

Opinions

The Blue Banner Editorials

Knock before entering

The new pamphlet program started by public safety in August invades the privacy of students. The Safety Tips & On-campus Prevention (STOP) flyer program began because of the steadily increasing rate of thefts on campus.

Although this initiative shows that officers care about our safety and belongings, it goes too far. All public safety needs to do is refrain from going inside dormitory rooms and offices, even if the doors are open, because those places are privacy zones for students and professors.

Putting a pamphlet on the door is sufficient enough to remind us that we could have been robbed or someone could be waiting inside. Going for the dramatic effect is not always the best policy.

Knowing that someone, even or especially an officer, can violate our freedom is very scary. Does the university have the right to allow public safety inside our rooms, without us there? If they do, it should be stopped.

As adults, we should be able to say who can and cannot come into our rooms. Although we do not own the property, we pay a substantial amount of money to live on campus, and in turn expect to be able to conduct a somewhat normal routine without the threat of invasion.

Doesn't that entitle us to some privacy rights? We don't live at home anymore — if we need reminders about what's good for us, we'll call home. Let us take responsibility for our own mistakes. It's the only way we'll learn anything.

Rewarding the laborers

To most people, it is no secret that North Carolina is one of the more unattractive states for prospective teachers, offering comparatively lower salaries and fewer benefits than most states.

Efforts such as the implementation of the N.C. Teaching Fellows scholarship, wherein 400 incoming college freshmen a year promise to teach in the state for four years in return for a sizeable scholarship, have increased the number of prospective teachers, but Governor Jim Hunt has proposed another incentive for teachers in the form of free tuition for children at in-state public universities.

Obviously, on a teacher's meager salary, affording the increasingly more expensive tuition for a child to attend college is a difficult goal. If this proposal becomes reality, many a N.C. schoolteacher and parent will be able to breathe a little easier.

N.C. is in need of incentives to entice not only future teachers, but also to retain existing teachers. As a state, there has been a 12.3 percent turnover over the past four years among teachers. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system, one of the largest and higher-paying systems in the state, lost approximately 1 of every 5 teachers in their system last year.

A large number of high school seniors may be applying to become Teaching Fellows every year, but after those four required years, many will likely leave for more lucrative positions if salaries and benefits are not increased.

The proposal has not yet been finalized, but may include the stipulation that free tuition for family members is offered to teachers only after teaching for a certain number of years. Even if a teacher has to achieve a certain tenure before being able to reap these benefits, this is still another few years that the school system will not have to search for a teacher.

N.C. has been lagging behind most states as far as teachers' salaries and benefits in the past, but now has an opportunity to be the first state to offer such an incentive for teachers. Some states offer free in-state tuition for teachers who promise to teach in the state, but none offer free tuition for the teacher's children.

The idea was originally proposed about five months ago, but was put on hold because of budget constraints. The financial aspect of such a plan is a major concern for legislators involved.

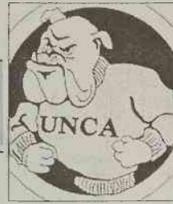
In the next decade, N.C. will need approximately 80,000-100,000 new teachers. It is time to promise our teachers the rewards they deserve.

If I had a million dollars

We at *The Blue Banner* are just as sick and tired as everyone else of spending ridiculous amounts of money on gasoline. So if we didn't have to spend our hard-earned money to fill up the tank, this is how we'd spend the extra bucks:

Emma Jones: heavy sedatives
Cate Bergman: better wine
Sarah Wilkins: a new car
Kathryn Krouse: an Austin Healy Sprite
Lena Burns: a new tattoo
Sarah Lacy: cat litter
Lauren Deal: a Hello Kitty waffle iron
Mark West: a complete set of WWF action figures

Attendance a bad policy



Sean Clancy
Columnist

Every semester, one of the first things professors explain to students is the attendance policy.

Without fail, every semester I get one of those teachers that must explain that they will keep track of every second you miss of their class, so they can penalize your grade, so that you will come and make better grades. They will also inevitably explain that it is in your best interest.

In this year's UNCA catalog, all that is said regarding attendance is "Students are responsible for regular class attendance. Faculty members are responsible for reporting to the student's advisor any student whose repeated absence from class is impairing the student's work."

Now, assume I'm in a class where the teacher lectures directly from the text, with the only digressions being to illustrate examples of key points in the text, or to reminisce of past events.

Then, I know that if I have read and understand the material, my presence on a certain day could be superfluous, or at least not crucial to understanding the fundamental concepts of that particular day.

Also, let's assume that something has come up (God forbid) that seems more important than attending a class. I think it should be my decision as to whether or not I

need to go to class.

A few semesters ago, I had a girlfriend who lived in southern Florida. I had a Monday-Wednesday-Friday class that I skipped often to drive to Florida.

It is almost impossible to drive to Florida and back between Friday night and Monday morning and still actually do something besides sleep and eat while you are there.

However, it was an entry-level class that was taught directly from the book. I ended up getting a B in the class, until my professor averaged in my attendance grade of negative 30 to my overall score, dropping me down to a D for the semester.

He also neglected to notify my advisor, perhaps because my attendance did not impair my work. Only his attendance policy did that.

What purpose do actions like this serve? The student might decide that the most important thing in their life is the class where the professor thinks their class is the most important thing in a student's life, or they might not.

Maybe the teacher will get satisfaction out of ripping apart a student's overall grade because of the impurities that were inherent in a grade earned through poor attendance.

Whatever the reasons are for strict attendance policies, they are not good enough.

This semester, I had a teacher explain on the first day that class began when the door closed, and anyone who came in after the door closed was late. Furthermore, anyone late was counted absent, and, of course, anyone absent had points counted off.

If my watch is eight seconds off and I'm three seconds late for class, my grade goes down. That makes a lot of sense. Did anyone reading this go to high school? Did you not think that you graduated?

While the education students in college receive is usually very important to the rest of their lives, it is not mandatory. Most professors explain the situation by stating that what is taught in their classroom is essential, and attendance policies raise the level of attendance and, thus, raise scores.

So, assuming students don't attend class, you could also assume their scores are lower and that they have learned less, generally speaking.

Hopefully, everyone attending college is smart enough to figure out on their own that if they don't show up to class, they need to do extra work or risk a poor grade. If they keep missing class, they probably won't be surprised to get a bad grade.

Students pay money to come to classes. In the same vein, if you buy a dozen doughnuts, nobody is going to penalize you if you don't eat them all. What if the cable company charged you five dollars every month that you didn't watch every channel you were offered?

If not coming to class equals not learning and that equals poor grades, is that not incen-

tive enough to go to class? No one comes to school with aspirations of doing really bad.

Do you think if every teacher had a rigid attendance policy college students would cease to go out and party? Would fraternities throw down their beer bongs in order to better embrace service projects, studying and the lofty goals of dedicated higher education?

Suppose the American government wanted to provide incentives for the American public to exercise and stop being fat and lazy. Would it make sense to write tickets to people who couldn't find the time to work out or, more importantly, people who just didn't want to?

One important thing to remember is that school may be like a job sometimes with concern to deadlines and effort, and it may be even more important to an individual than a job, but it is not a job, unless you are a teacher.

I think teachers concerned with attendance should shift their focus from the students to themselves and their teaching style. If this means bringing in more outside information into class and testing on it, do that instead.

If it means changing styles from straight lecturing to more interactive types of activities that will promote class involvement, why not? Shouldn't teachers and their classes be inspiring or at least slightly interesting?

There are a lot of excellent professors at UNCA that motivate students' attendance, participation and quality of life. Most of them don't accomplish this by forcing unhappy students to fill their classroom.

Traveling toward broke



Kay Alton
Columnist

Will everyone who believes the present administration cannot lower gas prices please stand on their eyelashes?

The unfairness of these artificially inflated gasoline prices means I have to pay almost \$100 to drive to Montgomery, Alabama to meet my new granddaughter.

If we didn't know that Bill Richardson, our federal energy cabinet person, struck an agreement with the oil cartel to limit production in order to boost Russia's flagging economy, we might believe our government was on the side of the American consumer.

This presidential administration betrays American citizens time and again in the name of national prosperity, only to pour aid dollars into all areas that might improve its image.

Resentment rises when our commodities like oil products are inflated in order to buy friends in foreign places.

Coincidentally, any sense of government for the people and by the people becomes hollow when we stand before these icons of public theft. Who can believe ordinary citizens

are uppermost in the considerations of our president and his cabinet?

Not all citizens in the United States of America are flush with cash. This grandmother has a budget, as do untold regular folks around us. Betrayal springs to mind when considering these obscene pump prices, knowing the clout those in office have over other world leaders.

The Asheville-Hendersonville area exceeded all other prices for gasoline observed as I traveled through South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

Billboards along the interstate seemed to mourn this price gouging as much as I did. Many signs sported canvas shrouds covering entire spaces that usually advertise gas prices. Some signs indicated only the \$1.5_ price, leaving the final digit vacant for an up-to-the-minute increase change.

Along the borders of South Carolina and Georgia, prices fell to lows of \$1.379 per gallon. That was a whopping decrease while traveling to and from my destination.

Obviously, state agencies are able to lower or raise prices, because we see this reflected in a ricocheting gasoline pricing pattern from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Alaska to Florida.

Predictably, front-page stories reveal that a drive-away gas theft epidemic exists in Montgomery. Poor people who have to use gasoline but cannot afford it are reduced to stealing.

The Clinton administration supports other nations' cheaper oil prices while, in America, they are out of reach for this basic necessity of our families.

This administration callously refuses to reconsider. Preferring to engage in political finger pointing, the Democrats accuse the Republicans and vice-versa. Meanwhile, we, the little people of America, desperately need relief at the gas pump.

If we had their ear, we would ask, "Mr. President and Mr. Energy Secretary, what about the voters who put you into office?"

Our basic need for gasoline and heating oil should be exempted from the present game of election blame fixing.

Some of us have fixed incomes, especially the elderly and the retired.

However, the need to drive to doctors, grocery stores, family visits and trips to the polls all require a decent amount of gasoline at a decent price. The cold of winter will not be

warmed by heating oil prices that are forecasted to double, perhaps triple, this winter.

This week, we see that the press reports that the oil cartel is meeting and just might consider releasing a little more oil. The leader of the number one nation in the world surely can convince producers to raise the production, just as this administration previously convinced them to lower production.

No one's standing on their eyelashes, and nobody believes this administration is powerless to lower gas prices. Riots in the streets could occur. But my hunch is that very soon, much closer to election day, these prices will be reduced.

By then, some people may be in debt or in prison for stealing what the government has stolen from us through artificially limiting oil production and allowing exorbitant pricing at the pumps.

Perhaps we will help this administration remember that we, the American public, increased their income and enhanced their personal lifestyle when we elected them to public office. We hoped for a better economy for all.

We, the faceless masses, watch and wait while existing on limited incomes and paying very high taxes for our presidential administration to relieve this gasoline-pricing crisis.

The common people need a break in their cost of living, beginning at the gasoline pump.