

The reasons for grad uninvolvement

By TOM CONLON

"They don't root for Carolina in sports, they don't vote in campus elections, they don't read *The Daily Tar Heel*..." — such are words sometimes uttered by undergraduates about graduate students.

Up until last May, I was a Carolina undergraduate and sometimes shared the above perspective. But this past summer I did a public service internship in Salinas, Calif., where I had an opportunity to room with a former UNC graduate student and find out what I was in for. While traveling back east on Amtrak across the Nevada desert, I began thinking about the adjustment I'd be making.

Matt Friedman, a 1983 graduate of UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning, said that erratic and busy academic schedules prevented him and other graduate students from getting fully involved in campus life but that he made as much effort as possible to stay informed.

"I had the general feeling that many grad students came to UNC for a par-

ticular program of study and that their particular program happened to be at Carolina," he said. "Their interest in the school ended at the door to their department, as did their knowledge of the university."

"An incident that comes to mind is when a grad student asked me who Dean Smith was," he said. "I told her he was the head basketball coach and asked her why she was curious. She responded that she had been over at (N.C.) State and that a student there asked what she thought of Dean Smith and she responded, 'What department is he Dean of?' She was curious why the State student looked at her as if she were retarded."

I may have the advantage of familiarity with UNC, but Friedman came to UNC from Macalester College in Minnesota and from his home in Burlingame, Calif. He had to make that little effort to fit in, which, he said, made his graduate years at Carolina very rewarding, socially as well as academically.

Friedman said he avoided "graduate alienation" by participating in school activities when possible and maintaining friendships with both undergrads as well

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as graduate students.

"I had to make an effort to both be involved outside the classroom while maintaining a high academic performance," he said. "I think I did both successfully. In the final analysis I learned a lot and had a good time enroute for the most part. It refreshed my mind periodically so I could function well."

So far I am seeing the other side of the coin. Graduate departments are generally smaller than their undergraduate counterparts, and graduate students know everyone in their department. For this reason, graduate students tend to socialize among themselves within their department. As an undergraduate among larger classes and different faces, I found my social life more often among clubs, dorms or campus organizations.

During my recent two-day orientation

for the master of public administration program, I found out how much more challenging my academic load will be. It will limit me from activities I previously took advantage of as an undergraduate.

The problem is trying to balance graduate academic commitments with staying informed of life at the University. Friedman was active in Macalester College's pipe band, school paper, track team and numerous organizations. He couldn't continue them at Carolina.

"At the outset, though I had a double major as an undergrad, I found graduate level courses to be more time-consuming, though not necessarily more difficult," he said. "There were many times I had to miss activities due to class work I had to finish."

"Another problem was the inability to set a consistent schedule — as a grad

student, many assignments and completion schedules were not always set in advance. I found that my schedule was very inconsistent and I could not take part in as many activities at Carolina as I would have liked. While I was involved in some campus activities, I would have liked to have done more."

For most undergraduates, the only contact with graduate students is through a class taught by a graduate teaching assistant. Graduate students, as authority figures in the classroom, are viewed as different from the typical student and thus in a different world.

The effort must come from both undergraduate and graduate students. While the graduate student has greater time and academic strains, he must strive to stay informed and involved to make the most of the Carolina experience. Undergraduates must be aware of the differences between their graduate counterparts and strive for greater tolerance and understanding between the two groups. All students should remember that they are here for a common goal at this point in their lives and should make the most of their Carolina experience.

Tom Conlon, a first-year graduate student in public administration from St. Paul, Minn., is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

J-frosh shares experience

By TIM CROTHERS

Before saying anything else, let me admit that I've never participated in a Carolina orientation. This fact may appear to discredit a column describing those first dreaded days a student spends outside the comfortable home town high school womb, but actually I am more than qualified for the task. After all, my first few days in Chapel Hill came straight from the "you think you had it bad" chapter in the lengthy book of Carolina orientation horror stories.

I was labeled a J-frosh. If you're a little fuzzy on this term, please don't feel naive. I'm afraid there are a few people in the administration who aren't too familiar with it either. I wouldn't want to imply that the J-frosh is a completely forgotten breed, let's just say we're not pampered.

For those who don't know, a J-frosh is a freshman who begins school in January rather than the customary August. In my case, I arrived at the university, sight unseen, on a cold day in January 1982 only to find a campus full of locked doors. Orientation (for J-froshes) was the following day, but nobody was back from Christmas vacation to roll out the red carpet. The next morning somebody did show up long enough to hand out the endless string of little cards everybody, even seniors, have to fill out for class registration and a campus map with Woollen Gym circled. Upon arrival at the gym, I quickly learned to block out the screams of anguish over that lost Econ 10 course. I decided to take classes that I could get without anxiety and then escape from what can be a rather overwhelming circus.

I guess that is the best lesson I can pass on. Mom was right for a change when she told you not to worry and that it would all work out, eventually. It will. Take it from a battle-hardened J-frosh; freshman naivete is one of the healthiest forms of ignorance. There's always time for Intro to Econ.

Tim Crothers is a junior English major from New York City.

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