Meet Carolina Union Board of Director?s Student Member-at-Large Richard Hall, Jr., a senior Sports Administration major and Social and Economic Justice minor from Fayetteville, NC. Hall has a lengthy resumé of involvement on campus and with the Carolina Union including as a Union student employee and member of the Activities Board street team.

As he assumes this important leadership role, Hall wants to be a voice for collaboration and inclusivity across campus groups. Hall recently sat for an interview to discuss his vision for the Union and student life at UNC:

For those who might not know, what are the specifics of your role as Student Body Member-at-Large?
Some of the specifics of my role serving as a voice for the entire student body include sitting on the board, participating in some of the Union?s long-range planning, and participating in some of the different committees that the Union has. I?m not on the Board of Directors so I have yet to actually serve on one of the committees but I?m excited about getting to work and just leaving an impact as a senior.

Why did you apply to be a Student Member-at-Large?
My involvement with the Union has spanned back to my first year at UNC. My first year I served on the street team for CUAB, then my sophomore year I transferred to the leadership programs coordinator role in Student Life and Leadership, then I was a Guest Services Associate at the welcome desk. Now as a senior I felt like taking all those experiences and perspectives and I felt like being on the board was a logical next step for me to be able to impact the campus. I feel like I'm pretty well-known and a lot of people can confide in me. I hear a lot of different issues being brought up on campus that students don't necessarily have the platform to be able to express. I feel like as a student member at large, that would give me a platform to be able to take student issues from students to a place where things can actually be done. That's really why I wanted to apply, and I also felt that as a student that uses the Union services and as an employee, my perspective will be that much greater.

What is the most exciting aspect of your term so far?
My term so far has been relatively short, I've attended one meeting so far and that was one of the most intense meetings I've ever been a part of. I was very intrigued to see how the Union director, who operates with the CUAB president, who operates with the speaker for the undergraduate senate, who operates with OFSL, just seeing how all of these different roles kind of collaborate together on the board to create the vision for what the Union can offer, both now and the future and legacy of the Union. First meeting, I just kind of took time to sit back and observe, get a feel for the room, and how my role could fit in. I definitely took some notes and I feel like I'm ready to get into action.

What kinds of goals do you have for the Union this year as a Student Member-at-Large?
I would just say to truly champion for inclusivity across campus and across student groups, bring more collaboration amongst student groups. There are a lot of times where we have student groups fighting for certain issues, fighting for similar issues, and if there was a collaboration they could provide that much louder of a voice. One of goals would definitely be to encourage and help facilitate some of that collaboration across student groups.

The Union has been referred to as ?the living room of campus.? Why do you think that title fits?
I think that title fits because literally anything that you can do in your living room, you can do in the Union, whether it's watching TV, getting something to eat, chatting with friends, getting homework done, taking a nap, dancing, these are all things that take place in the Union and I feel like the title of ?living room? is natural for it.

There has been a lot of controversy on campus this year. What do you believe the Union?s role should be in facilitating these discussions and providing student support?
I believe the Union should take a primary role in facilitating these discussions. With
there being so much controversy on campus, I feel like there’s a lot to be said and there’s a lot to also be heard as well. It’s bringing in students from all different perspectives and facilitating that conversation to where it’s not just ?you hear me,? or ?you don’t hear me,? it’s like we hear each other. I can take my beliefs and your beliefs and reach a common ground that’s beneficial not only for one set of particular students but something that’s beneficial for all students, because the Union is a hub for all students. Just making sure that the Union takes charge of facilitating and providing that space and opportunity for student voices to be heard.

In what ways can the Union offer support to students who might need it in the midst of these issues?
I feel like the Union offers its support primarily through the people. The people, in my opinion, are what makes the Union. Literally I can’t tell you how many days I’ve walked into the Union and just seen a smiling face sitting at the desk, or talked to one of my supervisors and how much just talking to them has helped ease my mind. Just this morning I went to go get breakfast with Dr. Shauna Harris from Student Life and Leadership and just being able to talk to people; people that want to listen, people who have the capacity to take what’s being said and actually do something about it, even if it’s from Crystal King to the person sitting at the welcome desk, these are the people that make the Union what it is. Offering that support, offering that listening ear, it’s pertinent, and I feel that that is the best way that the Union can support not only the students, but also its mission of being that ?living room,? that inclusive hub on campus where all students can be heard.

What is the most important accomplishment you hope to achieve this year?
It being the 50th year of the Carolina Union, I just want to make sure that we’re celebrating the Union’s history. In addition to celebrating its history, kinda helping to focus and cement its legacy over the years; being able to look back after 100 years and being able to say ?wow, 50 years ago they were doing this,? it’s wild. Look how far we’ve come, look how far we have yet to go. I’d love to see how we’re gonna get there. I really just want to be able to help in whatever way I can to make this 50th year a great one.

What is a Carolina experience you will always remember?
A Carolina memory I will always remember would have to be performing with the a capella group I’m a part of, Harmonix. We got the opportunity to sing at Late Night With Roy my freshman year and that was one of the most nerve-wracking yet exciting experiences. We were up there singing ?Hotline Bling? by Drake with Kennedy Meeks by my side, in front of 20,000 screaming fans. It was an experience that I will probably remember for the rest of my life. That was? just seeing my face up there on the Jumbotron, like wow that’s really me and I mean, in the moment, I was just singing a song, but in hindsight I’m just a kid from Fayetteville and there’s not a lot of opportunities for black males coming out of Fayetteville. Being able to realize that I’m being afforded this opportunity to make it from where I’m from to where I’m at right
now, it was amazing. I still think about it, and I just thank God, you know? This was an experience that I had in my freshman year, my first year, and the possibilities are endless, I?ve had this question of how much more I can accomplish while I?m here? I think that?s reflective of all that I?m involved in. How many more experiences like this can I have while I?m still here?

What are some activities around campus that you?re involved in?
I work in the university office for Diversity and Inclusion as a campus visitation coordinator, coordinating tours for underprivileged families all across the United States. Coming to UNC and being able to provide that kind of access, the work being done in that office is some of the best work I?ve been a part of at UNC. I?d also like to shout out some experiences that I?ve had at UNC. ?Leadershape? in Student Life and Leadership definitely elevated my leadership capacity to be able to do all the things that I?m doing and serve as a student member at large, helping not only the groups that I?m affiliated with but also the entire student body. I?ve learned how to listen for those different perspectives, even if they may be different than my own, and learn how to reflect on and use those to my advantage. It?s something that I feel like is not a super common experience at UNC but I?m really thankful to ?Leadershape? for that opportunity. I?m in a fraternity, the mighty Mu Zeta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. We have a step show coming up and it?s gonna be really exciting, everyone should show out for what?s gonna be a really exciting show. I know the groups that are performing have been putting in countless hours and I feel like that deserves a little publicity.