

Opinion

It's time to change nightmarish drop process

I was having a dream — a nightmare, really. I sat, cramped and sweating, in a tiny office, surrounded by papers and worksheets and computer-scanned forms.

"Yes, Anthropology 41 fits nicely into your social science perspective," my adviser said of my current classes. "And Geography 10... I think we can slip that right into the junior-senior science requirement," he continued.

That one nearly passed me by, as my subconscious swam through this General College Pre-Registration Hell.

"Geography 10? What are you talking about? I'm not in that class!" I exclaimed, growing alarmed at the man's nonchalant manner.

"Of course you are. It's on the print-out."

"I've never been! I picked it up and dropped it during Drop/Add in Woolen! I don't even know where it meets!" I said, feeling myself growing hysterical.

"OK, OK. Head on over to the registrar's office and explain your situation," he said, moving on and trying to fit Econ, Psych and Soc 10 into my schedule.

In my R.E.M. state, I drifted across the quad into Hanes Hall. Approaching the glass-enclosed office, the hum of computers reached my ears, and I suddenly had a premonition of dread. Stealing myself, I entered and explained my case to one of the over-worked, harassed staff members, assured that she would immediately erase Geography 10 from any mention on my record. She shot me a practiced "you poor, naive little underclassman, I'm sure I'll get all the classes-I-preregister-for fool" look.

"Social Security number?" (pause) "You'll have to bring me your pink Drop/Add slip."

Failure, despair... for the moment. As things often happen in dreams, I found myself immediately back in the registrar's office, damp fingers grasping my pink copy. Triumphant, I

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presented the sheet to another lady.

"Social Security number?" (pause) "Yeah, you're registered for Geography 10, and this won't do you any good," she said, giving me the form.

"This has only been crossed out and never officially dropped. That's what the computer says, at least. You'll have to go to the General College Office. Get anyone to sign another drop form and bring it back. Next!"

Momentarily defeated, but with relentless energy, I returned to the General College. Walking into the office, I faced yet another hassled lady whose desk was a tangle of papers, phone lines and a public address microphone. I explained my situation...

"So if you'll just sign a drop form, I'll be on my way —"

She stared at me incredulously for a moment, as if she thought I just fell off the turnip truck in West Podunk, N.C. Well, I hadn't expected her to pick up the mike and announce:

"Attention General College shoppers. Today's blue light special is drop forms. Just come by the main office" to Steele Building, but her surprise at my request was rather humiliating.

"You're in the General College?"

"Yes." *No, actually, I'm from the Kiwanis Club, and I was just wondering if you'd like to buy some light bulbs.*

"Social Security number?" (pause) "You're going to have to go to the instructor," she said, handing me another print-out, "and get him to write, on departmental stationery, a note saying you've never attended the class."

So I confidently whipped over to Saunders Hall but ended up wandering aimlessly up and down the corridor for a while trying to find the office of the grad student who teaches the course. Finally, upon entering the grad lounge,

I cornered the sympathetic instructor. We trudged downstairs and picked up some elegant geography department stationery.

"Social Security number?" (pause) "Well, there you are."

"Thanks. I appreciate it," I said, walking away.

"You should really take Geography 10. It's a good course..."

Ah, back to the GC (as I fondly referred to it now). I could tell the dream was coming to an end, for things were getting done. I held the letter in my fingers.

"So you just take this to the basement of Hanes, and they'll straighten this out," the dean said, giving me a brand new drop slip.

I left feeling joyous and free and giddy.

"Wait! We've got to have that letter on file!"

I dashed back into the office and handed the letter to the frowning secretary, who looked at me as though I was going to run over to Kinko's and try to reproduce geography department stationery to sell on the mid-semester Drop-a-Class black market.

I smiled politely and left, this time for good. I meandered over to the bowels of Hanes Hall and approached a line, thinking, "Why did I get sent here? Shouldn't I be upstairs?" Nonetheless, as cheerful and mindlessly accepting as I was, I dutifully waited in line and presented a lady with the form.

"I'm supposed to be upstairs, aren't I?"

"Yes," she said, looking at me as if I owned the turnip truck.

Sighing, I turned and marched upstairs. In the registrar's office, I gave a lady the sheet, expecting the worse.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry for not doing whatever else it is I have to do to drop a class that I had no idea I was in and have never attended!"

"But —"



Now that I was warning up, there was no way of stopping me yet.

"So where are you sending me now? South Building? I know where that is, and I've been inside before! Would this next step involve getting a certain chancellor to send a Hallmark card over here releasing me from a registration hell?"

"It's all set," she said, puzzled, "You no longer have Geography 10."

(pause) "Oh, OK."

I went out the door, slightly dazed, certain that someone would run after me. I halted in the corridor, unsure of what to do next, when an angel de-

scended and proclaimed my journeys over.

"You may return to North Campus," it said.

Smiling serenely, I clicked my Tretorn-encased heels together and slowly repeated "There's no pencil like a number two" three times.

The funny thing is that I didn't wake up. It actually happened, well, more or less this way. But I finally have managed to erase Geography 10 from my record, after nearly a week of running from building to building.

The next night, I dreamt of a different UNC — a UNC not mired in bureaucracy, even if it is to ensure that students don't just drop a class mid-semester because they're failing or want to sell the book back. I saw a UNC populated with cheerful, appreciated administrators: A UNC where these same administrators all agreed on the correct procedure for rectifying an error.

Unfortunately, this time, I woke up.

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UNC leaders support CIA horrors

Administrators allow CIA to kill health officials by proxy

It is horrible that the UNC administration has made welcome on our campus an organization that has ordered the murder of some UNC students. The CIA has ordered a proxy army to kill anyone from UNC's public health school, medical school or School of Nursing, if these people try to bring health services to some regions of the Third World. One such region is Nicaragua, where the CIA owned-and-operated Contras have a policy of killing public health workers. I know of at least three UNC graduates, all health professionals, who have gone to Nicaragua to practice their profession. These people have been in direct danger of being murdered by the Contras, agents of the CIA. Of course, not only UNC graduates are targeted. All health workers in Nicaragua are Contra targets.

Below are some examples of Contra attacks on civilian health workers:

In July 1986, Contras ransacked the health clinic in San Jose de las Lulas. The Contras asked for the health worker who ran this clinic by name. When they found him they tied him up and marched him away. His mutilated body was found nearby the next morning.

In July 1986, Contras took four health workers from their homes in San Jose de la Mula, in Matagalpa province. One was the administrator of the local health program. Their bodies were found dismembered shortly after they were taken.

In October 1986, Contras ransacked and set fire to the health clinic at El Diamante.

In October 1987, Contras used two mines to destroy the health clinic in Cerro Colorado in Matagalpa province. After destroying the clinic the Contras started asking for the clinic's director by name. The director ran from his house and stayed in the nearby hills until the next morning. The director told the Americans investigating this attack that people in Cerro Colorado will now have to travel at least eight miles to the nearest clinic for health care.

In October 1988, one mile outside of Las Cuchillas, Contras ambushed an ambulance with gunfire and grenades. The ambulance was clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem and a white flag. The driver sped the ambulance to safety, but a Red Cross official riding along was wounded by shrapnel.

The Contras attacks listed above are part of a Contra campaign against Nicaragua's health system. The 1984 book *Health and the War Against Nicaragua*, was written by two American health professionals, counted 31 clinics and one hospital destroyed or badly damaged from 1981-84. In this same period, 19 salaried health workers and 40 health volunteers were killed. Witness for Peace,



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and American religious organization with representatives in Nicaragua, documented eight health centers burned by the Contras from 1985-March 1988. The Nicaraguan government reports that 50 health centers have had to be closed because of the Contra danger to health workers. These losses represent a significant reduction in health services in the sparsely populated war zones of Nicaragua.

Many people on campus might not link these Contra murders with the CIA. These people might reason "Sure the Contras are brutally murdering civilians in Nicaragua, but what has that got to do with the CIA? Aren't the Contras an independent group of rebels whom the United States occasionally supports?" This view of the Contras is incorrect. Without U.S. interference, the Contras would never have existed. If the United States stopped interfering, the Contras would disappear. The United States controls every aspect of the Contra organization. The United States picks the Contra leadership, directs the Contra's tactics and gives the Contra materials. The CIA is the governmental agency largely responsible for these jobs.

From the start, the Contras have been a U.S. invention. In 1981, the Reagan administration organized several bands of deposed Nicaraguan National Guardsmen into the FDN, which is still the main Contra group. The parties in this organization signed papers formally constituting it at a

meeting in Guatemala in 1981. Edgar Chamorro, a later member of the Contra directorate, described this meeting thus: "The meeting was arranged and the documents were prepared by the CIA. The name of the organization, the members of the political junta and the members of the general staff were all chosen or approved by the CIA."

The Reagan administration also directed a 1987 shake-up in the Contra leadership. Newsweek magazine reported on the shake-up by saying, "The change of strategy was designed by national security adviser Frank Carlucci, and by Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams."

The CIA even paid men on the political directorate of the Contras, according to Arturo Cruz, once a member of this directorate. When Cruz quit the Contra directorate in 1987, he wrote, "It doesn't matter who leaves or who stays (from the Contra leadership). The Nicaraguan resistance stays in the hands of the U.S."

The CIA also directs the Contra's tactics. Again from Chamorro: "After our offensive at the end of 1982 was turned back, almost all of our troops in Honduras and our own officers believed that they needed more training and more time before they would be ready to return to Nicaragua. The FDN officers were overruled by the CIA, however. The agency told us that we had to send our men back into Nicaragua and keep fighting. We had no choice but to obey."

The CIA also trains the Contras. The CIA prepared the infamous "Psychological operations in Guerrilla Warfare" manual, which directed the Contras to assassinate local officials.

The United States also manages the

Contra's supply operation. Contra leader Eden Pastora testified in a sworn deposition in 1987 that George Bush was in the "Contra resupply chain of command."

I hope that UNC administrators and students will seriously contemplate the information in this column, even though these facts are difficult to make sense of. These facts are scary in that they challenge our image of our country. It is difficult to ask oneself "Why is my government intentionally murdering people?" It is much easier to accept the patriotic-sounding excuses and the national security jargon.

All countries use these excuses to justify their cruel actions. When the Czechoslovaks rose up against a U.S.S.R.-backed dictator in 1968, Pravda reported that the Soviet Union was crushing the revolutionaries to "restore order." They did not report that the U.S.S.R. benefits economically from domination of Eastern Europe. Doubtless some people in the U.S.S.R. believed this convenient excuse, and supported crushing the uprising.

Ever since the Nicaraguans overthrew a U.S.-backed dictator in 1979, the American television news has told us that the U.S. government is attacking the revolutionaries because it wishes to "restore democracy" to Nicaragua. They do not report that the United States benefits economically from domination of Latin America. Currently, administrators at UNC believe this excuse and support the CIA.

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Amendment would stifle the patriotism of U.S. flag burners

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Recently, quite a controversy has arisen around these few words, "The Congress and the states shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

This is the Constitutional amendment proposed by George Bush in an attempt to overturn a Supreme Court ruling. Because the thought of a burning flag fills most Americans with a sense of moral outrage, it is not surprising that the proposed amendment has gained so much support. Frankly, I am alarmed by the fervor with which many people are rushing to defend the Bush amendment. The important issue of whether the amendment should be ratified should not be decided by simple response to emotions, but by calm, rational consideration of several very important aspects of the controversy. After a careful weighing of the facts at hand, even those appalled by the act of flag burning will realize that the danger posed by the amendment is far greater than the good that it seeks to accomplish.

Perhaps the most important argument in favor of the Bush amendment is that the flag is a symbol of what our country stands for, and, as such, it should be protected from the insult of desecration. I agree with this line of thinking, to an extent. I do not enjoy watching Old Glory being consumed by flames; however, I do not believe that the Constitution should be tampered with to extinguish those flames.

To me, the flag symbolized not only the strength and greatness of our nation, but also the basic freedoms upon which this country was founded. Many people think that a person who chooses to burn the flag is saying that he doesn't respect "the republic for which it stands." This is not the case. When a person burns the flag as a means of calling attention to a specific grievance against the government, he is demonstrating that he loves and respects his country enough to want its wrongs to be righted and that the freedom represented by our flag is more important to him than the (physical) flag itself. He is also stressing the importance of upholding the Constitution. The Constitution protects our freedom; shouldn't we think twice about altering it in a potentially harmful way?

A portion of the Constitution specifically threatened by the proposed amendment is the First Amendment, which states that, "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech." Clearly, the two amendments can not be reconciled when one considers two facts: that flag burning exists mainly as a form of protest, and that protest, being the expression of dissenting ideas, is a manifestation of free speech. Granting Congress and the states power to outlaw flag burning allows them to abridge our right to freedom of speech, while laws that do so are explicitly forbidden in the text of the First Amendment. If we allow this

blatant contradiction to be worked into our most important governing doctrine, where will be draw the line on future amendment proposals?

Another problem lies in the Bush amendment's wording. It is dangerously vague and very vulnerable to a wide range of individual interpretations. Allowing it to be ratified would be like writing Congress and the states a blank check. To begin with, the amendment does not specify in what manner Congress or the states may prohibit flag desecration. For example, would the amendment allow a state to make flag burning penalties tougher on a person who burns the flag in protest of government policy than on one who does so for some other reason? Secondly, and I believe that this is most important, it is left up to individual discretion to decide exactly which actions are to be considered desecration. What would be included? Sewing a garment from the flag? Wearing a flag lapel pin? Or worse yet, would it depend on the arbitrary perceptions of one judge or another to decide what message is being conveyed by the actions of the defendant? If this vague, and therefore weak amendment were introduced into the Constitution, it would produce the familiar effect of the weak link which undermines the strength of the whole chain.

In light of the possible damage that will be done to the Constitution if this amendment is ratified, does the current situation merit taking such a risk? I say no. People simply are not running rampant in our streets burning flags wholesale; conversely, each and every citizen of this country relies daily on the strength of the Constitution. Better that we should suffer a few insults to our sensibilities, in the form of flag burning, than alter the Constitution and face the possibility that someday we will turn to it for support and find it no longer able to hold our weight.

Martin Luther King has said that a person who breaks a law that he feels is unjust, and suffers the punishment, is actually displaying the highest respect for the concept of law. I hold that the same applies to flag burning. An individual who acts against an action or policy of the government — even by burning the flag — is in actuality displaying a great love for his country in wanting to right a specific wrong. This, to me, represents a higher degree of patriotism than does waving the flag and saying that everything is all right. Can we really allow a form of patriotism to be outlawed by the Constitution?

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