

Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

Privacy and truth at UNCA

Perhaps one of the great ironies of our society today is the overwhelming mass of information that floods our lives, troubles our consciences, and invades our privacies. Yet, at the same time, we cannot always grasp the information that we really need.

At a university, the free flow of information keeps the clockwork running. But the North Carolina General Assembly had different ideas in mind when they passed Statute 126 in 1989, regarding the privacy of state employee personnel records. Only ten years after a person's state employment has ended can general information about "personnel matters" be released. Information relating to demotions and disciplinary actions resulting in dismissal are never released without a court order or unless the case winds up in litigation.

What does this mean? For an employee, it assures privacy in difficult matters. A similar federal law, commonly known as the Buckley Amendment, assures the same right for students.

But what does it mean to the rest of the community? Not knowing what has taken place in a suspension or dismissal can lead to an undue amount of speculation on the part of a small campus like UNCA. Thoughts can be quick thieves—our wild conjectures rob us of the truth. Sometimes our guessing games leave us blind.

There is a simple solution. Allow universities to discuss "personnel matters" as they arise, when it is most important. If something indeed happens that poses a threat to the campus community, the university should be allowed to take action and explain it publicly. In fact, a university like UNCA, with its liberal bent and seemingly concerned and conscientious administration, would probably like to take positive steps immediately.

But there is an even better reason: we deserve to know the truth. It is not Ray Ingram's responsibility to tell us what happened in his case, nor is it the responsibility of the unknown person who disagreed with him over whatever subject it was. The UNCA administration should be allowed to arbitrate disputes publicly, so that the community is informed and the process may be fair.

To paraphrase the words of Thomas Paine, who championed freedoms of every kind, knowledge is everything. We may be kept ignorant, but we cannot be made ignorant.

Where do we draw the line between what should be known and what should be kept private? Imagine a different scenario: a professor rapes a student and leaves the university for undisclosed reasons, never to be seen again. The student never speaks out. The university never informs the public, because they are prevented from doing so by law.

Who will know? Who has the right to know? It may happen at UNCA, and we may find that the line was drawn in the wrong place. It may have happened before, and we will never know.

Editorial Board

Michael Taylor
Jennifer Thurston
Renee Slaydon
Brian Castle
Kyle S. Phipps
Del DeLorm
Matthew Gibson

Editor-in-Chief
Managing Editor
News Editor
Features Editor
Sports Editor
Photo Editor
Copy Editor

Staff

Rafica Adams, Bonner Butler, Lara Barnett, Shelly Eller, Elise Fox, Gary Gray, Robert Hardin, Kristi Howard, Stephanie Hunter, Trish Johnson, Tracy Kelly, Erin King, Melinda Pierson, Kristin Scobie, Chanse Simpson, Catharine Sutherland

Wendy McKinney
Thomas Estes
Nate Conroy

Advertising Manager
Circulation Manager
Electronic Editor

Columnists

Nate Conroy, James Hertsch, Pam Williams, Tracy Wilson

Mark West, faculty advisor

The Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville. We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Carmichael Hall, Room 208-A.

Our telephone number is (704) 251-6586. Our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. An on-line version of The Banner is also available at <http://www.unca.edu/banner/>

Nothing in our editorial or opinions sections necessarily reflects the opinion of the entire Banner staff, the faculty advisor, or the university faculty, administration or staff.

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of the Banner editorial board. Letters, columns, cartoons and reviews represent only the opinions of their respective authors.

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

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

The deadline for display ads and the FYI calendar is on Monday at noon. The deadline for classified ads is at noon on Tuesday.

Tips to help you take tests



Nate Conroy
columnist

Flat out cheating is, of course, wrong. But I admit, the so-called "honor code" is a joke at most schools. Still, if you haven't gotten over the cheating phase now that you're out of high school, maybe you should go back there (or quit school and make millions cheating people in corporate America).

Nonetheless, occasionally life throws you a curveball. You wake up one bright day, stroll over to class, and walk into... (cue scary music) THE TEST ZONE. In the Test Zone everyone gets to class early with two sharpened pencils. No one talks except for brief commiseration about how hard the test will be.

"Um, is there a test today or something?"

"Yes!" they snap as they go back to last-minute notecard reviewing and frantic page flipping.

Reality begins to sink in. It's time to accept that you're pretty much SOL and up the creek (and if you fail the class again, it's gonna hit the fan).

Basically, you're DOA from the start on this one, and if being SOL is just the SOS, you might

get frustrated and do something drastic and get a DWI. Don't despair, you can still get out of this A-OK! Although you're going to get a low grade, you can still set your sights on a D- or F+!

And as every baseball player knows, you can't go up to plate looking for a curveball, you've got to look fastball and adjust.

Partial credit is a slacker's best friend. If you hint at the answer or leave a little ambiguity, the prof might assume you just made a mistake and meant to write the correct answer.

The prof wrote the test. He/She knows the answers. Like an optical illusion, his/her mind might fill in the blanks of what you left out. (Unless you've proven yourself a moron in class, in which case he'll assume you're going to write something stupid.) Don't focus on any fact you're not absolutely sure of; always rely on ambiguity.

Q: Where did Odysseus go after he escaped the Cyclops? "Hmm... if I were escaping from a Cyclops, what would I do?" A: He ran away.

Q: Who helped Tom build the raft? A: Tom's friend.

Q: Whom did Oedipus marry? "Hmm... his wife... no, that won't work. Ah, I don't know. I'll just put a joke answer." A: His mom.

For harder exams, partial credit can be tougher to bulls—t. In math, put something like "x", a low number, or some number that a lot of problems result in like 0, 1, or "D.N.E." With a graph, draw an ambiguous line that never really chooses a direction, poorly label the axes, and pray for sympathy points (next to the big red question mark that will be written on the test next time you see it).

Another partial credit technique is the "half-erase." When used in conjunction with "writing things off to the side" the half-erase can be a powerful tool to squeeze out a point when you don't deserve it.

Use crappy pen erasers to look like you tried your best to erase and rewrite something... maybe. If what you wrote is right, that was your answer. If it's wrong... that was just some scratch work. Throw in random words that would enhance if they're right, but be ignored if they're wrong. Just don't give anything in your answer that would reveal you don't know what the hell you're talking about.

For multiple choice and essay tests, there's only so much you can do. You can try to answer a different question than the one asked. Bring in stuff that you know well from other places, as

long as you know it well. This is risky because you can use up your essay time going way off topic. However, a little irrelevance is a small price to pay if you come off like an expert. Try this formula: $Expertise + (Max Points - Irrelevance) = grade$.

Try focusing on the ideas that run throughout the major. In sociology, throw in something about sociological structures, patterns, and regularities. In accounting, just keep performing math operations on your given numbers until you get an answer that makes sense. In humanities, focus on the teacher's favorite area: "This is reflected in the (art, architecture, or music) of the time." (Explaining why would be nice, but if you don't know a well-worded answer, this deserves a few points.)

For tests where you can omit questions, you can try underhand stuff like writing "omit" an extra time or answering all questions and hoping the teacher takes the best of your answers. (But don't be a jackass; you know they know you knew what you were supposed to do.)

The bottom line is to fill in the white space with something. If you're gonna fail, don't kill your average for good. At least get close to a 60.

Test tricks work better in some majors than others and on certain kinds of tests.

But what really separates magna cum laude from your average student? I say, test taking techniques. (Or studying.)

End preconceptions about feminism



Tracy Wilson
columnist

In my 21 years of feminine experience, I've heard women say plenty of things that really annoyed me. By far, the most irritating of these is a phrase I've heard friends say so often that I know it has become a part of American feminine culture. Every time I hear a woman begin a sentence, "I'm not a feminist, but," I cringe.

When I hear a woman say she's not a feminist, I instantly make assumptions about her. I suppose she is weak, unassuming, and afraid to take up for herself. She must be opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment under the argument that it encourages women to abandon their families, become lesbians, and practice witchcraft.

She certainly is not the kind of woman who acts on her own behalf.

Usually, I am wrong. Within a few moments, I realize I am speaking to a very strong woman. She is intelligent, active, and happy. Usually, she is also as wrong as I am.

She really is a feminist, she just won't call herself one. When she says, "I'm not a feminist," she means, "I'm afraid to call myself a feminist."

Women in America refuse to call themselves feminists for two primary reasons. First, women who are hesitant to call themselves feminists usually don't want

to be labeled man-haters. Second, popular misconceptions about feminism have made women think that to be a feminist, one must abandon the feminine.

Often, women think that one of the prerequisites to being a feminist is to believe that women are superior to men, and therefore react hatefully toward men. But, the basic argument of feminism is that people are equal regardless of gender.

To believe that women are superior is as sexist as to believe that men are.

Superiority and inferiority disappear in the face of equality. By this definition, any woman who believes herself equal to men should call herself a feminist.

Women do not have to abandon their relationships with men to be feminists.

Instead, women should be able to enter into relationships with men that are fulfilling to both parties involved and are on terms of respect and equality.

Such relationships are not limited to the romantic sphere; they need to exist in the workplace, the government, and in every social system.

With this understanding of relationships between the genders comes the idea that men and women should be able to live together, comfortable in gender roles, legal rights, and social positions.

Without the need to be the dominant or the submissive, both genders can coexist without prejudices based upon sex.

The second reason women hesitate to name themselves feminists is that they are afraid of having to abandon what is traditionally feminine. They argue that mothers cannot be feminists and that women cannot argue their equal-

fers jeans or dresses, whether she wants to be a manager, a mother, or both. Any woman can claim feminism, whether she be in an evening gown, in overalls, or in the nude.

All that matters is that a woman choose her roles, both socially and personally, based upon her desires rather than upon what others demand she do; she must act for herself rather than allowing others to subvert her power.

I am a feminist. That statement makes people assume that I am a lesbian who hates men, who refuses to be feminine, who reconstructs the English language, who spends all her free time constructing new ways to overthrow the patriarchy.

I avoid sexist language. I argue against oppression where I find it. I refuse to be denied rights because of my sex.

At the same time, I am not the militant stereotype which persists in following the word "feminine." I don't blow up men's clubs or pull guns on people who say "waitress" instead of "server." I certainly don't hate men.

When I hear someone say, "I'm not a feminist," I am hard pressed to imagine a woman who really is not feminist. I cannot conceptualize what she is like.

Sadly enough, though, some women live their whole lives under the belief they really are inferior.

Feminists are here to fight sexism.

We don't try to rid ourselves of men or of femininity to do so; we need to become secure of ourselves as human beings.

Feminism is not extremism; feminism is equality, rationality, and common sense.



Illustration by Jay Nelson

ity while dressed in pantyhose and heels.

That idea, though, simply is not true. Feminism has nothing to do with whether a woman wears make-up, paints her nails, or shaves her legs, whether she pre-