

# Opinions

The Blue  
Banner

Editorial

## We should pay attention

On Thursday and Friday of last week, the UNCA Board of Trustees met to decide the direction of UNCA's future. They discussed budgets, ground plans, finances, and all manner of things that will directly impact our lives as students. The truly disappointing fact about the meeting was that the only student to attend was Sergio Mariaca, our SGA president. Why does no one show interest in these meetings? This is not your standard policy meeting where nothing happens for three hours. This meeting was bloody IMPORTANT!

The parking lot behind the cafe is listed as over 60 days late, and was supposed to be completed by November 15th. Why isn't done? Does the construction company not know the meaning of "Hurry the hell up"? Is the construction company being penalized for this lateness? Somebody must have these answers.

Does air conditioning being installed in Highrise and Carmichael appeal to anyone? That, too, is on the drawing board, and with a \$2 million price tag, it must surely be on someone's mind. The city of Asheville wants to use UNCA property to build a greenway from Broadway to Merrimon. Does anybody else have images of construction and traffic nightmares? What about the fiber optics network they're going to install? That would give us incredible Internet access, not to mention the ability to put emergency call boxes elsewhere on campus instead of just right in front of the security office. Computer science majors, are you out there? With all the talk about safety on this campus, one would think that call boxes JUST MIGHT be an interesting topic.

How about the Southridge clone they want to build for over \$6 million? Do we want another 150 students going here? Do we have class space to accommodate them? Has the Resident Life Staff members been given any chance to state their opinions about Southridge? Are the windows going to fit this time? Do we want another building where you can't see the doors from the hallway?

Are we going to run out of parking spaces again, or are they going to build the 200 car parking deck that is costing \$2 million to INVESTIGATE, not including actually building the thing?

Where the heck are they going to put it? Are we going to end up looking like North Carolina State University, a huge pile of brick with no trees? The renovation of the Highsmith Center is back on the tracks, with \$9 million attached to it. Anyone interested?

Nearly \$30 million were being run around at that meeting. Some of it was yours. Do we want to grow the way the Board wants us to, or are we going to start showing up and let them know that we, the customers, are paying attention? We have opinions. We have ideas, and we need to voice them.

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Our telephone number is (704) 251-6586. Our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. We're on-line, too. The address is <http://www.unca.edu/banner/>

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The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and content and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste, and timeliness.

Letters must be typed, double-spaced, and must not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters and classifieds is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to The Blue Banner, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville NC 28804

## Ignore him and we hope he'll go away

Kristi Howard  
Columnist

For a while there I thought he wasn't gonna show this year. I thought that maybe somehow word had reached ol' Gary Birdsong that this pardner was a'gunnin' fer him, and since this campus ain't big enough for the both of us, I was afraid he'd packed up his black leisure suit, his Bible and his old hip-swivelin' he'lllll-firrrre, and rode off into the sunset.

And then, Monday morning, there he was, standing in Highsmith Plaza looking like a sweaty, oversexed Colonel Sanders in cheap shoes, pointing at yours truly and telling me to "Git on back to the kitchen" where I belong. Siiigh.

How could a columnist pass up such an opportunity to ridicule ignorance in its purest form?

Now, before I step up onto my ever-present soapbox, I feel the need, as a mass communication major, to say this: Gary Birdsong is within his First Amendment rights when he comes here for his bi-annual circus.

The constitution gives any human being the right to turn his/her self into a walking freak show on public property, and this university qualifies as public property.

Now, with that said, I can proceed to exercise MY first amendment right to free speech.

I first encountered Birdsong

when I was a freshman, walking to the Caf with my then brand-new boyfriend. Birdsong, surrounded by a chorus of hecklers, looked right at my boyfriend and started his tirade about longhaired hippie homosexuals that were going to burn in hell.

After listening to him some that day, and on his subsequent visits, I sensed a general theme running through his distracted sermonizing: sex. Fornication, prostitution, masturbation, homosexuality, anything sexual at all.

And, of course, that is not counting his rampant male-chauvinism.

I would be inclined to say that perhaps Mr. Birdsong has some issues that he needs to work through in therapy.

He seems to have a theory that masturbation causes permanent eye damage. (Come on, guys, how many of you heard that old chestnut when you were little?)

He usually proclaims this little gem while putting on his own thick glasses.

Once, when a heckler commented on that fact, old Birdie replied cryptically, "These are READING glasses!"

He also seems to have some sort of animosity toward sororities and fraternities, perhaps a direct result of having been ostracized by a frat in his college days—or perhaps being turned down by a sorority girl.

His comments on the matter suggested that all sorority girls

are whores, all frat boys drunks.

He even went so far as to say that the sororities on campus were running the prostitutes of Asheville right out of business.

Now, I have to say that I know some sorority girls and some frat boys, and none of them are sluts or raving alkie.

This kind of nasty generalization, however, is just what one might expect from the kind of man Birdsong seems to be.

No, I do not admire him, his dedication standing out there in the rain to spread his particular brand of bulls--- despite getting soaked.

A turkey will stand out in the rain staring up at the sky with its mouth open until it friggin' drowns. We don't call that dedication, we call it utter stupidity.

I find nothing ADMIRABLE at all about Gary Birdsong. I think that when it comes right down to it, his professed beliefs are probably as flimsy as the fabric of that suit he wears.

His theology is at best questionable, at worst utter fabrication, and so completely full of contradictions that, listening to him, one almost gets dizzy trying to keep track.

Mr. Birdsong loudly proclaims that he has a right to come onto this campus, ruthlessly attack people with vicious verbal abuse, and back up his insults with quotes from the Scripture.

And, according to the Constitution, he does. Now what draws the line between freedom of speech and harassment in his case, I'm not sure.

All I know is that I am sick of

Gary Birdsong. He is no longer a humorous between-class sideshow, like he seemed when I was a freshman.

He is a maddening testimony to the fact that ignorance in this country has yet to die out.

No, I will not advocate taking Birdsong's right to free speech away from him. I will, however, propose this to everyone on campus: Next time he comes to UNCA, IGNORE HIM!!

All the Fresh people have seen him, now, and everyone knows how obnoxious he is.

So next time, let him shout out his poison to the empty air.

We can't make him leave our campus. But maybe if we show him that we don't care about what he has to say, he'll give up and go away. The best remedy for people like him is to deny them what they love most: an audience.

Yelling and arguing don't work, they only add fuel to the fire of his madness.

So, when Gary Birdsong returns to our fair campus, I suggest that we all band together, all you Christians out there who are having to put up with the bad image people like him give you, and all us non-Christians out there who have to worry about crazies like him who burn down homes of those who believe differently.

Let's all band together for a common cause, for once, and IGNORE BIRDSONG!!

## A voice mail system wastes technology we have

James Hertsch  
Columnist

Every year, researchers and engineers manage to wow us with some new piece of gee-whiz technology, something we never used before but that we absolutely need now.

Some of these pieces of technology, such as electronic mail and stainless steel are actually useful.

Others, such as the products you see advertised at five o'clock in the morning on shows like Amazing Discoveries, are useless and overpriced to boot.

Among these overpriced, useless pieces of technology is the voice mail system that will probably be installed on this campus next fall. While this piece of gadgetry seems like a useful device, it really is not.

The major benefits cited as reasons to support the installation of this system are fulfilled by technology readily available to all UNCA students.

Under the voice mail system, each on-campus resident (and some commuter students who wish to partake of the voice mail service) will be issued a unique mailbox in the campus phone system.

Stored on a computer, a mailbox can be remotely accessed by the student, and will function similarly to an answering machine. Currently

advertised at a price of \$4 per student per month, this service also includes the ability to put together PIN lists to distribute messages to a broad group of students, as well as a "wake-up call" to help somebody get up in the morning.

First off, I'd like to address the price: \$4 per student per month amounts to about \$20 per semester. Twenty dollars per semester yields \$40 per academic year, for a total cost of \$160 for a four-year stay at the university, or \$200 if you're on the five-year plan.

Add this to the charge for local service (\$16 per room, divided evenly among roommates), and you're looking at a minimum monthly phone bill of \$8 if you live in Mills Hall, and a maximum of \$20 if you live in Governor's Village.

Answering machines, on the other hand, represent a one-time expenditure, usually of less than \$50 for a basic answering machine, a sum which is significantly below the long-term expense for the voice-mail service.

The counters to the "answering machine" argument are twofold: first, the voice-mail system allows unique mailboxes, rather than a single answering machine per room, and the "ease-of-use" argument—as in working remotely with a pre-installed system,

rather than having to deal with all the wires associated with an answering machine.

If one answering machine for a group of roommates poses a problem, that's because one roommate isn't sharing messages.

Sometimes, this is indicative of roommate problems, rather than a problem unique to the answering machine.

The "ease of use" argument holds absolutely no water: plug the answering machine into the wall, and your phone into the answering machine. From there, you record your greeting, and, presto! Your machine works.

Aside from wires, voice mail works much the same way—just without plugging in the wires.

And if you're really desperate for private mailboxes for you and your roommates, a voice/fax modem with some voice-mail software can work just as well—and for a lower overall cost than for voice mail for two to four people.

This brings up a second oft-neglected technology: e-mail. As a student at this university, you're entitled to an e-mail account on the UNCA computer systems.

From here, you can e-mail to your heart's content, communicating as quickly and as efficiently (and as privately) as one would on the phone.

E-mail, of course, also addresses the distribution list question brought up by voice mail—us-

ing Pine or even VMS Mail, setting up a distribution list, and sending a message to multiple recipients with it is a simple, easily-executed task.

As for the wake-up call bit—does anybody here not have an alarm clock?

What I'm trying to say is that the voice-mail system is an extremely poor option for the average college student.

While it no doubt sounds real neat (and the poll conducted earlier this semester seems to indicate it's wanted), this piece of technology will ultimately be of little to no benefit to anybody at this university.

Instead of being a glorious new piece of machinery, it instead becomes a phone-wired white elephant, a sacred beast we may not kill, but still eats each of us out of house and home.

On a side note: I don't know which was more interesting this week: Gary Birdsong standing outside, in the rain, without an umbrella, and preaching his faith. . .

. . . or the students standing out there, in the rain, without umbrellas, heckling Gary Birdsong for preaching his faith.

One of these is indicative of modern attitudes toward free speech, but I'm not sure which.