

# The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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## The danger of complacency

University officials and students have reason to pat themselves on the back after being ranked 11th by U.S. News and World Report among research institutions across the country.

### board opinion

The honor is significant, raising the University's status as one of the premier public schools in the nation. Yet satisfaction at this high level of accomplishment should not blind administrators to the areas of the University that still need improvement.

It may be easy for UNC educators to bask in the glow of a national ranking, yet complacency can have negative results. In 1985, the same poll rated UNC 9th. Although some dismiss the ratings as biased or arbitrary, they do reflect the opinions of 764 college presidents.

Those who rest on their laurels may lose them. To counteract this natural tendency, the University should take the opportunity to address the problems that existed in 1985 and persist in 1987.

Due in part to the high ranking two years ago, applications to UNC have skyrocketed. However, the Admissions Office remains understaffed and overcrowded in its quarters in the Monogram Building. The staff has inadequate time to review applica-

tions, much less to interview prospective students.

A priority of a nationally ranked institution should be recruiting the best students possible. Yet UNC waits for outstanding high school seniors to apply rather than encouraging them, sometimes losing the state's top students to other schools.

Developing cultural awareness programs like the planned Black Cultural Center would demonstrate UNC's broad appeal to students from all backgrounds.

To preserve its reputation as an academic stronghold, the University should strike a balance between conducting research and teaching. A professor's name in a scholarly journal means less than his ability to inspire active debate among his students.

But any endeavor to attract and keep good faculty is destined to fail without competitive salaries and benefits. As Chancellor Christopher Fordham has told the Board of Trustees, improving faculty benefits is vital to keeping the University at the top. Losing good faculty to better-paid positions detracts from the University's reputation.

A national honor should do more than put self-satisfied smiles on the faces of administrators — it should be an incentive to work harder. An institution that is not moving forward may be moving backward.

## Legislating pseudo-morality

The role morality should play in the legislative process is truly ambiguous. Making laws is often a matter of putting reality ahead of ideals, of pragmatic compromise in place of ideological formulations. Those legislators who hold fast to their beliefs often sacrifice effectiveness in the pursuit of their goals.

North Carolina's Jesse Helms has been characterized as "Senator No." because he seems less interested in working for the passage of laws of which he approves than he does in fighting against legislation with which he disagrees. Given Helms' hidebound conservatism and highly moralistic outlook on the role of government, it should come as no surprise that he finds himself in conflict with the majority on a regular basis.

Helms is a populist and a demagogue, though, and is blessed with a keen eye for those battles he can win. Earlier this week, he led a campaign that resulted in the passage of a Senate bill that would clean up federally financed AIDS educational materials. The bill, which would ensure that such materials would have to emphasize sexual abstinence without promoting homosexuality or drug use, passed 94-2.

During the floor debate, Helms hammered upon the existence of sexually explicit comic books distributed by a health crisis center that

receives federal money. The comic books depicted sexual acts between two gay men, and were designed to promote the use of condoms. His essential argument was that the federal government should not be paying for material that advocates such practices, which he deemed "perverted."

The power Helms wielded, of course, was that of public opinion. Few senators on the floor could believe that their constituents would look favorably on a vote against the bill. The overwhelming victory, then, was to be expected. Helms also no doubt expected a flurry of criticism on editorial pages across America.

But that expectation does not lessen the disaster that is Helms' measure. The removal of the word "condone" from the bill means that AIDS education will not be seriously impaired. But at a time when the disease is raging untouched, any attack on the effort to educate the public is abhorrent.

More importantly, Helms' callous manipulation of the situation by oversimplification and distortion represents a corruption of the ideals of law-making. No matter what the senator says, the bill is not based on legislative morality, but on shameless vote-gathering. The irony is that "Senator No" has seen fit to say yes to a bill that serves no purpose but agitating the public and wasting the Senate's time. — James Surowiecki

## Readers' Forum

### Gays, lesbians seek equal treatment

Mark Donahue  
 Guest Writer

The events of Oct. 11 to Oct. 13, 1987, will eventually be known as a landmark social protest in the history of this nation and the largest such protest in 25 years. Oct. 11, 1987, marked the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, a collective of strength, urgency and resolve. Lesbians and gay men were in Washington to seek relief from the systematic oppression by our courts and legal system. "For love and for life, we're not going back," was the theme and message we took to the nation's capital, and we meant it.

On Oct. 13, the civil disobedience action at the Supreme Court resulted in over 600 arrests, while several thousand stood in support of the demonstrators. It was one of the largest civil disobedience actions ever to occur at the court. Meanwhile, police wore surgical gloves supposedly to protect themselves from protesters who might have AIDS.

The march garnered support from hundreds of thousands of lesbians, gay men, their friends and their families. The initial count at 2:30 p.m. on that chilly Sunday afternoon was put at 200,000. By 4 p.m., estimates had jumped to over 600,000 people.

I was there. I was with my friends, my demands and most of all, I was there with

my vengeance. I was there to tell my government that I would no longer allow it to treat my capacity to love as a crime. I was there to demand an end to the government-sanctioned discrimination against gay and lesbian marriages and parents, especially in the denial of our childhood visitation rights.

I was there to demand an end to Ronald Reagan's foot dragging on the AIDS crisis, which was never solely a gay affliction, but had taken a dramatic toll on the lives of gay men in six short years. I had watched this government, with the God-given exception of Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, adopt a blame-the-victim stance with the AIDS crisis. Our lesbian sisters had also felt gay men's pain and knew that the suffering had to stop. Our sisters were there to voice their concern.

I was there to support them as well. I was there to demand an end to sexism and to racism in this country and to apartheid in South Africa. I was there to scream, "Stop the violence against my sisters and brothers! Stop firing us with no justifiable

cause! Stop throwing us out of our dwellings simply because of who we love! This is our country, too, and we won't let this happen. We are 25 million taxpayers, and we are not begging. We are demanding!"

Some have ventured that the success of the march was solely due to the impact of AIDS on the male gay community, and that the force which was demonstrated in Washington could never be galvanized again without the AIDS factor. I assure you that this country will one day learn of the folly of that myth. Gay men and lesbians intend to make this country live up to its democratic premises, as guaranteed us in the Constitution.

We are a gentle, angry people. We desire to be allowed to live our lives with peace and dignity. We desire equal treatment under the law and by our fellow citizens. We desire life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Those who would deny us this have little more than totalitarianism in their very souls. We are gay, we are proud and we are at UNC and around the state, the nation and the world.

We are here to stay. Long live the dream.

Mark Donahue is a senior political science major from Indian Trail.

### Protest directed at alumni

To the editor:

Not every protest is perfect. Not every protest is meant to satisfy each and every person. Yet, I feel that the demonstration in Memorial Hall on University Day was totally justified, and I back it entirely.

Why Memorial Hall? The people whom Action Against Apartheid were trying to address on this day were alumni who were unaware of UNC's position concerning its investments in companies that are in South Africa. Many of the alumni do not realize that UNC is only divesting less than half of its money in these companies. It is extremely important that as many people as possible know about this. I personally do not believe in doing things halfway and I will not stop fighting this University until it calls for total divestment. The location of the demonstration was, therefore, not meant to attract press or call attention to us as members of AAA but to educate people on UNC's investments.

To address AAA's apparent lack of taste, I am sure that many Board of Endowment members and conservatives would consider it very tasteful if protesters marched in the Union bathroom crying for total divestment. The point is that a protest is always going to offend someone, even if it may only be a KKK member or a neo-fascist.

I, as one of the alleged protesters, am totally appalled at many people's obvious lack of interest in South Africa and her people. Of course, it is everyone's right to place his interests wherever he pleases, even if it means idolizing alumni and ignoring anguished cries for freedom in South Africa.

JOEY TEMPLETON  
 Sophomore  
 Drama/Political Science

### Ignorance breeds prejudice

To the editor:

I write to respond to a claim in Jon Rust's editorial on AIDS and the gay community ("AIDS issue overwhelms



rally." Oct. 13) that I deem outrageous and in need of rebuttal. Rust states, "No matter how they try, gays cannot assuage the homophobia already prevalent in society." Is he forecasting — or worse, advocating — a closed-minded reaction to the gay community and, in particular, its predicament regarding AIDS? How closed can a person's thinking be?

Rust's claim that gays are incapable of reducing some citizens' fearful response to homosexuality is clearly an absurd and inaccurate statement. As far as I can tell, just the opposite is true. I am not a homosexual; I have worked with many gay men and women in my profession, and these collaborations over the past seven years have been by far the most important factor in my being comfortable with people regardless of their or my sexual preference. I have found that the more gays I meet and work with, the more their sexual preference really ceases to be an issue or any impediment to getting the job done and enjoying one another's company. I trust that I am not the only one for whom this is the case.

Gays can, have, and I trust, will continue to engage in dialogue that seeks to break down the barriers of sexual preference. To declare their constructive work — and that of non-gays as well — hopeless is to deny both the achievements and the future possibilities for gay and non-gay people

to reduce the fear and ignorance of the population at large regarding sexual preference and the urgent AIDS issue. We do not need gloomy forecasts of no progress. We do need to address the AIDS issue directly, but with hard facts and with the full participation of all concerned. It is my hope that as we learn more about AIDS, the praiseworthy work of the gay community will not only impact the medical situation but also resolve some of the "homophobia" — a fancy word for ignorance — around us.

JONATHAN MILLER  
 Graduate  
 Music

### Fight all forms of racism

To the editor:

I want to express my concern over the recent incidents of racism that have occurred at the School of Business Administration. It is very sad that such ignorance and prejudice abound at this institution of higher learning. As ugly as prejudice is, I applaud Lynne Gerber for making us fully aware that it does exist on this campus. The incident serves to show that the battle against racism is far from over. And it is not only this type of blatant prejudice that must be fought, but also the more subtle forms that occur more frequently. Hopefully, with this realization, although many already know it firsthand, we will become more active in trying

to overcome it.

VALERIE HALL  
 Junior  
 Interdisciplinary Studies

### Troll's patrons abuse Phi Mu's

To the editor:

I am a waiter at the Phi Mu house, and recently the sorority has been victim of a series of crimes. On a consistent basis, members have discovered either in the middle of the night or the next morning that someone has thrown a rock through one of their windows. Having to replace these windows can become very expensive.

Another problem has been automobile break-ins. Phi Mu is located behind Troll's, and its members' cars are there for when a person has had too much to drink and feels like having a little fun. In addition, the house's parking lot is dark, and there are some trees blocking sight from the street. I realize that it is nearly impossible to apprehend anybody, but it might be reassuring to know that police officers are patrolling more often — who knows, the police might catch the culprit!

I would also take a guess and say that this situation is not limited to the Phi Mu's. People probably think that it is not as big a problem as it is. I'm sure the Greek system would appreciate attention to the problem.

NICKY HOLT  
 Sophomore  
 Criminal Justice

## Student Congress proposal hardly frivolous

To the editor:

I am writing in reference to your Oct. 14 editorial entitled "Building a paper bureaucracy." This editorial was ill-conceived and poorly executed. It contains important misrepresentations and misunderstandings which lead to erroneous conclusions.

Let us begin at the beginning. The first paragraph disparagingly implies that this resolution was some type of frivolous research which had no purpose other than a purely political one. It was not. This resolution was a request for action. It was a request, and not a command, simply because the Student Congress has not the power to compel the action we desire.

If the resolution was a cry for help, as an anonymous congress member put it, there is no basis for the editorial's assertion that the cry was directed inward. In fact, a cursory inspection of the document should clearly reveal that it was directed to the University administration.

And it gets worse. By the sixth paragraph, the author has turned the comments

of one representative into the unified body of congressional opinion. In fact, only one representative discussed the issue with the author prior to publication (excluding the comments of congress members on the outcome of the meeting with Dean Donald Boulton). And as a member of that congress, I have no difficulty asserting that she most definitely does not speak for its membership in general.

And indeed, it is here that we reach the crux of the problem. The DTH does not, has not and probably will never understand the way student government works. The DTH has failed to understand that in order for the speaker of the congress to speak for the congress it is necessary for him to have before him one of those resolutions — passed by the congress — that the author calls "nothing more than a posturing device." Without it, the speaker wields no more authority than any other student at this University.

While the editorial was kind enough to mention the meeting of student leaders with Boulton, it failed to note that this

was part and parcel of the execution of the resolution. The meeting was requested by the speaker following the resolution's passage in congress last week, the meeting was held and progress was made. This would seem to place the author's conclusion that the resolution was "only a piece of paper" on a somewhat mushy foundation. After all, the DTH itself, in the sense the author seems to intend, is only a piece of paper.

This editorial contains gross misrepresentations of the opinions and attitudes of the congress. The writer's conclusions themselves are in most instances backed up by little more than hot air. The author maintains that the editorial is something of a response to what he perceives as frivolous political rhetoric. I submit to you that he has engaged in a little frivolous journalistic rhetoric of his own.

NEIL RIEMANN  
 Junior  
 Political Science/  
 Mathematics

### The Daily Tar Heel

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 Printing: The Chapel Hill Newspaper