

The Daily Tar Heel

98th year of editorial freedom

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Taking a tradition

Banning pledge process has its consequences

If you have ever wondered what a black fraternity or sorority "pledge line" looked like, you should have looked last year.

Starting this fall, young black men and women dressed identically, marching in single file lines according to height will be absent from college campuses. The national black Greek organizations in order to curb hazing, banned "on line" activities and the traditional pledge process this summer.

Undoubtedly, the decision was in the best interest of pledges and the organizations responsible for them. It is no secret that some Greeks have taken pledging too far — to the point of broken bones, bruises and even death. Some organizations are facing major lawsuits, and many chapters are on probation for hazing. Yet it is understandable why some black Greeks are finding the new ruling a hard pill to swallow. Many found pledging, despite its flaws, a valuable and enriching experience.

One reason the pledge system will be missed is the tradition and heritage that will disappear along with it. Black sororities and fraternities have served as the backbone of the black community since the early 1900s. The respective founders formed their groups as a chance for blacks to gather and exchange ideas. The institutions assisted the black community socially, culturally and economically.

As the founders began to induct new members, a system evolved that created bonds between pledges and their big brothers and sisters. Many students who want to pledge have mothers, fathers, older brothers or sisters that have "crossed the sands." To be Greek in the same sense,

these hopefuls want to go "on line" also.

Without pledging, the bonding that pledges experience "on line" will be lost. There really is a reason for pledges to walk alike, shave their heads or refrain from certain activities. By doing so, line members must cooperate closely, a process that allows each person to discover strengths and weaknesses about himself or herself. There are no individuals; only the best interest of the group matters. Many Greeks feel this experience can apply later in their careers and lives in general.

The pledge process serves as the final test to prove who really wants to belong. It is the time when potential members learn the history and background of the organization they seek to join. Now that the pledge process is gone, when will the material be learned? Later or never? Black Greeks don't want to see their chapters fall into the hands of those who only desire to wear letters or gain popularity. They want members who know their organization's past and thus can take it into the future.

Wiping out the pledge process will have its consequences. This is not to say that the decision wasn't right. Becoming a part of a sisterhood or brotherhood shouldn't end in tragedy. As one Greek put it, if just one life is saved from the "no-pledge" ruling, then the change will be well worth it. And perhaps something even better can be found that will not only be safe, but create strong bonds between new members as well.

But for those who know the benefits of the pledge process and what it is really supposed to be about, it will be greatly missed. — Lynette Blair

Playing petty games

Strong leadership may spare congress

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into Student Congress, the political squabblers almost returned. Fortunately, leaders in congress and the executive branch kept the waters calm.

Last week, representatives Todd Wyatt (Dist. 4) and Jürgen Buchenau (Dist. 3), financial committee chairman, refused to grant Student Body President Bill Hildebolt's request for \$400 to rent Carmichael Auditorium for Monday night's student body meeting. Buchenau said congress discourages student organizations from applying for funds after they have already put on an event. Because Hildebolt scheduled the meeting before getting the money, the executive branch would simply have to do without; Buchenau feared granting the request would set a bad precedent.

If Wyatt and Buchenau were so concerned about bad precedents, they should have accepted the request to avoid setting an even worse one. Refusing to pay for a student body meeting contradicts what congress is all about — representing students. Congress members should promote such events in times of crisis, not turn them away. In this case, the two representatives seem to have put procedure before its

purpose. Ironically, procedure should have given executive branch the money.

Because there was little justification for the denial, Hildebolt and Heyd feared that Wyatt and Buchenau were playing political games, something congress members such as former Speaker Gene Davis and former Representative Jeffrey Beall did frequently last year. Rather than continuing such games, the four leaders met this week to resolve the issue instead of bringing it before last night's congress meeting.

Student government is lucky to have stronger leadership this year. Heyd said last night that he refuses to tolerate such game playing and that he wants to make congress more task and goal oriented. Student leaders should listen to these words of wisdom and warning.

Campus organizations, especially branches of student government, have little time for games. More than ever before student leaders must devote their time to serving student needs and fighting budget cuts instead of petty political squabbling. Unity is crucial to saving this University's existence. If last year's divisions in student government continue this fall, students only stand to lose. — Jessica Lanning

Budget cuts are taking their toll on UNC, until one of the world's most successful companies steps up and offers to bear the financial burden. There will be no more budget problems at...



JEFF MAXIM DTH

U.S. needs to keep an eye on judicial home front

The U.S. Supreme Court has been especially controversial during the last couple of years. From the constitutionality of abortion to flag burning, the Supreme Court has made its share of friends and foes. Many Americans are particularly concerned about the balance of the court, because its decisions have been increasingly conservative, a result of several Republican appointments.

I was disappointed when I found out Justice William Brennan was retiring from the court in late July. This meant President Bush would have the opportunity of nominating the fifth justice, who would more than likely be conservative. The Bush Court. Oh, woe is me and the country, I thought.

The nominee to replace Justice Brennan was announced days later. Did the name David H. Souter ring any of your collective bells? It didn't ring mine when I first heard of him, either. So what makes this guy, a virtual unknown, especially qualified for the country's highest court?

On a personal level, Souter is 50 years old and bears a striking resemblance to the cartoon character Mr. Magoo, especially when his hair is oil-slicked to the side. He's never been married but says he is not homosexual. He's a quiet man who seems to be a slave to his career, a career which is impressive.

Souter had been appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals just months before becoming a Supreme Court nominee. He started as a private lawyer in Concord, N.H., then worked his way up to attorney general and then the state's

Kimberley Maxwell Strictly Business

supreme court. He is a graduate of Harvard University, both for his undergraduate and law degrees, and was also a Rhodes scholar.

The Iraq-Kuwait conflict has pushed this Supreme Court nomination out of the headlines. Although there is a possibility of war in the Middle East, no doubt a few missiles and gunshots will be fired in the Senate during the Souter hearings scheduled to begin Thursday.

Souter's record on the more pressing issues of the Court are unknown, just like he is. Initial opposition to Souter was hollow because he has not written opinions about the major judicial controversies which would face him on the Supreme Court. But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to deduce that Souter's views are similar to those of President Bush.

Sen. Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has said the committee will ask specific questions about Souter's ideology in his confirmation hearings. This will directly challenge Bush's strategy of "pick a quiet guy and let him slide through the confirmation." And Souter, in anticipation for the

showdown on the Hill (Capitol Hill, not Chapel Hill), has been studying the most current and pertinent constitutional issues in private. He's also been watching videotapes of previous hearings, particularly those of Robert Bork, Reagan's highly unsuccessful nominee.

As the media concentrate on Saddam Hussein, many people seem to have forgotten the importance of Souter's nomination, and the fact that this decision will change the direction of the court.

I have no doubts that Roe vs. Wade (1973) will be reversed, limiting or even outlawing abortion. Other upcoming Supreme Court cases will involve desegregation (a currently desegregated school system wants to adopt a neighborhood attendance plan instead of busing students, which would probably cause desegregation) and women's rights (a company wants to exclude fertile women from jobs that could damage the health of a fetus). These cases directly challenge important, Constitutional questions that will affect the majority of Americans.

Perhaps the United States is headed for war in the Middle East — it's tough to tell. But one thing's for sure. Souter's confirmation hearings will be a "war" here at home, especially considering that the future of the Supreme Court will influence life in this country for years to come.

Kimberley Maxwell is a senior journalism and political science major from Marietta, Ga.

READERS' FORUM

Criticizing students only hinders change

Editors' note: This letter is a response to a Sept. 11 editorial titled "A missed opportunity."

To the editors: I wish the world were so simple, but one meeting alone cannot determine that students are in an "apathetic stupor," nor can it solve the budget crisis. At the meeting on Monday night, students, administrators and faculty presented many excellent suggestions as to what we can do and those who attended benefited first hand. But let those of us who went not waste our time in a frenzy of self-congratulation. Get off your soapbox and get moving! Condemning and alienating the student body is pointless. Most of the work is left to be done and we need everyone's help to do it. Everyone should write to their legislators, register to vote and vote in November. Now is the real test of apathy.

STEPHANIE VON ISENBURG
Senior
Art History

Writer fails to prove point against Helms

To the editors: As I was reading through The Daily Tar Heel today, I noticed an editorial entitled, "Helms ignores purpose of art by targeting NEA" (Sept. 12). As a person who is growing weary of the constant negative coverage this and many other newspapers are giving Sen. Helms, I felt that it was my duty to respond to this article with a different perspective on the issue.

Although I do not see the connection that Madison makes between Spanish and Italian museums that tastefully, not graphically, display the human body, Sen. Helms is not against art. He is against the taxpayers spending hard-earned money to finance graphic images of homosexual behavior. This is hardly art; this is something off the smut rack at the local convenience store. I have no problem with a person viewing such material; it is their right under the Constitution to express themselves in any legal way they see fit.

However, there are other people who do not agree with the government spending money on the advancement of the arts through such artists as Robert Mapplethorpe.

There is also another point that Madison made to which I see no connection. That is concerning the issue of censorship of music. His attempt to parallel Hank Williams Jr., who sings of love and how he is proud of his southern heritage, and such choice groups as 2 Live Crew, who sing about graphic sexual relations with women and how sexually stimulated they are feeling, was unsuccessful. If this was made to be an effective point for open-mindedness, then it was a very futile one. Freedom of expression is one thing, but freedom of degradation is something that cannot be allowed if this country is going to uphold any of the morality that our forefathers believed in and fought for.

CULLEY CARSON
Freshman
Political Science

Charlotte residents boast more than crime

Editors' note: This letter is in response to a Sept. 12 editorial "Bigger isn't always better."

I am writing this letter to thank Tim Little for his glowing review of the city of Charlotte. Once again, it seems as if there are always people unhappy with Charlotte's success. As a resident of Charlotte, I would like to point out some other areas besides population for which the residents of Charlotte are justifiably proud:

1. Schools — The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system is one of the largest in the state. While Little is quick to point out the acts of violence that Charlotte's youth are prone to, they are generally exceptions to the rule. Our school board continuously has discipline as one of its highest priorities. While our schools are relatively very safe, can the same be said for urban schools in cities such as Atlanta or New York?

Many prominent Charlotteans got their start in the school board, i.e. Dr. Jay Robinson, who left as superintendent to become vice president of public affairs for the

UNC system. Charlotte also boasts a fine collegiate atmosphere with UNC-C serving as the centerpiece for University Research Park. UNC-C is quickly becoming a quality academic as well as research institution.

2. Cultural — Charlotte, because of its size, is able to attract many varied cultural outlets. The Mint Museum of Art holds national touring exhibitions on a regular basis. Uptown Charlotte currently offers Spirit Square, an arts-center type facility, and will soon be able to host events in a new arts center facility to be built by the city. The Charlotte Coliseum holds concerts regularly and for those with more acquired tastes, there is always the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. We even acquired a drum and bugle corps this summer.

3. Medical — With recent additions to both Presbyterian Hospital and Carolinas Medical Center, Charlotte now has the finest medical care available in the state, excluding of course UNC Hospitals and Duke. We have the busiest ER and trauma center in the state, surpassing even Duke Medical Center. This summer, Charlotte received national headlines for the first fetal heart transplant in the region. In the next decade, Charlotte will be able to hold its own with such renowned hospitals as Duke, the Mayo Clinic and others.

4. Sports — The ACC Men's Basketball tournament for the next three years. NCAA Southeast Regionals this year. NCAA Final Four action in 1994. The Charlotte Barons minor league football team. NASCAR racing at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. Charlotte Heat team tennis. UNC-C basketball. The Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions (which North Carolina hosts this year). The Charlotte Hornets NBA franchise. And, lest I forget, the possibility of professional football in our brand-new uptown stadium as well as the possibility of World Cup soccer. All of this is possible because of Charlotte's growth and population.

So, Mr. Little, you see that there is more to Charlotte than just numbers and massive crime statistics. Yes, we did have a policeman get shot in the line of duty this past summer. What you fail to realize is that police fatalities are

quite rare in our city as are any injuries relating to the job. Compare our crime statistics concerning police with those of cities such as New York or Chicago and you will see quite a difference.

Just as in any other urban environment, crime is but one of a number of problems. Massive transportation difficulties, a heavy influx of drugs and declining educational scores are all problems that Charlotte faces. But compare that with the pluses mentioned above, and you will see just a few of the reasons why so many people have decided to make Charlotte their home. Charlotte has hung together like a small town so that we now have a nice blend of big-city feel with small-town hominess.

Thank you for your congratulations, Mr. Little. Charlotte has come a long way. You should be happy for our success instead of focusing on a few bad apples. After all, the Queen City's success and growth translate into added success, growth and improved image for North and South Carolina and that is something everyone can be proud of.

MICHAEL TYE
Senior
Psychology

Pit preachers serve a purpose on campus

To the editors: I am more than a little tired of the incessant "pit preacher" bashing that is printed on this page. What is the problem here?

For the most part, pit preachers are espousing their beliefs in a confident manner in front of a usually apathetic (and sometimes hostile) crowd. We should admire their courage and perseverance.

More basically, they do something. They shake up the status quo and remind us that some people are still alive and showing some emotion. To borrow from Kerouac: We have enough people who "yawn and some common-place things"; we could do with more who "burn, burn, burn, ..."

MICHAEL SHERMAN
Graduate
Statistics

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