

Commitment to consortium called for

The spring semester is practically upon us and an increasing number of students here will be taking classes at other colleges. This means that they will be part of the consortium, a word most of us cannot pronounce, much less understand.

The glories of the consortium have long been drilled into our heads, though little of that effort has been put into the program itself. What has resulted is a program whose benefits exist only in the pages of school catalogues and the minds of administrators who have never had to experience the consortium.

Admittedly, there are advantages to the program. The participant gets a chance to attend a predominantly white university, or a predominantly Black university, a small campus or a large campus and hundreds of other such contrasts. Of course, this isn't an advantage to the student who is satisfied just going to Bennett. Then there is the advantage of attending a co-ed school. But then, if the student had wanted this advantage, she would have chosen another school to begin with.

There are some advantages that few students can refuse. For instance, the student who takes classes at A&T will undoubtedly lose a few pounds by walking to class daily. (The nearest classrooms are 15 minutes away.) The most convincing advantages, of course, are those given to the college.

One such advantage is that while Bennett students pay \$2,300 for 16 hours tuition, many don't take all 16 hours at Bennett. This means that the average student pays the college \$143.75 per semester hour even though she may be taking a substantial number of semester hours at a less expensive consortium school.

Bennett accepts the money without having to work for it. Pilot students and students who are on academic probation are worse off since they pay approximately \$191.66 per semester hour. The average student who takes six hours at a consortium school, then, is giving Bennett \$862.50 that the school does not earn except to print the course and grade on that student's transcript.

Another advantage—which could be profitably developed next year—deals with the car situation. As more students attend consortium schools, it stands to reason that more students want cars on campus. Now that the new dean of student affairs has generously, yet suspiciously, paved the way for all students to have cars on campus, next year would be the perfect time to start charging these students higher prices to keep their cars. This fee, combined with the tuition, would make for some well-stuffed Christmas stockings around Bennett.

The disadvantages of the consortium, on the other hand, aren't quite as interesting as the advantages. They can be best illustrated through Betty Bennett, a senior here. Betty's pattern calls for courses which carry tags reading "Offered in alternate years," "Offered on demand," and "Offered first semester only." Some are no longer offered at all, but no courses have been added to replace them. (She is not to be confused with Janice Junior who takes courses at consortium schools because she has failed them here or because she wants to avoid a hard instructor.)

Betty takes six hours at UNC-G. One class is from 9:30 until 10:45; the other is from 12:15 until 1:30. Each Tuesday and Thursday, Betty must be waiting behind the administration building promptly at 8:12 a.m. (She could've caught the bus at 9:12, but then she wouldn't get to school until 9:32 and it takes her 10 minutes to get to class.) Therefore, she arrives at UNC-G at 8:32, but rides around again and gets off at 9:08 to wait for her 9:30 class. After sitting in class, Betty cannot return to Bennett for lunch because she wouldn't be able to attend

her second class. Later, she can't catch a bus back to Bennett until 2:08, so she waits for 28 minutes.

Recently, Betty has been late for class because the bus has abandoned its schedule to take earlier students to A&T. This means that Betty must pay a city bus (or a friend) to go to UNC-G and she must also pay for her lunch. On a weekly basis, the lunches alone take quite a chunk out of Betty's money—money she might have had if she had not had to pay Bennett that \$862.50 for six hours at UNC-G as well as pay the school \$1,300 for room and board when she misses at least two lunches a week because of their inadequacies.

Betty is a hypothetical student, but her problems are real and prevalent. In addition to missing buses and lunches, a consortium student misses out on the atmosphere. At Bennett, she is among "sisters" but at UNC-G, she is among strangers, the new kid on the block, so to speak.

The consortium student does not have the advantage of randomly missing classes, though she may be attending a school with non-compulsory attendance. If she misses a class at another school, chances are that there is no one she can call to get the assignment. At Bennett, she could go across the hall or at the very least, across the campus, but at another school, she must sacrifice 20 cents to call a fellow student or the instructor. Such a sum is inconsequential to an administrator, but it makes a big difference to a Belle when Friday's fish dinner is served.

Since the consortium bus is not supposed to go to A&T, the student who takes courses there must walk to class like the mailman—through sleet, snow, rain and sunshine. This can be stimulating sometimes but it can be disturbing when the student walks 20 minutes in the rain only to find that her class has been canceled and she must walk the 20 minutes back to campus. It is also frustrating to the student who waits in the snow for the consortium bus, gets to school only to find that her class has been canceled. This student may not be able to return to campus if she has another off-campus class following the canceled one.

Then there is the added dilemma of schedule differences. A student may have Fall Break at A&T but Bennett classes will not be canceled.

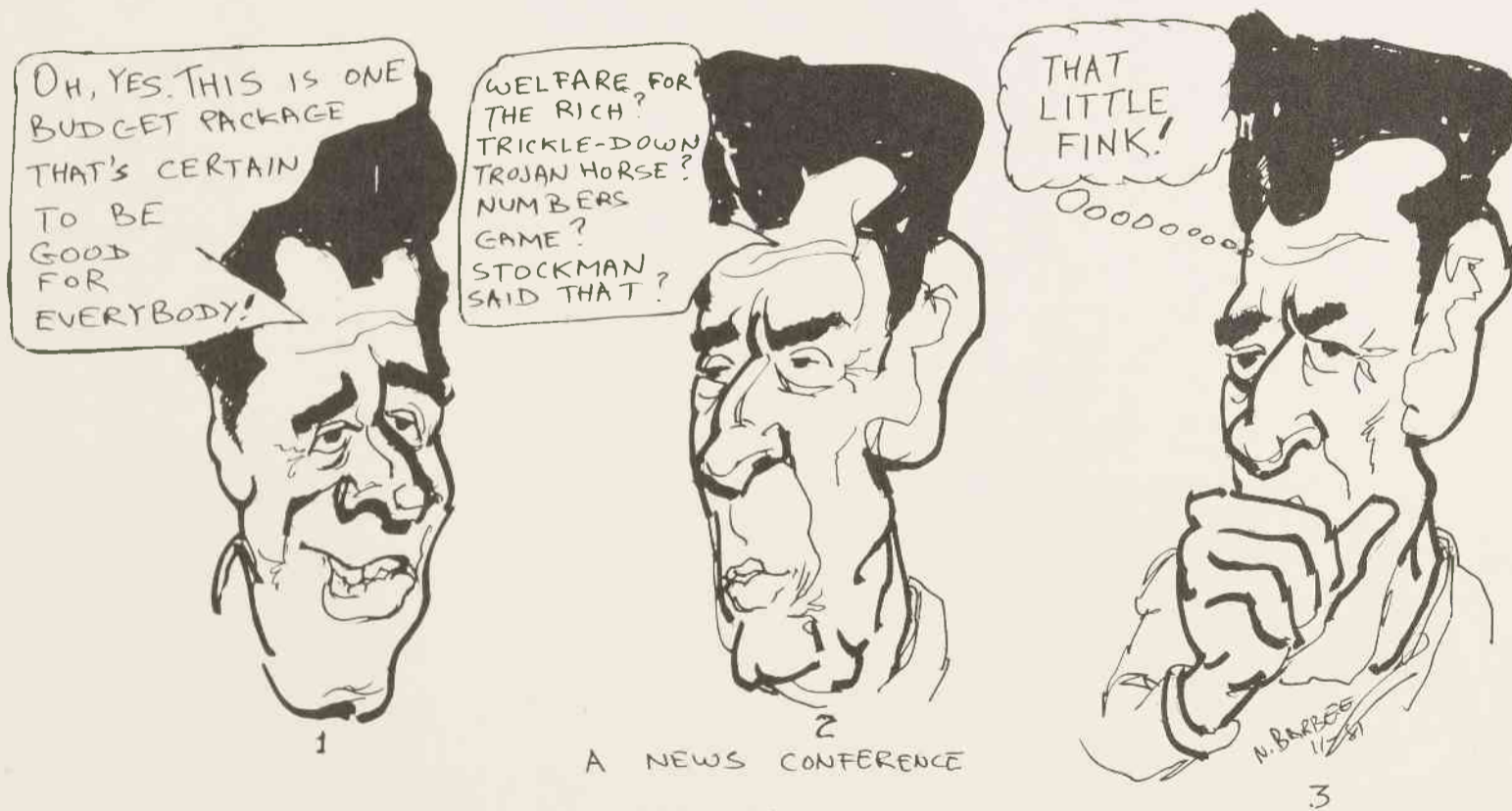
The administration's defense is, naturally, that these are minor obstacles which a mature college student can readily overcome or tolerate. Admittedly, Bennett students have constantly had to tolerate, even ignore, difficult and absurd problems on their own campus.

But that is not the point. The problem is that Bennett is taking advantage of a situation while not putting anything into it. Consortia can be healthy and positive if they are handled well. One alternative could be for Bennett to provide its own transportation for Belles who take courses elsewhere. The school could use the extra tuition these students pay to finance it. Moreover, they could charge students only for the hours they take at this school and charge the consortium school's price for the consortium courses. Students should not have to pay for a school's shortcomings.

More consideration should be given to students who take courses at A&T. They should at least be given transportation. Bennett could even arrange with the campus bookstore to allow its students to rent books (as A&T students do).

As the number of students who participate in the consortium increases, so should Bennett's involvement. Since the college has committed a large number of its students to the consortium by the infrequency and lack of its course offerings, it should also make a firm commitment to improving the system.

Myra Jewel George



A NEWS CONFERENCE

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Letters to the editor:

Baldwin sends regrets

To the Editor:

I deeply regret my inability to be present at Bennett College on the 2nd and 3rd of November. Circumstances beyond my control prevented me from doing so and I am very sorry if this has caused you a great deal of inconvenience. I will be quite willing to make up for it and if you are interested, please get in touch.

Please convey to the President of the college and to the Faculty and students my sincere regrets.

Yours sincerely,
James Baldwin

To the Editor:

America is up to her old tricks again. The seed has been planted that Black youths no longer have a need for higher education.

Black students must determine who is for real. We must look at what he or she does, rather than how much noise they make. As a group, we need all the Black people that we can beg, borrow, or steal who are interested in and able to hold executive and leadership positions among Blacks and in racially mixed settings.

The tipping of the iceberg was the 1960's. Black people fought

hard together and sacrificed much to bring about social, political and economic gains for Black youths. The horizons for Black youths expanded, and as new opportunities arose in the professional, political, and in the skilled labor force, Blacks took advantage of them. Blacks begin to compete for a piece of America and their new roles posed a threat to those whose position was not as secure as they once thought.

In 1981, the greatest irony is that for all the economic and political progress we have made, we (See pg. 3)