

Opinions

The Banner Editorial

Tales facing up

Sinking the ark

Is anyone going to attend this university to see our pretty new buildings if the UNC system raises student fees by a whopping 32 percent over the next three years? We may sell ourselves as a hidden treasure, but no one wants to be part of something special if it's going to cost them an arm, a leg and \$575 extra dollars a year to do it.

As students, we must ask the UNC system if they have actually considered the ramifications of making students cough up that much more money in just a few short years.

Billed as a best buy by numerous college journals, UNCA has seen an approximate student fee increase of 9 percent since 1998. If the system skyrockets our price, we risk losing one of our most precious assets as a small liberal arts institution — our affordability.

Though we may have good programs, what people see first is our price tag. Case in point — at the sight of a \$1,000 purebred Persian cat, most people say, "Oh, how pretty," and then move on to the less qualified, but less expensive, tabby.

To make matters worse, the \$575 increase is a set dollar amount for all 16 of the university system schools. At places like UNC-Chapel Hill and NC State where students already have to donate plasma weekly just to afford classes, \$575 dollars is more a drop in the bucket than a revitalization of Noah's flood. We have to wonder if UNCA's academic ark is strong enough to support the flooding lower decks of our financial difficulties.

If the state ups student fees, will they not simply have to turn around and offer more financial aid to those of us who cannot whip out a roll of bills and pay for our schooling? Where will that money come from? Will taxes have to be raised for North Carolina as a whole to sway the costs of supporting expensive universities and the usually broke but highly intelligent and worthy students that attend them? It seems a vicious cycle.

Lastly, there is the issue of fund distribution. Though UNCA students will donate more than their fair share of fees to the \$70 million construction fund, the fund will be dispersed to universities "based on need and size," according to Tom Byers. If trends hold true, we will once again be offered less than our due because we are a small, widely unknown university in a system that rewards big money and big names.

Thus far, we have been able to hold our own against the rising tide of dollar-based education. But in the face of a massive undermining of the financial advantages of our university, we risk losing our *raison d'être* — potential students. Why, then, will we need to construct new buildings?

The forgotten

It is impossible for you to miss the hubbub that surrounds the major February holidays and events. Black History Month commercials salute African-American leaders, and Wal-Mart's aisles are jammed with candy hearts and flowery cards in a giant pink-and-red tribute to Valentine's Day.

What about the other February holidays? Feb. 13-20 is National Eating Disorders Awareness Week. It is impressive that we manage to overlook an entire week promoting awareness of a pressing issue, yet we spend our paychecks to buy roses for our sweethearts to celebrate one specific day.

Eating disorders are a prevalent problem in today's society, particularly among teenage and college-age women, though plenty of men also suffer from the disorders. For us to overlook the event is to further stigmatize the sickness perhaps next year as we're all gorging on chocolate and educating ourselves on black history, we'll remember as well the thousands of people who cringe and purge at the thought of a single gram of fat.

Supervised time

UNCA has finally taken a step in the right direction by bringing the issue of childcare to the forefront.

Unfortunately, these programs have to be financed somehow. Students that do not have children may find themselves paying for childcare, even though it does not affect them. Although this may seem extraordinarily unfair, one must keep in mind that we're talking immediate benefit for a minimum effort on our part. And it's not \$575 per person. Childcare would enable student parents to focus on their classes, and students without children will benefit by the lack of interruptions.

The short-term solutions proposed by the committee are all beneficial for the children, yet one stands out among the rest. The Babysitter's Club not only has the potential to solve many issues temporarily, but it would also provide education majors with experience in their chosen field.

Maybe the university could take further advantage of the program — what about giving the education majors class credit for their work, making it into an independent class, much like childcare programs in high schools?

It is fine to learn how to instruct children in the classroom, but the real test lies in the field. The program would give students a chance to prove their knowledge and expertise, while providing free childcare to students. Finally.

Bicyclists ride for road space



Candice Carr
columnist

If you have seen a crowd of bicyclists on main roads creating their own lane and chanting, "More bikes, fewer cars!" around town, you have witnessed a Critical Mass bike ride running smoothly.

The Critical Mass group has several goals. One is to bring attention to bikers' rights as traffic. My favorite bikes are smaller and more agile than cars, they are often overlooked. Some drivers don't give bikes the same respect that vehicles are given, even though they may actually deserve more. Bicyclists are often on bikes because they choose to be, whether it is for fitness or to avoid polluting the air.

The name Critical Mass comes from a concept in molecular physics that states that there is a point when there is enough of something in a system to make the whole system change, and that quantity is the critical mass.

This city is not exactly bike-friendly. Critical Mass gets us out there to make us more visible and show Asheville why we need bikes and dodging telephone poles and

trash cans on Merrimon, bumping over curbs, squeezing between parked and moving cars and sweating around pedestrians are the daily trials of biking in this city, not to mention sucking down vast amounts of noxious fumes. My favorite exhaust is coming from vans and SUVs carrying one person. If we had bike lanes, more people would be encouraged to bike to work instead of adding to our regional haze and ozone pollution problem. That is also an aspect of Critical Mass — encouraging people to get on two wheels and join us on the fourth Friday of every month, or every day by leaving the car at home.

At the last ride, it was fabulous to see what a large percentage of the riders were UNCA students. It feels more like a celebration than a demonstration, especially with the surprising amount of support from people in vehicles. I am always surprised when people bother to honk, give us thumbs-up and yell, "Yeah! Right on!" from open windows.

The police leave us alone now,

because we actually obey the traffic lights, use hand signals and only ride in one lane. Even people who get stuck behind us on Broadway were excited to see us out biking together, and some always cheer as they eventually pass by. We haven't received any negative reactions.

Asheville's first Critical Mass ride last year was a catastrophe that got a lot of bad press. There were about 60 of us that time, and the energy was high. Because there were so many of us, we were taking up both lanes and blowing through red lights when there was nothing coming. The police were a little angry about our takeover of the streets, and after uselessly following us for some time, spewing unintelligible phrases from their loudspeakers, they cut us off at an intersection and yanked a few people off their bikes, handcuffing them and tossing them into cop cars.

Because this was fast and outrageous, we reacted immediately, some folks sitting in the road in front of the cop cars, some yelling at the police. One guy jumped up on the back of a car in front of Beanstruts coffee and started ranting about clean air and bike rights. This didn't go over well with the police. He was grabbed and arrested with the others.

I want to make it clear to everyone that this was in no way what we cyclists intended, and we don't want to involve the police when we set out to demonstrate our concerns to the public at large. We hope that they recognize that Critical Mass is

not about getting arrested, it's about making a civil statement, and alerting the city to the needs of its citizens. Asheville needs bike lanes. They don't even need to be fancy, engineer-sloped and landscaped like the one on one side of UNCA, although that IS quite a nice bike path. The nice thing about it is that it is far enough from the road to not be constantly inhaling petroleum fumes while hyperventilating. Yum!

We don't have critical-mass kind of numbers yet at our rides here in town. Asheville will see its next Critical Mass demonstration on Feb. 25 at 4 p.m. when bicyclists begin riding at Vance Monument. This is the next date for most Critical Mass rides internationally, definitely in Berkeley, San Francisco and Santa Cruz, Calif. Critical Mass started on the West Coast, and they are a few steps ahead of us with transportation issues, just as they are with organics.

My friend Marty Bergoffen started taking part in Critical Mass rides when he was in law school in Eugene, Oregon.

"January's ride was peaceful and effective," said Marty, now a lawyer, who bikes to work at the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project here in town. "Even occupying only one lane and obeying traffic signals, we showed that bikes are an efficient and enjoyable mode of transportation. The city of Asheville must provide more money for alternative transportation."

Edison's rival: a forgotten genius



Liam Bryan
columnist

York put up a bid for a company to build a hydroelectric dam on Niagara Falls. Westinghouse, who had just recently negotiated for Tesla's patent of the AC motor, won with a bid of nearly half of Edison's DC regime.

A few months later, the plant was built, supplying power to as far as 22 miles away, something impossible before the conception of AC. Now Tesla's theories were proven true beyond any doubt, and the commendations came rolling in.

There was one major enemy that Tesla had made, however. Edison. The man who now had already spent millions laying wire and circuitry now had to spend millions more in remodeling his electric juggernaut. Edison's political and economic clout would continue to plague Tesla, even after the inventor's death.

But for now, Tesla was free. He had been given free power to run experiments out in Colorado, so he relocated to the Midwest. In Colorado Springs was his famous laboratory.

Here Tesla became known as a magician, and rightly so. His first construction was that of a huge dome atop a tower a little outside of town. Then the fireworks began.

In town, sparks would fly up from the ground through pedestrians' shoes. Hydrants would emit small lightning bolts. Grass would glow with St. Elmo's Fire. Sidewalks would suddenly, visibly buckle for no apparent reason.

And all Tesla was doing was standing.

Finally, Tesla was ready. He stood outside his laboratory and told an assistant to turn his device up to full power. A snaking, electrical lightning bolt began to extend from the tower, reaching off into the sky. It grew to a full length of forty-two meters before all power was cut to his lab. His device had set the town generator on fire. Needless to say, he received no more free electricity.

What had Tesla done? Essentially, he sent electricity straight through the ground, bouncing off the other side of the Earth and returning back to the lab, where he would send out another pulse, strengthening the original.

What Tesla had was the ground-work for wireless power transmission. Power could be sent through the ground or the air to anywhere on the globe. But Tesla's dream of free power never came to fruition. Why? No capitalist would ever invest in something that would provide zero return.

At this lab, he also built a "death ray" that accidentally obliterated a huge swath of land in Tunguska, Siberia. Due to a dearth of written notes left by him, the closest that scientists can arrive at is that the device was a kind of particle accelerator with an incredibly low spread. Mind you, this was built in 1908. After discovering the accident, he promptly dismantled it.

Of course, no article I could write could possibly extol all of his accomplishments, so all I can leave you with is his death.

Tesla was a better friend than a businessman. His efforts were humanitarian, trying to better the world through free electricity. But he never understood the way of capitalism. As a result, he died penniless in a New York apartment.

When notified of his death, the CIA suddenly swarmed his apartment and confiscated all of his belongings and notes. What did they find? We do not know. Even today, only about a sixth of his CIA files have been released to the general public nearly sixty years since his death. Many of his inventions were decades ahead of their time, and even now would present a threat to national security.

So, the next time you operate a device with a motor, or turn on a light, or use the radio, or ride a boat, think not of the Wizard of Menlo Park, but Tesla, the Electric Magician.

Today I honor my favorite scientist and the most innovative inventor of the twentieth century. He holds all the patents that run our electrical systems today. He harnessed the power of Niagara Falls to make cheap electricity. He built a "death ray" that destroyed five hundred thousand acres of land in Tunguska, Siberia. He created the world's longest manmade lightning bolt. He laid the groundwork for radar. He devised remote-controlled submarines that were voice-operated. He invented the modern bladeless turbine engine for seagoing vessels. He was one of the first people to propose light was both a particle and a wave. He also invented the wireless radio. Edison? No. Marconi? No. Einstein? No. This inventor was Nikola Tesla.

Of course, only about three of you readers probably recognize that name. Even my loyal computer's spell-checking device has indicated that "Nikola Tesla" is something that is written incorrectly, but Edison, Marconi and Einstein are perfectly fine. Tesla is the forgotten genius of this century, despite having over 700 patents to his name.

Yes, I am aware that Edison had over one thousand patents. But also remember that he had dozens of engineers working for him to create his inventions for him. Also, an

unusually large number of his patents tend to be something like "phonograph cabinet," "clothes cabinet," or "wooden cabinet."

I am sure that all of you are familiar with the fact that Edison began building one of the first electrical power companies back in the nineteenth century. There was a slight limit to his empire, however. All of his power was made through direct current (DC). The limit to this is that DC power can only travel about half a mile. So, this controlling distance halted the widespread distribution of power. Until Tesla.

Tesla immigrated to America from Croatia (he was a Serb). Upon his arrival, he immediately sought out Edison and proposed an invention his mind created back in Europe: the alternating current (AC) generator. Edison refused to have anything to do with something that would undermine his DC empire.

So Tesla had to turn to other sources of funding. After a failed business attempt, he was sponsored by a university to build the first AC motor. He had finally been given enough time and resources to stand the scientific world off. He built that AC motor from the plans in his head, creating the perpetual motion device of turn-of-the-century electronics. It worked flawlessly. Shortly afterward, the state of New