Carolina Union Director Crystal King has announced that she will be stepping away from the Union and into her next chapter at the end of this semester. The first woman and first person of color to serve as Union director, King championed students’ vision and voice for the Union and ushered in sweeping improvements to building's physical spaces during her tenure.

Citing a desire to spend more time with her family,
"I guess it?s time for me to graduate!" King said. "I have learned so much from my experiences at Carolina, and I step into my next chapter with appreciation for all of the incredible people I have met along the way. The timing of my departure is strictly personal. I have reached a point in my career where my family needs me most.

"The goal of my tenure has been to help students see themselves as amazing, innovative, precious, and unique individuals, and to ignite in the building a positive and kind synergy that serves as an example of the best of a humane society.

"It?s now time for me to pour the best of myself into further developing and supporting my own children so they can thrive in whatever endeavors interest them most."

Carolina Union Board of Directors Chair Jordan Bermudez, a senior from Durham, NC, praised King's commitment to students and to the University.

"The impact Crystal has made on the Carolina Union, the University of North Carolina, and most importantly its students has been immense," Bermudez said. "Her passion and continued commitment to be a champion for students has been invaluable. She has changed countless lives in her time here at Carolina and truly is a priceless gem. I will miss Crystal dearly and wish her the best of luck in this next step."

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Dr. Bettina Shuford said that King's focus on students and her collaborative approach to her work has left lasting improvements throughout the Union.

"Although Crystal King is stepping down from her role as the Director of the Carolina Union on May 3, she will leave an indelible legacy behind with regard to her accomplishments over the past six years," Dr. Shuford said. "Her student-centered approach guided her success in supporting the student self-governance model with the Carolina Union Board and Student Government. Crystal has been equally successful in building out a new mission for the Carolina Union where the focus is on creating safe, inclusive, and educational experiences that enable students to maximize their time at Carolina. Since arriving at UNC, Crystal has done a total refresh of the 50 year old facility by developing a new brand for the Carolina Union that included new furnishings and artifacts in the building that promoted greater student engagement and institutional affinity. Additionally, under Crystal leadership the Union developed a new model for student life and leadership, provided a greater focus on student employee development, and underwent a year-long feasibility study as part of the campus master plan process. Operating with a spirit of collegiality, Crystal frequently brought campus partners together to discuss opportunities for collaboration. We will miss Crystal?s collaborative spirit and wish her well in her new endeavors."

A few of the major accomplishments during King's time as director include:
• Creation of the new Rehearsal Space, designed to give performing arts groups a home to perfect their expressions of creativity. This project was initiated by UNC's largest student-run dance group, Blank Canvas.
• The addition of The Healing Space, on the third floor of the Union. Amid the bustle of daily life at UNC, students said a place for quiet reflection was needed on campus.
• Overhauls to the West Lounge and Aquarium Lounge. These are among the most highly-used common areas on campus, and the Union built versatile spaces to accommodate uses from quiet study to lively conversation over a bite to eat.
• Creation of the Tar Heel Game Zone, a new space specifically designed for UNC's gaming community.
• Renovations to The Auditorium, one of UNC's largest performance venues, will include increased capacity, improved sound systems, additional side video screens, accessibility improvements, enhanced sight-lines, and adjustable seating arrangements. (Expected completion, Spring 2019)

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