

Perspectives

Empower student government or dissolve it



Brian Castle
Editor-in-Chief

As a member of *The Banner* editorial board for the last three semesters, I have watched the workings of our Student Government Association with a keen interest in holding our elected representatives accountable for the way in which they govern student life at UNCA.

During my time as managing editor last semester and now as editor-in-chief, I have driven our editorial policy to criticize the SGA and its members for what I have believed to be their failure to properly serve the student body. I had hoped that criticizing such projects as the law painting on University Heights would spur the various senators and administrators to achieve higher goals for the students, such as improved services, security measures, and entertainment options.

I was wrong. In criticizing the Student Government Association and its members for what I perceived as their inaction and ineptness in dealing with student issues, I have alienated friends and fellow students. When I took the job of editor-in-chief, I knew that I would more than likely make more enemies than

friends. But I now believe that much of my criticism of our student government was unfair.

These criticisms, in the form of editorials written with fellow members of my editorial board, have been unfair because our student government is not a case of bad people not utilizing a good system. Quite simply, it's a case of good people like current President Adrian Tatum, Senator Doug Jones (in spite of his anti-*Banner* bills last semester), and newly-elected President Alphonso Donaldson; these are people who want to make a difference and make changes for the betterment of student life at UNCA, but they are trapped in the confines of a bad system that gives them no real power to affect these changes.

In talking to both friends and acquaintances who are involved in student government on our fair campus, I have learned that the power of the SGA has eroded through the years. I have learned that the power of the SGA is currently at its weakest point in school history, as its members have what they describe, in all of its feebleness,

as "the power of suggestion."

Suggestion? I have been assured by at least one person in the student government that the administration does listen to their concerns. But all too often, listen is all that the administration does. And the reason that we have a student government, in an ideal world but not in the reality of life at UNCA, is to take action. Take, for example, the issue of voice mail on campus.

Bookstore Manager Mike Small is charged with providing services to students in the field of communications. In his dealings with AT&T, Small has secured voice mail service to be paid for by a fund generated by resident students' long distance charges. Those who know Mike Small tell me that he is "one of the good guys" on campus, a genuinely nice person who tries to accommodate student needs.

Before Small and the administration implemented the voice mail system, they took a campus-wide survey to find out whether or not students wanted voice mail at all. Their survey was problematic in that it included the opinions of commuter students, who, by virtue of the fact that they don't live on campus, would neither be paying for the system via their long distance calls nor using the system as would resident students. I am a commuter student, and I myself was hounded for days in front of Zagar Hall to vote on voice mail. I remember thinking, why the hell should they care what I think about something that is geared toward resident students?

Evidently, President-elect

Donaldson was thinking the same thing, because he set out to discover how the students who would be paying for voice mail and who would be most affected by it felt about its possible implementation. In his door-to-door survey of the residence halls, then-Senator Donaldson uncovered an overwhelming opposition to voice mail among the resident student population, which he then related to the student government.

In its current state of grand impotence, the SGA could merely suggest that we not spend residential student money on voice mail. The

SGA had, and still doesn't have, any formal power to block a measure that did not, in light of Donaldson's survey, serve the best interests of the students at UNCA. In short, no power equaled no action on behalf of the students, and we now have unwanted voice mail on campus. Imagine what the result would have been had the SGA

power, the SGA should dissolve itself and its leaders join with campus activists in mass protest against the oppressive policy of the administration.

President-elect Donaldson and the rest of the newly-elected SGA should end the farce that has been student government for as long as any of us can remember. We elect them to take action on our behalf to solve the problems that face us, problems like dark, rape-friendly parking lots. We don't elect them to serve as our pep club, to paint paw prints on University Heights to build school spirit (not that spirit paw prints are a bad thing in and of themselves, we should just have that and not have student body officers bragging about their accomplishments being blue paint on a road).

Some might suggest that UNCA students don't really care whether or not they have a powerful student government, and they may cite the 10 percent turnout for the pre-spring break elections. I refute that suggestion by citing the fact that those who voted were not voting for people running for positions in the UNCA Student Government Association. They were voting for new leaders for the UNCA School Spirit Association. I maintain that if the SGA had real power, you would see a lot more people caring about student government in a positive way.

President-elect Donaldson, the choice is yours: continue the bad joke that is SGA, or empower yourself to truly lead the people whom you are charged to serve.

We all know from history that those who hold power are usually reluctant about giving up any part of their power.

Letters to the Editor

Brave Horvath an example for us all

Dear Editor,
Lord knows I've felt more hip to the facts since reading Stephan Horvath's letter in the March 12 issue.

A poorly-informed outsider, I could not have suspected that insiders were so well-acquainted with the complexities of life in Washington, D.C. "Wow, 'Zippergate.'" Those of us with access to news coverage of lesser caliber haven't heard that petty buzzword before. I am grateful for Mr. Horvath's willingness to get us in on some Beltway-insider secrets, and I applaud his determination to "live by a higher standard."

However, I must question Mr. Horvath's wisdom in revealing that he has "Top Secret clearance." The Cold War may be over, but indiscretion in matters of national security still has no place in our capitol. More revelatory letters to *The Banner* might bring Mr. Horvath to the not-altogether-undue attention of the C.I.A., underground-Communist-super-spy organizations, or any number of rogue agents of international espionage. The amoral,

unscrupulous world of cloak-and-dagger intrigue is an unforgiving one, or so I hear. Caution is warranted, as Mr. Horvath could one day be ambushed, kidnapped, beaten, questioned, and beaten some more, all while emphatically denying that he knows anything about anything.

Still, I commend Mr. Horvath on his courage and humility in the face of danger. Verily, he stands guard at the gates of the citadel of American democracy.

Jack Walsh
Senior, mass communication

CBTV is ready for its close-up

Dear Editor,

There is something new in the air, in Western N.C., and it is Community Broadcasted Television.

CBTV is not your everyday TV station.

We the founding board members (Herschel D. Williams, CEO; Neal B. Kelly, President of Special Projects and Production; Albert W. Di Martino, Director of News and Programming) of CBTV have brought into inception, here in

Western N.C., the first amateur community television station.

It is CBTV's mission to offer "We the People" the access to the airwaves that are freely and constitutionally ours.

CBTV's objective is to facilitate production of TV programming to the diverse Western N.C. community, without constraint of race, class, gender, or age, so as to promote communication, understanding, and community where there is a void at present.

CBTV looks to offer its facilities to all who wish to enhance the educational, cultural, economic, and political community of Western N.C. with their passion of talent and beliefs.

All are welcome to express themselves to the fullest extent of the First Amendment and the FCC.

Where accessibility to the people's airwaves in the past was only open to those of power and wealth.

We at CBTV look to offer to all in the Western North Carolina community an opportunity to display their feelings.

To finally have an open forum that can freely inform, educate, entertain, and build a community for all of our citizens and not just the big fish of the small pond that Asheville, is CBTV's raison d'être.

For more information about

CBTV, contact me at 259-7559.

Al Di Martino
Senior, sociology

Shape up or tune out

Dear Editor,

What is the point of this stupid article ("Asheville radio fails its listeners, students say," Oct. 9, 1997)? Yes, stupid. The students at UNCA don't know how lucky they have it. First off, I am at Western Carolina University, in Cullowhee, N.C. We don't get Asheville stations, and we sure as heck don't get Charlotte stations. All we get is Rap and Top 40 from the campus radio station.

I see no reason for a campus like UNCA that receives at least three stations to complain. It's stupid. You don't have it hard. Remind students there that they have a choice, turn up the volume, or turn on the CD player.

Stop complaining. Come down here, and see how lucky you have it. Feel free to print this letter and submit it. Stop complaining.

Kyle Kissmann
WCU student

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The Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, content and length and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste, and timeliness.

Letters should be typed, double-spaced, and should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to *The Banner*, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville NC 28804.

The deadline for display ads and the FYI calendar is on Friday at noon. The deadline for classified ads is at noon on Tuesday.

Letters to the editor may be submitted to *The Banner* at One University Heights, 208A Carmichael Hall, Asheville, NC 28804, e-mailed to banner@unca.edu, or submitted via The Banner Online. Letters should be typed, single-spaced, and limited to 300 words or less. Submissions may be edited for space and content. Letters to the editor must be signed and include the author's classification and major or other relationship to UNCA.