

# The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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## Open the files on past exams

A student takes a test from her teacher. As other students around her panic when they read the essay questions, she promptly begins writing. One reason for her coolness is that she had reviewed old tests before the exam. They weren't her tests, however. She had found them on file in her dorm.

Many groups on campus maintain test files. The completeness of these files vary. Some dorms have tests for particular courses for the past ten years. Many fraternities and sororities keep not only tests but quizzes, class notes and term papers. Other groups are continually trying to start a system of their own.

Studying old tests can be an advantage to a student. In some classes, the tests stay the same from semester to semester. Granville East Governor Jo Boney explained, "We have quiz files to help students who live here have an edge in their classes." It is an edge that should be allotted to all, if any. Those who can access files have a clear advantage over those who cannot.

Balancing this inequity is a goal of Willis Brooks, associate history professor. In a proposal to the Faculty Council, Brooks suggests that professors be required to submit all final exams to a three-year reserve in the Undergraduate Library.

His suggestion makes sense, since it would be impossible to stop the use

### board opinion

of test files. When a student gets his test back, it becomes private property to file if he wants. And although teachers can try to restrict filing by asking for the exam sheet at the end of a test, some students will inevitably reconstruct the questions from their answers when the blue books are returned. It would be a disservice to learning if teachers were to keep students' answers from them in the middle of a term.

At the end of a term it is not as great a disservice to withhold students' exams. Indeed, teachers are advised to hold onto finals for a year. Final exams, then, lend themselves to being easily regulated. But they are not the main problem.

Teachers should be required to turn in all period tests to a campus-accessible reserve, not just finals. This would be the greatest step in ensuring equality of opportunity for students.

Some professors would be unwilling to set up a test file. But some of the problem is their fault. There would not be as great an incentive to study old tests if more faculty members took the time to shape their test questions each term.

There is already a quiz file in the Undergraduate Library provided voluntarily by some teachers. It is very incomplete. The Faculty Council should rejuvenate this central file to help balance an academic inequity by requiring professors to submit all tests to it.

## Laughing all the way to finals

They're here . . .

Eight months later and they're as ugly as ever. Welcome back to exams. The fun's over, kiddies.

Today teachers will finish their last lectures and offer a few words of advice to their students on how best to study for exams. Their advice, however, is founded in myth and fantasy. Confident even in the face of reality, the teachers will say:

■ "Get a good night's sleep before the test." Even if students do manage to finish cramming before dawn, their heads will be filled with visions of the Spanish Inquisition, not dancing sugar plums. They'll wake with the sheets twisted in a noose around their necks.

■ "Eat a full breakfast that morning." Sure, fried eggs and grits will feel great in a stomach wracked with tension and glutted with caffeine.

■ "Your studying should be mostly casual review." All except for the last half of "War and Peace" that was somehow overlooked. And that light and frothy book on international deficit expansion macro-Reaganomic theory.

■ "Cramming never helped anyone on an exam." "Cramming" is such a crass word. How about: "Intensive short-term memory expansion of unfamiliar material."

■ "Write an outline before begin-

ning your essay." Spend those precious minutes showing yourself what you don't know even before writing the actual essay. Better to leap straight in, blissfully ignorant of your ignorance.

■ "Cliff's Notes will not help you pass this exam without reading the book." Of course not. That's why ol' Cliff spends his retirement years sailing a luxury yacht around the Bahamas.

Before persecuting professors for perpetuating this pernicious propaganda, students should remember that this season of stress is as hellish for teachers as it is for students. Professors will spend the next two weeks holed up in their offices in silent classroom buildings, writing endless graduate school recommendations and drafting essay questions they know they'll be cursed for over the holidays.

Worse yet, when their solitude is broken by a knock at the door, usually it is a panicked student whining desperately about "what I need to know for the exam." It must be hard not to reply, "Everything we read, discussed or alluded to."

So, students and teachers, get out those soothing Windham Hill albums, try switching to de-caf and settle in for the home stretch.

Santa will get here eventually. — **Brian McCuskey**

### The Daily Tar Heel

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## Readers' Forum

## This year, make a real resolution

**Matt Bivens**

Staff Writer

As classes wind to a close, sighs of relief echo across the campus. This weekend is the calm before the caffeine storm, and a Tar Heel's thoughts wander over the past semester. Reading day is an especially good time to reflect.

The result of this contemplation for many students is a set of informal ground rules for next semester. Since New Year's Day is immediately before the spring term, some students are making formal resolutions. Most are just bemoaning what they did wrong and how their lives have changed now and they've seen the errors of their ways and they are *never* going to make that mistake again, etc. If we were to compile all of these pithy promises into a column, it would fill up a lot of space. It would also look something like this:

■ "I'm never taking another 8 o'clock class again."

This resolution comes first because it's one of the only ones most students will keep. Drop-add wouldn't be the same without students moaning "I've got an 8 o'clock."

■ "I'm not going to skip class anymore."

This statement is frequently wrung out of students at 3 a.m. the night before an exam. It's a lie, of course, since the memory of cramming-in-hell fades by next semester.

■ "I'm going to party less" or "I'm going to party more."

UNC students are divided into two groups, group A and group B. While members of group A are partying their faces off, members of group B are diligently studying. Come finals, group A does poorly, and members swear to live in the library from then on. Members of group B do better, and decide they have earned the right to blow off everything next semester.

This vicious chain continues throughout time, as students see-saw between the wild life and no life. Members from group A rarely meet members from group B —

they're never in the same places.

■ "I'm never taking a course in chemistry, foreign language, poli sci, etc. again."

Unfortunately, normally rational students become fools when they register for classes. They forget the wretched time they had in a class, and something possesses them to sign up for the next course in the series. In drop-add, many become overly ambitious, to their horror when classes start again in the spring. "I signed up for 18 hours? What was I thinking . . ."

■ "Next semester, I'm going to eat better food, exercise regularly, go to bed at reasonable hours, do well in class, etc."

The catch-all resolutions never work. Resolves usually remember them two weeks later, when they're eating Funyuns and Double Chocolate Hostess Pudding Pies while watching David Letterman the night before midterms.

■ "I'm going to pay more attention to doing laundry."

This promise, prompted when socks leap out of the laundry basket to war-dance around the bed, is rarely kept. Students remember it only when they are forced to wear their underwear inside-out — either that or hand wash and blow dry a pair.

■ "I'm going to clean up the dishes right after I cook."

When that 3-foot pile of plates has aged on the counter for weeks, frustrated students will harken back to this one, as they scrape milk crust out of cereal bowls and struggle to pry plates apart.

■ "I'm not going to waste time watching TV."

This is one of the quickest resolutions to fall by the wayside, as students build their schedules around "Guiding Light" and Oprah Winfrey, and studying becomes

an early casualty to "Moonlighting."

■ "I'm going to get up an hour earlier so I have time to relax in the morning."

Uh huh. This is the worst resolution to make, because it's doomed from the start. Don't depress yourself with your lack of discipline.

■ "I'm going to start jogging mornings before class."

Students will get up to jog twice. When they don't feel thinner and more energetic, they'll quit.

■ "I'm going to get to know my professors better — visit them in their offices, go to dinner with them, play tennis and so on."

After deciding their professor is a bizarre geek, students will miss class two weeks in a row to watch "Jeopardy." Consequently they will become too terrified to even make eye contact with the teacher.

■ "I'm going to do all my assigned reading before class, so I'll be better prepared for lectures."

Assorted syllabi will still be crisp and unwrinkled when the entire campus falls behind in class. Students will spend the rest of the semester struggling to catch up. (Unless they are in group B, in which case they will go shotgun a few beers and end up face-down in the bathroom at Hector's.)

■ "Next semester I will strive to better inform myself about campus issues — the search for a new chancellor, racism, sexism, parking ticketism, phone-in registration, Smith Center ticketing policies, the Pittsboro extension, the alumni center proposal, and other worthy causes. My voice will fill the vacuum of student apathy."

Those Funyuns are lookin' mighty good.

*Matt Bivens, a sophomore journalism and political science major from Olney, Md., has nobly given up Funyuns for the new year.*

## Culture begins with language

To the editor:

In Blain Holman's Dec. 3 column, "Foreign language classes impractical," the author argued that classes in foreign languages were not useful. Knowledge of a foreign culture is indispensable to any person who considers himself educated, and the best means to which that end is obtained is through foreign language classes.

Holman argues that a class in foreign culture would be better suited to the job of teaching culture. I disagree. It would be impossible to teach the culture with no knowledge of the language. Culture encompasses much more than customs, traditions, etc. It includes thought patterns, viewpoints and other such things which cannot be learned, but understood. The best way to understand another culture is to live in that culture — to know the people. Short of that ideal, language study is the most practical means.

Granted, three semesters of language study does not allow for this cultural education. It is merely exposure to the culture in hopes that the individual will continue his education on his own. People who do not pursue this education may well have wasted their time. But worse, they may remain locked into a single point of view for the rest of their lives.

JAY GUMP  
Sophomore  
English/Mathematics



## Let research continue

To the editor:

Late last year, the East Carolina University animal labs were vandalized, resulting in several thousand dollars' worth of damage. This growing level of intimidation against animal labs, along with impending federal rules could further restrict the use of animals in experiments. Many scientists acknowledge that past pressure from animal advocates has led to better care and treatment of lab animals. However, the humane treatment of animals is no longer the issue: It's now the very right of researchers to use animals at all.

According to a National Academy of Sciences survey, the total number of animals

used by institutions that receive federal research grants fell from \$33.4 million in 1968 to \$19.9 million in 1978. Of these, 61 percent were used in studies involving little or no pain, 38 percent were used in surgical procedures under full anesthesia, and only 1 percent were used for experiments in which pain was an integral part of the research — for example, studies of ways to treat pain itself.

Part of the decline is the result of alternatives to the use of animals, particularly in routine testing of drugs or other new products. However, the development of surgical procedures, vaccines against AIDS and other diseases, and treatments for complex brain disorders such as Parkinson's disease continue to depend heavily on animal experiments. In fact, researchers continue to

use about 200,000 dogs and cats a year, which is roughly the same number that are destroyed each week by animal shelters.

In conclusion, the ultimate consequence of further acts of intimidation and federal regulation would be fewer new treatments, cures and preventions for diseases that now afflict countless Americans.

GENE GALIN  
Chapel Hill

## Letters policy

■ All letters and columns must be signed by the author, with a limit of two signatures per letter or column.

■ All letters must be typed, double-spaced on a 60-space line, for ease of editing.

## Final exams don't test knowledge

*Editor's note: This is an occasional feature reprinting Daily Tar Heel articles. The following editorial was printed on April 3, 1947.*

A letter received from student Paul L. Furgatch included the following paragraph:

"In every discussion of the Honor Code at Carolina the blame for the collapse of the system has been leveled at the student. Professor Chester Warren Quimby of Ohio Wesleyan University has presented a different and plausible approach in a letter to the editors of Life."

The letter referred to is printed below:

"We professors are largely responsible for student cheating. We invite it by:

- 1) Our own stupidity. Any professor who gives the kind of quiz that can be passed by cribbing off the cuff, etc., isn't quite bright.
- 2) What we expect from the student in an examination. All semester long he has been toting thick textbooks in some half-a-dozen subjects. In addition he has class lectures and collateral assignments. No mind, however brilliant, can absorb so much information in so short a time. Yet the student is expected to enter an

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examination blind, while the professor, who has confined himself to one field, has all along relied on his notes. He would "flunk" without them.

3) The artificiality of the whole examination system. The student is supposed to know the answers to any question, sight unseen, thrown at him. But in life the lawyer may consult his legal tomes, the physician can refer to his medical books . . .

We believe that Professor Quimby will probably find much support for his beliefs from students on this campus and others throughout the country. His ideas are certainly different from those shared by many other men in the teaching profession.

We do not feel, however, that the professor is so much to blame for student cheating. But his letter does contain one sentence with which we have long been in agreement — "the artificiality of the whole examination system."

We do not feel that final examinations

afford an accurate insight into either what the student has learned during the year or his inherent intelligence and ability. Examinations can prove to be pitfalls for many brilliant students and lifelines for some who have learned little all year long. The amount of knowledge absorbed by the student throughout the year and his daily classwork is what should furnish an indication to his ability and learning. His final grade should not be dependent on a final examination, which often becomes a hazard for a usually intelligent student and which many students who have done nothing all year long can pass by a night or week of intensive studying, better known as "cramming."

In the perfect system of education, elimination of the final examination would be ideal. For many reasons, such as the great number of students which makes it impossible for the professor to know and study them and forces him to resort to quizzes, examinations are a necessary evil in modern-day education. But perhaps someday the time will come, as it has in some schools and in some courses, where the headaches and heartaches of examinations will be eliminated and education will take another step forward.