



Guide to the North Carolina Public Interest Research Group records, 1970-1982

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David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

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Summary

Collection Title:

North Carolina Public Interest Research Group records, 1971-1982

Creator:

North Carolina Public Interest Research Group; North Carolina Public Interest Research Group. Duke Chapter

Abstract:

The North Carolina Public Interest Research Group (NC PIRG) is a consumer advocacy group established in 1971 to facilitate student activism on North Carolina's campuses. Duke students formed the first local chapter of NC PIRG. Collection contains the records of NC PIRG campus groups at colleges and universities in North Carolina, the records of the statewide NC PIRG office, and a small group of material related to the national PIRG office. Materials date from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Topics in the collection include Duke University, consumer advocacy, environmental protection, disarmament, student rights, rental policies, utility rates, and other activist issues.

Extent:

4 Linear Feet (8 boxes)

Language:

Materials are in English.

Collection ID:

UA.31.08.0004

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1q138>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], North Carolina Public Interest Research Group Records, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

Contains the records of NC PIRG campus groups at colleges and universities in North Carolina, the records of the statewide NC PIRG office, and a small group of material related to the national PIRG office. Materials date from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Topics in the collection include Duke University, consumer advocacy, environmental protection, disarmament, student rights, rental policies, utility rates, and other activist issues.

The North Carolina College and University Chapters series consists of correspondence, constitutions, bylaws, notes, clippings, and other printed material that document the establishment, funding, and activism of NC PIRG chapters at each school. The largest group of material in this series is from NC PIRG at Duke and documents its operation and activities, including those of its West End Community Action Group. Clippings and correspondence reflect the attitudes and values of students on college campuses during the 1970s and 1980s.

The NC PIRG Statewide Administration series consists of files compiled at the NC PIRG statewide offices, which include administrative, financial, and printed materials, as well as a few campaign files. This material reflects the statewide office's efforts to establish and coordinate PIRG chapter activities and priorities, and it provides additional documentation of the establishment, funding, and activism of NC PIRG chapters at each school, including some that are not present in the North Carolina College and University Chapters series. Additionally, this series reflects the activities of the Statewide Projects Director, Wib Gulley, and other NC PIRG administrative staff.

The National PIRG Materials series contains a small number of items related to the national Public Interest Research Group and includes correspondence, reports, conference files, and clippings.

Biographical/Historical

The North Carolina Public Interest Research Group (NC PIRG) was created to facilitate student activism on North Carolina's campuses. NC PIRG was founded in the fall of 1971 by a group of students at Duke University, after hearing a speech by consumer advocate Ralph Nader. Duke University acted as the first headquarters for NC PIRG. Organizing efforts at nearby University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of North Carolina at Greensboro were turned down by administrators and trustees. In the spring of 1972, students from St. Andrews College successfully organized and joined NC PIRG, and NC

PIRG legally incorporated as a non-profit. Other colleges and universities in North Carolina followed suit in establishing local PIRG chapters.

NC PIRG was funded and controlled by member schools. Students contributed a portion of their student fees to support NC PIRG as a campus group. NC PIRGs used the fee collection system as a stable means of guaranteed support. However, since NC PIRG viewed mandatory fees by themselves as an unacceptable means of support, they chose to offer a refund period to students. The refund provides students with a choice and makes NC PIRG directly accountable to students. This refund system was at times exploited by anti-PIRG groups on campuses.

The State Board of Directors was the major decision-making body for NC PIRG. The State Board was responsible for hiring professional staff, allocating funds, and setting research and project priorities for the year. School delegates reported their activities and exchanged ideas with each other at State Board meetings. The State Board provided continuity in staffing and support from experienced professionals.

NC PIRGs focused on consumer advocacy and related environmental, social, and political concerns. Some of the campaign topics of early NC PIRGs were high utility rates, nuclear weapons and defense spending, the draft, pollution, fair renting policies, and recycling. Because all PIRG members were students, PIRGs also focused on student rights, such as voting while living on campus, earning a full refund for rent deposit, student financial aid, campus-area grocery prices, and banking interest rates. Some of the most notable projects of NC PIRGs were land use pattern investigations in the North Carolina mountains, lobbying for changes in a local expressway, and organizing citizen testimony before the North Carolina Utilities Commission. They also assisted in the formation of the Brown Lung Association and sponsored the Generic Drug Substitution Act in 1979.

The chapter of the North Carolina Public Interest Research Group at Duke (also known as NC PIRG-Duke, NC PIRG at Duke, and Duke PIRG) began in 1971 with establishment of the larger NC PIRG. NC PIRG at Duke was one of the most active chapters during the 1970s and early 1980s, and it organized the following workshops and events: Labor and Medical Center Employee Unions (1979), Truth in Testing (1979), Free University (1979-1980), and supported the Duke Draft Coalition. Its West End Community Action Group (WECAG) worked on issues of housing quality in Durham's West End neighborhood. NC PIRG at Duke likely ceased functioning in 1984.

As of 2026, NC PIRG is active and headquartered in Raleigh, N.C. Student PIRG chapters in North Carolina are currently organized through NC PIRG Campus Action.

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Arrangement

Arranged into three series: North Carolina College and University Chapters, NC PIRG Statewide Administration, and National PIRG Materials.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright for Official University records is held by Duke University; all other copyright is retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law.

Acquisition Information

The North Carolina Public Interest Research Group records were received by the Duke University Archives as transfers in 1975 and 1984.

Processing Information

Processed by Emily Glenn

Completed April 2003

Encoded by Emily Glenn, April 2003

Rehoused and description enhanced by Leah Tams, March 2026.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 75-61, 84-4.

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Related Materials

Related Material

Office of the Chancellor. Environmental Concerns Committee records. University Archives, Duke University. ECOS records. University Archives, Duke University. Small Collections: Environmental Center folder. University Archives, Duke University.

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Names and Subjects

- Lobbying
- Environmental protection -- North Carolina
- Public interest -- Societies, etc.
- Political campaigns -- North Carolina
- Students -- Political activity
- Student movements
- Durham (N.C.)
- Consumer movements
- Duke University -- Students -- Political activity
- North Carolina Public Interest Research Group
- Duke University -- Students -- Societies, etc.

Collection Inventory

North Carolina College and University Chapters, 1971-1982

Scope and Contents note

Series consists of correspondence, constitutions, bylaws, notes, clippings, and other printed material that document the establishment, funding, and activism of NC PIRG chapters at each school. The largest group of material in this series is from NC PIRG at Duke and documents its operation and activities, including those of its West End Community Action Group. Clippings and correspondence reflect the attitudes and values of students on college campuses during the 1970s and 1980s. Additional materials related to chapters can be found in the NC PIRG Statewide Administration series.

Appalachian State University, 1973-1974

General establishment and correspondence, 1973-1974	Box 1
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Clippings, 1973-1974	Box 1
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Bennett College, circa 1975-1980

General establishment and flyers, circa 1975	Box 1
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Correspondence and notes, circa 1978-1980	Box 1
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Davidson College, 1977 May

Annual report, 1977 May	Box 1
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Duke University, 1971-1982

Establishment and administration materials, 1971-1981	
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Constitution and bylaws, circa 1971	Box 1
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History, 1971-1972	Box 1
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Orientation materials, circa 1977	Box 1
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Scope and Contents note

Orientation folder and two copies of the pamphlet "Guide to Durham Banks."

Correspondence and notes, 1971-1974, 1977-1978	Box 1
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Meeting agendas, minutes, and notes, circa 1973-1981	Box 1
Student dues and refunds, 1971-1980	Box 1
Environmental concerns, circa 1974	Box 1
Summer internships, 1978	Box 1
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Campaigns, 1973-1981	
Utility rates and deposits, 1973-1976	Box 1
Beverage container recycling, 1974	Box 1
No Nukes/Kudzu Alliance, 1978	Box 1
Labor and medical center employee unions, 1979	Box 2
Truth in Testing, 1979	Box 2
Free University, 1979-1980	Box 2
Duke Draft Coalition, 1979-1981	Box 2
Nestle boycott, 1980	Box 2
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Printed materials, 1971-1982	
The Community Voice newsletter, 1978 November	Box 2
Fliers, posters, and pamphlets, 1971-1982	Box 2
Clippings, 1971-1977	Box 2

Scope and Contents note

Largely photocopies of clippings.

West End Community Action Group, 1978-1981	
Grant proposals and correspondence, 1979-1980	Box 2
General, meeting notes and fliers, 1978-1981	Box 2

Scope and Contents note

Includes Phoenix festivals, Vista activities, and clippings

The West End Times newsletter, 1978-1981	Box 2
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Elon College, 1975-1981	
Establishment, 1976	Box 2
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Correspondence, 1975-1980	Box 2
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General activities, circa 1975-1981	Box 2
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Student papers, 1976, 1978	Box 2
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Guilford College, circa 1970s	
Establishment, circa 1970s	Box 2
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Meredith College, 1973	
Correspondence, 1973	Box 3
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North Carolina State University (NCSU), 1976-1977	
Establishment and constitution, 1976	Box 3
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Correspondence, circa 1976-1977	Box 3
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Clippings (copies), 1976	Box 3
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St. Andrews College, 1972-1976	
Establishment, circa 1972	Box 3
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Correspondence and activities, 1975-1976	Box 3
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Clippings, 1972-1976	Box 3
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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1972-1974	
Establishment and history, 1972-1974	Box 3
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General materials, 1974	Box 3
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University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1975-1977	
Establishment, 1975	Box 3
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Correspondence, 1975-1977	Box 3
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General activities and notes, 1975-1976	Box 3
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Clippings, 1975-1976	Box 3

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1973-1982	
Constitution and bylaws, circa 1973	Box 3
Correspondence and activities, 1973-1976, 1981	Box 3
Greensboro office space, 1982	Box 3
Clippings, 1975-1982	Box 3
Wake Forest University, 1973-1978	
Constitution and bylaws, 1973	Box 3
Correspondence, 1973-1978	Box 3
General activities and notes, 1973-1978	Box 3
Clippings (copies), 1973-1978	Box 3
Western Carolina University, 1976	
Correspondence, 1976	Box 3

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NC PIRG Statewide Administration, 1971-1982

Scope and Contents note

Series consists of files compiled at the NC PIRG statewide offices, which include administrative, financial, and printed materials, as well as a few campaign files. Administrative and financial files such as meeting minutes, notes, agendas, correspondence, reports, and budgets reflect the statewide office's efforts to establish and coordinate PIRG chapter activities and priorities. The minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence provide additional documentation of the establishment, funding, and activism of NC PIRG chapters at each school, including some that are not present in the North Carolina College and University Chapters series. Additionally, this series reflects the activities of the Statewide Projects Director, Wib Gulley, and other NC PIRG administrative staff. Campaign files largely relate to voter registration. The printed materials include NC PIRG publications.

General administration, 1971-1982	
Establishment, 1971-1972	Box 3

Scope and Contents note

Also contains general establishment materials.

General history, circa 1980s	Box 3
NCPIRG contracts with colleges and universities, 1974-1975	Box 3
Solicitation licenses, 1977-1982	Box 4
Annual report, 1973	Box 4
Organizing materials, circa 1972-1974	Box 4
Scope and Contents note	
Contains informational materials about organizing a PIRG, as well as correspondence and contact lists for local chapters at colleges and universities including Duke, Eastern Carolina, Mars Hill, Appalachian State, UNC Chapel Hill, and Meredith College.	
Funding a PIRG and collecting student dues, circa 1972-1974	Box 4
Employment and Manpower trainees, 1975	Box 4
Miscellaneous administrative and advocacy materials, late 1970s-early 1980s	Box 4
Campaigns, 1975-1979	
Background material, 1979	Box 4
Scope and Contents note	
Contains information and pamphlets about a variety of different consumer issues.	
Student voter registration: Correspondence and general materials, 1976	Box 4
Student voter registration: Clippings, 1976	Box 4
Watauga County voter registration case, 1975-1976	Box 4
Scope and Contents note	
Also includes some materials about voter registration in other places.	
Anti-PIRG bill, 1977	Box 4
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1972-1982	

Correspondence and notes, 1972-1975	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, and reports, 1972-1973 Spring	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1973 October-1974 May	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1974 June-August	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1974 September-1975 March	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1975 April-December	Box 5
Clippings and other materials, 1975-1976	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1976 January-July	Box 5
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1977 March-1978 August	Box 6
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1978 September-1979 April	Box 6
Policy notebook, correspondence, and notes, 1978-1979	Box 6
Minutes, agendas, and reports, 1979 August-1980 May	Box 6
Minutes, agendas, and reports, 1980 June-1981 April	Box 6
Minutes, agendas, reports, and correspondence, 1981 October-1982 June	Box 6
Clippings and other materials, 1981-1982	Box 6
Financial Materials, 1973-1981	
General financial materials, 1973-1974	Box 6
Financial correspondence and notes, 1974-1975	Box 6

Budgets, 1974-1975	Box 6
Financial correspondence and materials, 1975-1976	Box 7
Monthly reports, 1975 September-1976 September	Box 7
Correspondence and monthly reports, 1976-1978	Box 7
Budgets, 1978-1979	Box 7
Budgets, correspondence, and notes, 1979-1982	Box 7
Audit summaries, 1973-1981	Box 7
Lobbying expenses, 1977-1981	Box 7
Printed materials, papers, and reports, 1972-1982	
Davidson College, Urban Sociology course papers, 1976	Box 7
Scope and Contents	
Contains a few student papers about Ingersoll-Rand and its impact upon Davidson.	
Flyers and jobs ads, 1978-1982	Box 7
Pamphlet layout, circa 1980-1982	Box 7
Canvasser's Handbook, circa Fall 1973	Box 7
NC PIRG newsletter, 1973-1982	Box 7
Scope and Contents	
Titles: NC PIRG Report, NC PIRG Action, and NC PIRG Advocate.	
Outreach, 1978	Box 7
PIRG Perspective column, 1975	Box 7
Of the People, 1978-1979	Box 7
The Insider, 1979-1981	Box 7

Research reports, 1972-1973	Box 7
Research reports, 1973-1981	Box 8
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Clippings in support of NCPIRG, circa 1979-1981	Box 8

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National PIRG Materials, 1972-1980

Scope and Contents note

Series contains a small number of items related to the national Public Interest Research Group and includes correspondence, reports, conference files, and clippings.

Governing council materials, 1979-1980	Box 8
Correspondence and reports, 1978-1980	Box 8
Oppositions to PIRGs, 1973-1977	Box 8
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Letters of endorsement, 1972-1980	Box 8
National PIRG conference, Colorado, 1978	Box 8
National PIRG conference, Virginia, 1979	Box 8
Clippings, 1974-1980	Box 8

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