drug busts in recent weeks.

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NICK ESARES/THE GAMECOCK

USC President Andrew Sorensen returned from his Bow Tie Bus Tour after traveling to towns around the state.

Sorensen describes tours across Palmetto State

By TAYLOR SMITH
STAFF WRITER

After touring some of the most rural, education-deprived areas of South Carolina, USC President Andrew Sorensen has returned to the USC campus with a slight tan and the urge to talk about some of his experiences on the road.

During his Bow Tie Bus Tour, Sorensen stopped in towns like Kingstree, Lake City and Allendale to discuss the need for higher education.

Picking the locations was difficult, Sorensen said Tuesday. He said his staff had researched the best place for a bow-tie-wearing university president to fit in and advertise USC.

"Virtually every town in the state has a place where people gather in the morning, usually men, to discuss U.S. foreign policy, U.S. domestic policy, football at Clemson and South Carolina, and how to solve the problems of the world," Sorensen said. "My staff have identified those places all over the state, so we typically start there."

After gathering at places like Mr. Bunky's General Store on U.S. 378 between Columbia and Sumter, Sorensen and his entourage traveled to local schools and discussed the need

for higher education.

"Increasingly, employers expect a modicum of sophistication that previous generations did not," Sorensen said. "We try to indicate to them that there are certain expectations of the skills you bring to the job, and we try to encourage them to focus on their educational responsibilities."

Sorensen said the tour mainly focused on middle schools because of the impressionability of students who have not begun a college prep or tech prep course track. The strategy was originally suggested by a superintendent who recommended Sorensen talk to students who had not yet "cast the die."

"When you talk to 300 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students, and you are a university president, how much effect does it have? I don't know," Sorensen said. "But I keep doing that."

To garner community support, Sorensen said he also travels to rotary clubs where he discusses the importance of kindergarten through "pre-Ph.D. education."

After talks with community leaders, he meets nearby donors

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USC receives record number of applicants

By SYDNEY SMITH
STAFF WRITER

More than 13,000 students, an all-time high, applied this year for 3,500 spots in the USC fall 2005 freshman class, which could make this year's incoming class the all-time best academically.

In-state students are expected to comprise 75 percent of the class. Not all applicants will be freshmen coming in this fall. Applicants can also be accepted for spring 2006 after December graduation opens up spots in both classes and dorms, or they can attend another school and transfer to USC, provided they earn a sufficient GPA with 30 transferable credit hours.

University improvements in recent years, including the Strom Thurmond Wellness & Fitness Center, a renovated Russell House and the Greek Village have contributed to USC recruitment, as has the expansion of scholarship programs such as the Capstone and Carolina Scholars. An increasing faculty and a growing Honors College have attracted more students

from both in- and out-of-state.

"We're offering more academic and financial support for a greater number of students, particularly high-achieving students, than ever before," said Dennis Pruitt, vice president for student affairs. "And, when combined with our urban setting, with its job opportunities, connections to state government, good medical care, all in a city as hospitable to college students as Columbia is, USC is highly attractive and competitive."

Mike Calagna, a first-year finance student, came to USC from New York. Calagna chose USC over schools like St. John's, Syracuse, and NYU for both the business school and the weather.

"The strength of the business school and the overall atmosphere of the school were better than other schools," Calagna said. After USC sent him a letter, he said he visited the campus and fell in love with it.

First-year film student Ned Moore said he had no preference on what school to attend, but USC's affordability was appealing. "Academically, it's not the best,



NICK ESARES/THE GAMECOCK

Freshmen and their parents have been taking tours more frequently as the fall semester approaches. The number of freshman applications has been hit a record high this year.

but it's pretty diverse. It all boils down to the price tag I guess," Moore said.

College of Charleston's location in his hometown and Clemson's lack of a great liberal arts school also added to his decision, Moore said.

Ashley Johnson, a senior at Northwestern High School in Rock Hill, will attend USC in the fall as a member of the 2005

freshman class. In addition to looking at its academic qualities, Johnson said, she chose USC because many of her family members and high-school friends had chosen to attend as well.

"I'm so excited. I want to be there already," she said.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu

Science center leak reveals aging campus

By TAYLOR SMITH
STAFF WRITER

USCPD responded to a leak in the Jones Physical Science Center last Thursday, which damaged ceiling tiles in the "tired" building already under renovation.

The incident was the latest in a series of facility problems the 204-year-old campus has undergone this school year.

Jim Demarest, USC Facility Services director, handles university maintenance and construction issues, and said he has seen a rise in the number of maintenance issues across campus.

"We have a building with a lot of good piping in it," he said. "But with age and the materials in it,

there is special attention paid to it." Demarest said the incident had been a minor event with a slight asbestos leak, and that "the energy staff responded and isolated the problem, so we are back in shape."

USC Spokesman Russ McKinney said the surge in maintenance related issues is the result of an old campus, which never sleeps.

"It is just something that goes with the territory, and we try to keep on top of it," McKinney said. "I'm not just saying it is a problem of how old the buildings are, but this was an accidental occurrence."

It is often times forgotten, McKinney said, that USC, as a campus, must provide both

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Carolina repels Runnin' Rebels

The USC men's basketball team defeated UNLV on Tuesday to advance to the quarterfinals of the National Invitation Tournament.

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'Robots' take over the world

The universe invented by director Chris Wedge from Blue Sky Studios in this animated film outshines the Hollywood stars providing the vocal talent.

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