

Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

Same old song

Pale skin

Before we had bills to pay and jobs to get on time, summer was a time of year for being lazy and not feeling guilty about it. There was nothing to really do except have fun. Now that school doesn't always stop to take a summer vacation, those of us who have to attend summer school would like to make it as short an experience as possible.

Up until this summer, the three-week term made it possible for students to take classes they couldn't fit into their schedules during the regular school year, yet still be able to have some vacation time. This will change as of the summer of 1999, when the three-week term will disappear and five and seven-week terms will magically appear in its place.

Philip Weast, the assistant vice chancellor for enrollment services, said that "one of the things I intend to do is get a better handle on what the students need." Yet, by taking away the three-week term, the administration is only causing history to repeat itself by limiting the number of courses available to students. As usual, the administration is claiming to look out for the students, yet this move appears to be more about the bottom line than student concerns.

If consistency were the measure of success, then the administration would have 4.0 at all times when it comes to only halfway fulfilling its obligation of providing students with the courses they need.

Sure, go ahead and try to convince us that a seven-week term during summer beats a three-week one, that we'd rather spend our time engrossed in books than tanning at the beach, and that special topics courses are more attractive than the general education requirement courses we need to graduate. We're thankful that our liberal arts education has helped us hone our critical thinking skills, because we can see straight through this one. Looks like Plato paid off after all.

Red alert

Erase all doubt in your pretty little heads that the UNCA administration is not working in your best interests. A proposal may soon be submitted concerning installation of surveillance equipment in some campus buildings. This plan of action, while it seems to infringe on students' privacy, would be best for students' safety, according to some members of the administration.

"There is an increasing concern for the safety and security of dormitory students on the university campus," said Nancy Williams, assistant director of housing and residence life. This threat to student safety has reared its ugly head in the form of vandalized safety equipment, something that puts all of us in danger.

Crime is the oldest excuse for governing bodies to impose restrictions on personal liberty. At what point do they go beyond using the cameras to watch vandalism and start watching for guest violations? In an age where privacy is at a premium, it seems almost inhumane to watch students in their own dorms. We are being reassured by the administration by being told that this has been done on other campuses. This line may have sold us on Division I athletics, but it needs to stop there.

The UNCA administration begs for its own identity within the university system, and then insists on solving problems the same way everyone else does. It seems unfair to strip all students of their rights simply because a few of them don't know how to behave. However, this is the approach the university normally takes. Is the administration not creative enough to develop individual solutions or just too lazy?

It is comforting to know that not all university officials are in favor of surveillance equipment at UNCA, a campus that has been consistently ranked in publications as one of the safest in North Carolina. Perhaps the administration should make sure the threat to students' safety is a real one before making the threat to their privacy a reality.

Flushing the fish

It's hard not to look at UNCA's glorified trickle next to Zageir and not grin in amusement. While the landscaping crew's efforts at making this wonder of UNCA as beautiful as possible are appreciated, it's doubtful that it will be pulling in tourist dollars anytime soon. Although UNCA was trying for the picture-perfect nature scene, it has ended up with little more than an expensive drainage ditch.

The pollution of the stream garden is just one more sacrifice we need to make because of Asheville's water shortage. Yet it seems rather obvious that street runoff would be a main component in a stream built next to a road. The project has cost around \$3,000, funded by donations. This money would have served us better if donated for other, more beneficial projects, such as building more parking spaces.

It's no surprise that the administration has put image before everything else when it comes to the Zageir stream garden. While the landscaping crew decides what kind of mulch to use around the stream, it might do the administration good to reassess the value of such a venture in the wake of financial problems elsewhere within the university.

Watching the global economy



Christian Nimsch

columnist

"In the end, everything turns out just fine." This phrase accompanies optimists at all times and gives so many of us reason to hope.

In many instances, this blithe hope seems to find justification only in the past, but also in the present.

Low inflation and unemployment rates, in addition to the budget surplus, almost lead us to believe that paradise has come. It seems to become quite hard lately to come up with convincing arguments that things might take a turn towards the worse.

After all, the unsustainable stock market is doing well in sustaining against the odds, and the year 2000 problem seems to be less problematic as we approach the Jan. 1 deadline.

Moreover, who would have thought that there is life after the impeachment trial? Now the media not only introduces some rather interesting issues on the domestic level, but also seems to have rediscovered the world beyond the shores of America.

On the domestic level, the Republicans continue to shoot themselves in the foot and the battle over the 2000 presidency and other public offices begins to spice up a little. On the international scene, Slobodan Milosovic tries to convince the rest of the world that Madeline Albright does not know anything about "Balkan politics"

anyway, and new studies on the "global economy" are the focus of attention.

Although it almost seemed as if the world had weathered the Asian currency crisis and everything went back to a comfortable equilibrium, more and more voices raise new

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ghosts of gloom and doom. Believe it or not, now it is deflation that threatens the well-being of the economies around the world.

To many of us, such arguments come as a surprise.

How can it be that falling prices can possibly be dangerous to our well-being? After all, who could possibly complain about paying

less compared to more?

Well, the argument can be made that the current global situation does not look all that different from the early 1930s. So the question for the day is: Are we on the verge of a global depression? The answers to this intriguing question are as diverse as the solutions to counteract this situation. It would go too far to go into too much depth about economic and political arguments about what could be done.

One interesting thing is that the current discussion on how to distribute the budget surplus bears very real implications on the possible impact on not only the U.S. economy, but the global economy as well.

After all, one should not forget that the well-being of the U.S. economy is crucial to the global economy.

Among the most hotly-debated ideas on how to spend the surplus is, the Republican-sponsored plan of an across-the-board tax cut and the idea of "saving" social security by the Democrats.

At this point, I have to blithely admit that, despite the "need" of stable social security, the Republican-proposed tax cut can bring about the effect of increased stability in the domestic economy.

Such stability could come about as Americans spend part of their saved taxes on consumption, and thus prices for certain consumer goods might rise. (Don't ask how that works. Just trust me on this one.) In such an event, the ghost of deflation might not even appear. Even in the event that deflation occurs despite lower taxes and/or some other

policies, one still needs to keep in mind that sometimes deflation occurs simply for the fact that productivity is on the rise, causing prices to fall.

Under such conditions, deflation is regarded as good and would not put the economy in much jeopardy.

Despite the fact that government policies do usually not interfere with the economy as much or as fast as commonly hold, the effect of lower taxes is real and somewhat predictable.

At this point, it is important to mention, as well, that too large tax cuts (if there is such a thing) can cause inflation beyond what many economists would like to see.

This, of course, raises the question about the ability of government to determine how much economic intervention is healthy.

While, on the one hand, government policies can be very useful, the very same set of policies can be harmful as well. It is almost impossible to determine the "right" amount of intervention.

How does this apply to the state of the global economy and the distribution of the predicted budget surplus?

As the governor of Minnesota, Jesse Ventura, puts it, "I don't deal in predictions. If I would believe in predictions, I would not be governor."

The lesson learned is that, despite predictions, the actual outcome can look very different indeed.

This, of course, brings us right back to the question of are we really on the verge of a global depression. As usual, opinions differ.

While many point to the ghosts of gloom and doom and predict the end of prosperity, others predict that everything will be just fine.

Whom do we believe? Well, on the one hand, we could be pessimists and adjust our actions to meet our rather negative expectations. On the other hand, we could be optimists and go by the hope that everything will turn out to be just fine.

Letter to the Editor

A different view of humanities

Dear Editor,

I don't think anyone would consider me an academic stick-in-the-mud; I'm always trying new things and veering off in directions suggested by the discoveries or anxieties of my students.

So I had to take some time to analyze my extreme reaction to *The Banner* article on the new demand for "inclusiveness" in the humanities curriculum.

My problem with it, at least as expressed publicly, has several levels. The first is that it is not a call for inclusiveness at all, but for a form of cultural segregation.

If you take one from column A, then you are required to take one from column B, whether or not those selections can be prepared in the same kitchen or are appropriate for the same meal.

To say, as one person quoted did, that Plato is relevant only to those persons with a "Western" background (though in actual fact an African-American probably has closer ties to the Attic Greeks than a Celt like me) is to misunderstand the operations of civilization, and an indication that the humanities course has not failed in terms of "inclusiveness," but in terms of explaining what it is, what civilization is, how the two things work and how they do not.

I wouldn't teach Plato (for instance) if I didn't know that his effect is universal, that every African-American student as well as every white student on this campus is, in actual fact, hugely and permanently indebted to him, and will not be a full person without understanding why. I have never heard a persuasive argument that there are equivalent figures from the East or South who really have had an effect, however much we might wish they had. Their time comes.

This call for "inclusiveness" requires the canonization of what we wish rather than what is.

Most of this above argument refers to Humanities 124. There is far more to do with this issue in 324 and 414, and I would be content to see changes there.

The fact is that different things happen at different times in different places. If we want a point-to-point parity between the West and the East and the South, we will have to falsify. This is no one's fault.

Greece had it's Heroic Age in one century, India in another, Ireland in another, Benin in another, and they were all equally heroic, but we must admit they were not, except in the spiritual sense, simultaneous.

That the first civilizations are "western"—though Egypt, Sumer, even Greece are Western only because we built ourselves upon them, not because they belonged to some sort of exclusive club—is not

anybody's fault. Geography, climate, who knows?

To assume that there were mute voices in antiquity that are deliberately being silenced by the humanities involves us in embarrassments such as Nubia, which was, despite our valiant deceptions, merely a backwater of Egypt.

It's embarrassing scholarship and teaching in bad faith to allow desire, however heartfelt, to decide the curriculum.

I have developed a love for Celtic civilization from my frequent visits to Ireland, which I imagine is parallel to the Mullens' admiration for African civilization. I would not, however, care to make much of a case for the inclusion of Ireland in every discussion, because it simply does not belong. It's my thing, not civilization's thing.

Different in time is not difference in quality. Some people and civilizations have illustrious pasts. Others have gleaming futures. If I had the one, I think I could find comfort for not having quite so much of the other.

There's no point in inventing female Renaissance sculptors or African Homers if such things approach in due time. Some of us have pasts; some of us have futures.

I would be adamantly opposed to removing anything currently in the humanities curriculum, because honest people have worked long and hard to insure everything there belongs.

I would approve (and would help

with) a fifth humanities course (elective or required, perhaps an alternative choice for one of the others) called, perhaps, "Alternative Versions of Civilization." I would embrace the information thus provided joyfully, and with a clean, scholarly conscience.

And, I think we should be more precise in our definition of civilization, which was a series of choices and accidents, not always the best, which leads down to us, all of us who live in America, irrespective of where our ancestors came from.

Is an African-American student really part of African civilization, except by the longing for it to be so? Stephen Jay Gould points out in "Wonderful Life" that we err if we think of evolution as the survival of the fittest, as some inevitable march toward perfection.

At best it was a series of catastrophes and unfair circumstances out of which we creatures made the best we could. It is the same with civilization.

It would be nice if there were intelligent dinosaurs or gentle Neanderthals surviving in the world, but there aren't. It would be nice if civilization had been put together the way we would like, but it wasn't.

I think we should keep looking at what it was, always admitting that what might have been could have been better, and may yet be. Some of our stories are yet to come.

David Hopes
Professor, literature