

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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Curriculum changes

Report suggests positive steps for UNC

Two weeks ago, the General Education Curriculum Evaluation Committee released a preliminary report that critiqued the structure and quality of UNC's general education curriculum. While the committee concluded that general education at UNC is sound, it also pointed out curriculum problems affecting both faculty and students. In response to these concerns, the committee recommended some changes — including concrete reforms — that, if implemented, will constitute a positive first step toward improving education at UNC.

Some of the recommendations merely pointed up deficiencies that the University must continue to address. For example, the call for the administration's continued efforts to secure funding for development of the curriculum and the suggestion that each department discuss the aims of general education are necessary — and somewhat timeless — focal points for administrators and faculty that do not require specific immediate reform.

The committee also suggested specific changes that would allow students more flexibility in meeting the upper-level perspective requirements — flexibility that would undoubtedly benefit students, particularly those seeking double majors. The committee recommended that courses in a student's major be allowed to fulfill perspective requirements and that B.A. students be allowed to choose to omit one of the five perspectives.

While the University has a strong responsibility to see that students receive a well-rounded education, the committee found that UNC's General College and upper-level perspective requirements are in many cases stricter than those of other schools. A report by the National Endow-

ment for the Humanities found that of the nation's institutions for higher learning, 37 percent allow a student to earn a degree without taking any history, and 77 percent will grant a degree to a student who has not studied a foreign language — statistics that reflect very poorly on American colleges and universities. But given the General College perspective requirements at UNC, education would not suffer if more upper-level flexibility were permitted.

Another particularly commendable point of the committee's report is the suggestion that departments consider requiring students to take a capstone course in their major. One shortcoming with American education in general is the narrow focus within disciplines; courses, such as capstones, that try to help students understand how various disciplines are interrelated could only improve the quality of education.

Overall, the changes suggested by the committee are a good balance between calls for tangible change and recognition of more long-range problems that need attention now. None of the suggestions would mean overly radical change. In fact, future re-evaluation of the curriculum may reveal that further reform is needed to ensure that students are getting the best possible education. But as a first step, the points made by the committee are valuable and should be addressed.

The committee wants reactions from the University community on its report. Because the recommendations outlined in the report, if adopted, will affect all administrators, faculty and students alike, this input is extremely important. Students in particular should make an effort to let the committee know their feelings on the recommended changes — after all, the point of improving the curriculum is to benefit students.

board opinion

What's in a name?

AIDS testing needs to be anonymous

It is a battle between confidentiality and public fear. Anonymous testing for the HIV virus, which can result in AIDS, has become a heated debate in today's society. Despite the N.C. General Assembly's recommendation to begin using confidential testing, which would require patients to give a name and address, the Commission for Health Services decided last week to continue anonymous AIDS testing in North Carolina, assuring patients complete anonymity and protection from possible social and employer discrimination.

Most patients who take the AIDS identification test choose to remain anonymous. If the conditions for AIDS testing changed, fewer people would take the test — undoubtedly hindering research and statistical projects. Under the anonymous testing procedures, important general information can still be gathered without increasing the patient's fear of exposure. Forcing the patient to reveal his name, address and other easily identifiable information would only frighten possible patients from taking the test — making the statistics and research erroneous and the search for a cure more difficult to attain.

According to state guidelines, agencies that test for the AIDS virus cannot force any personal information from the patient, but information about race, sex and age can be requested and given to the state health department. State and national statistics can then be compiled without jeopardizing the patient's confidentiality.

Opponents of anonymous testing argue that certain people like doctors, sexual partners and employers of HIV-infected persons have a right to this medical information. Doctors who demand this information claim they have a right to protect themselves, but a doctor should always assume a patient is not healthy and should be wary. If a doctor can demand to know

if a patient is infected with the HIV virus, it gives the doctor a reason to deny the patient assistance and pass the patient on to a doctor who will care for him.

Partners of HIV-infected persons do have the right to know if their partner is infected with the disease, but the promise of confidentiality instead of complete anonymity would not completely protect partners. If a person fears infection, but also fears identification when tested, the person may more likely choose not to be tested — leaving both the possible victim and the partner in the dark. Health agencies now offer counseling for HIV-positive patients and services that help contact the partners about the disease. While there are cases when the infected patient does not inform the partner, there is nothing to suggest that the partner would be more protected if the victim's name is released.

But the most severe consequence of revealing personal information would be the danger of discrimination by employers and society. Employers have access to the results recorded in an employee's medical records, and since there is no law against homosexual discrimination, the HIV-positive person would not be protected. Even if such legislation existed, how well would it work or be enforced? Furthermore, because of society's insecurities about the disease, social tensions would worsen and cause the infected person to be labeled an outcast.

Anonymous testing for the AIDS virus is the most protective and fair for all involved. Few valid arguments can support confidential testing as opposed to anonymous testing. Confidential testing could place a person's private medical records on a pedestal for everybody to scrutinize. Let's allow those afflicted with the disease a quiet life instead of exacerbating their worries with personal prejudice and fear. — Jennifer Wing

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Doing the freedom boogie in Berlin

In late May and early June, radical change seemed imminent and inevitable in China. What began as isolated student protest in Beijing mushroomed into mass demonstrations involving not only students, but also workers and even some military officers. The peaceful protesters stood up to tanks and won — or so it appeared. The world watched in excitement, expecting to see democratic reform, but just when it looked like the hardliners were ready to concede to the demands for political, economic and social reform, they began a brutal crackdown, killing many civilians. Pictures of unarmed demonstrators being mowed down by tanks are still vivid in many minds.

In Eastern Europe, the groundswell for reform has been far more successful. As the size of protests and demonstrations grew a few weeks ago, no one knew what to expect. Erich Honecker, then the East German leader, said his countrymen would be wise to remember the repression of Tiananmen Square. Despite his ominous warning, East Germans fled by the thousands to the West through Hungary. The government had to take action — it was obvious that the protests were spiraling into a mass movement and, as a UNC history professor said, East Germany would fall like a ripe plum if reforms did not begin immediately.

The East Germans got the travel visas they demanded, and now they're demanding freedom. This weekend millions walked through the crumbling Berlin Wall to have a taste of the "free West." As some Germans danced and took pieces of the ultimate symbol of the Cold War, others turned the streets of Berlin (by tomorrow, East and West Berlin could be



Chris Landgraaf
Staff Columnist

anachronisms) into block parties. People rushed to stores to buy coffee, chocolate, electronics and toys. The pictures show people heady with excitement over their newly granted freedom.

But what does all this mean? The most accurate description is chaos. It's clear Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev supports the recent reforms. His refusal to send the Red Army into East Germany at the request of Honecker, and his endorsement of the destruction of the Berlin Wall should convince skeptics of his intentions, but it's impossible to know how much change will continue or how much change Soviet hardliners will tolerate. This makes the decision-making process in Washington a nightmare. White House officials complain that any time they think a situation begs action, the scenario changes. Every preconception about the political structure of Eastern Europe changes daily, leading some State Department officials to express a longing for the simpler, more stable "Cold War days."

Fortunately, those days seem to be fading, and the events of the last few days combined with reform in Poland, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union are altering the political map of Europe faster than anyone predicted.

George Bush and the State Department must not let this opportunity to aid in the democra-

tization of Eastern Europe and the possible reunification of Germany (whether *de facto* or official). The situation in Eastern Europe (possibly another soon-to-be anachronism) begs creative solutions, and the Bush administration could display needed leadership in this area, or it could take a more passive role. Will we trade more technology to Warsaw Pact countries? What impact will all the upheaval have on troops in Europe? Will the dominoes continue to fall in Eastern Europe? These questions must be answered in the upcoming summits between German leaders and between Bush and Gorbachev. Bush's caution (read inaction) in previous incidents has earned him the highest approval ratings in recent history, so a leadership plan is by no means impending.

The European Economic Community could also play a key role in easing the chaos in Europe. Gorbachev is betting that by encouraging trade between East and West, less emphasis will be placed on military spending, allowing him to revive Russia's ailing economy.

Nothing is unbelievable anymore. No textbooks on Eastern Europe can explain what has or what will happen. The best thing the international community can do is help the East Germans maintain order while encouraging productive change. Creativity balanced by rationality on the part of all actors could unify Europe to an extent no one would have imagined two weeks ago. It looks like Potsdamer Place is no Tiananmen Square.

Chris Landgraaf is a junior political science major from Atlanta, Ga.

Readers' Forum

UNC makes turning a profit top priority

To the editor:
This is concerning James Burroughs' editorial ("Breeding boredom: Students ignore education's purpose") which appeared Nov. 10. While it may very well be true that many college freshmen are ill-prepared and may have "inflexible ideas about career plans," these students, to a large extent, are products of our system. Certainly not all students can graduate from private high schools, which is about the only way they can be "better prepared" for college. I could argue about what it would take to raise the standards of our public schools all day long, but this is not really the point I want to make here.

Upon examination, any intelligent person will realize that this University is a firm, which does not charitably provide an education to each individual, but is in

business in order to maximize its profits like any other firm. For example, why must out-of-state students pay astronomical rates for tuition? Does it really cost UNC more to educate these students? I'm sure there is some ambiguous rule which attempts to justify these rates, but in economic terms the school is maximizing its profits by charging out-of-state students higher rates. So what's the significance?

The students at UNC (and every other university) might be thought of as victims of legal extortion. We pay tremendous amounts of money and give extraordinary effort and time in hopes that someday we can realize some profits of our own. Many of us don't even realize what our total costs are for attending UNC, but be assured the costs are high. The more classes that we are required to take, the longer we must pay the University. After all, it is that omniscient entity at UNC that decides which and how many

classes we must pass in order to make us "more intelligent."

Those of us who have grown tired of playing this game feel as though all of our opportunity costs spent to attend UNC would be wasted now if we didn't graduate. So, attending UNC becomes a kind of addiction that only graduation can cure. Students are constantly seeking "to broaden their own intellect," but many become frustrated when forced to do so only under the University's terms.

It is painfully apparent that UNC is much more concerned about pleasing its alumni than helping its students or bettering its faculty. UNC should be spending more on lowering the student-to-teacher ratio (by hiring more faculty) which will provide a better education for the students and ease the tension in the faculty, and it should be spending less on its relentless effort to chop down the Big Woods for the new Alumni Center. The University should be for the students, not the alumni.

For many of us, our reward after four or more years of college is nothing more than a piece of paper, which by itself can promise us nothing but 10 years of loan payments. I therefore urge Mr. Burroughs to consider other factors which may cause the effects he is concerned with and perhaps re-evaluate his opinion. Now, if you will excuse me, I'm going to the library to study for an exam.

DANIEL B. RUNDQUIST
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Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters to the editor, please follow these guidelines:
■ All letters must be dated and signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter.
■ All letters must be typed and double-spaced, for ease of editing.

SDI: A bad idea that's gotten worse

The Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, has long been the center of controversy, both in Congress and in the homes of politically-aware citizens. However, what SDI was originally, and what it has become now are two very different things, and many American people are not aware of the change.

In March 1983, President Reagan first proposed SDI, calling for \$26 billion to be spent on it in research alone. It must be understood that its mere proposal was a bad idea. It was not the first anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system to be put on the national agenda; in the late 1950s, the Nike-Zeus system was used by the United States, and later dropped in 1962 due to its ineffectiveness. In 1967, Sentinel came into existence, but proved inadequate against the huge number of ICBMs that the Soviet Union would launch in the event of a nuclear exchange. Then, in 1972, under President Nixon, came the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, or SALT. One of the agreements under SALT was the ABM Treaty, which allowed only two ABM systems in a nation. This was later reduced to only one, which could only be used to protect the capital. Although Washington has no ABM system at this time, SDI would be a blatant violation of this treaty, which has been in existence now for 17 years. Because of the fluctuations in U.S.-Soviet relations, violating such a long-standing treaty would be very risky at best.

Nathan Ballingrud Guest Writer

When it was first conceived, SDI was meant to form an umbrella over the United States, protecting the population from Soviet ICBMs. However, a "leakage" problem was soon discovered. When an ICBM is launched, it passes through four stages. The first, the boost stage, lasts for five minutes at the most. Here space-based satellites could strike the missiles with particle beams, which would deactivate the missile and the eight to 12 warheads it carries.

The next is the post-boost phase, which can last up to 10 minutes. Here the warheads separate from the launcher, and an equal number of decoys are released as well. A satellite could still stop them, but it would be much more difficult because of the sudden increase in targets. The third stage is the midcourse phase, which lasts approximately a half an hour. At this point, it is virtually too late. Here is where the leakage made itself known; the goal was to have the umbrella reach 95 percent effectiveness, but even then there would be up to 125 million deaths in the United States.

There would also be nuclear winter, which can be ensured by 100 nuclear explosions

(compare that number with the number of warheads the Soviet Union would be lobbing over here, which, including ICBMs, SLBMs and strategic bombers, would be roughly 10,300). Incidentally, scientists have discovered that a nuclear winter could trigger the next Ice Age, which is due to occur at any time now.

It was at this point that SDI changed. No longer is it meant to shield the American citizens from nuclear warheads. Rather, it has become a point-defense system. That is, its main objective is now to protect our own arsenal of nuclear weapons. This is, of course, to ensure the completely rational policy of mutual assured destruction, which would pretty much demolish civilization on at least two continents, probably three.

Obviously, SDI is riddled with problems. Its cost would exceed \$1 trillion; it would defy the ABM Treaty; and the satellites would be extremely vulnerable to attack. But even advocates of the initiative must find objection with its "evolution" to a point-defense system, on moral grounds if nothing else. The message is interesting, to say the least: let's spend mind-numbing amounts of money to save our bombs... after all, we can always make more people.

Nathan Ballingrud is a freshman Russian and East European area studies major from Asheville.