

**EDITORIAL**

# A falling star?

The size of ECSU's freshman class has been declining each year since 1992, which means that the University is not attracting the number of students necessary to meet its budgeted level. This is a serious problem that needs addressing, and we commend ECSU's interim chancellor, Dr. Mickey Burnim, for not only focusing the University's attention on that fact, but also declaring his intention to reverse the trend.

ECSU's decline in student enrollment stems from a series of difficulties regarding recruitment, retention, a negative image of the University played up in the media, academic inadequacies, and, in some cases, student dissatisfaction with their experiences at ECSU.

The problem appears to be compounded by ECSU's failure to effectively market the Incentive Scholarship program. Last year, for example, not all of the scholarships allotted to ECSU were even used. And that is not the first year this has happened.

If the University is to grow and prosper, this valuable program needs to be more effectively promoted and implemented.

ECSU also needs to focus more effort on improving academic programs. In some cases students are transferring to schools where their major programs are accredited. Other students feel they are not receiving the quality of education they came here for. Dr. Burnim has stated that the quality of ECSU's academic programs will be reviewed. We hope this review will culminate in positive changes. Improving our academic programs will attract more students while retaining those who are already here.

The negative press coverage ECSU has received recently has damaged the reputation of the University, thereby having a negative effect on recruitment. As students, we are the product of what this institution has to offer. To counter a negative image of the school among some individuals we need to take a more aggressive role in marketing the University, our academic programs and campus activities.

We need to let the world know that ECSU is indeed a "rising star" and this can be done through more aggressive promotion of the University by faculty, staff, and students. More press releases about our many positive programs and unique features will also help. Eastern North Carolina newspapers should be blanketed with positive stories about ECSU.

We urge everyone to take part in this responsibility to ensure that our University is able to secure the funds necessary to provide a quality education.

As students we have a responsibility to ourselves and our education. We must take our education beyond the classroom. We will get out of this institution exactly what we put into it.

Let's set the example for what a true Viking should be.

## THE COMPASS

THE COMPASS is published by Elizabeth City State University students under the direction of the Department of Language, Literature and Communication, Dr. Linda Florence Callahan, Chairperson, and Mr. Stephen March, faculty advisor.

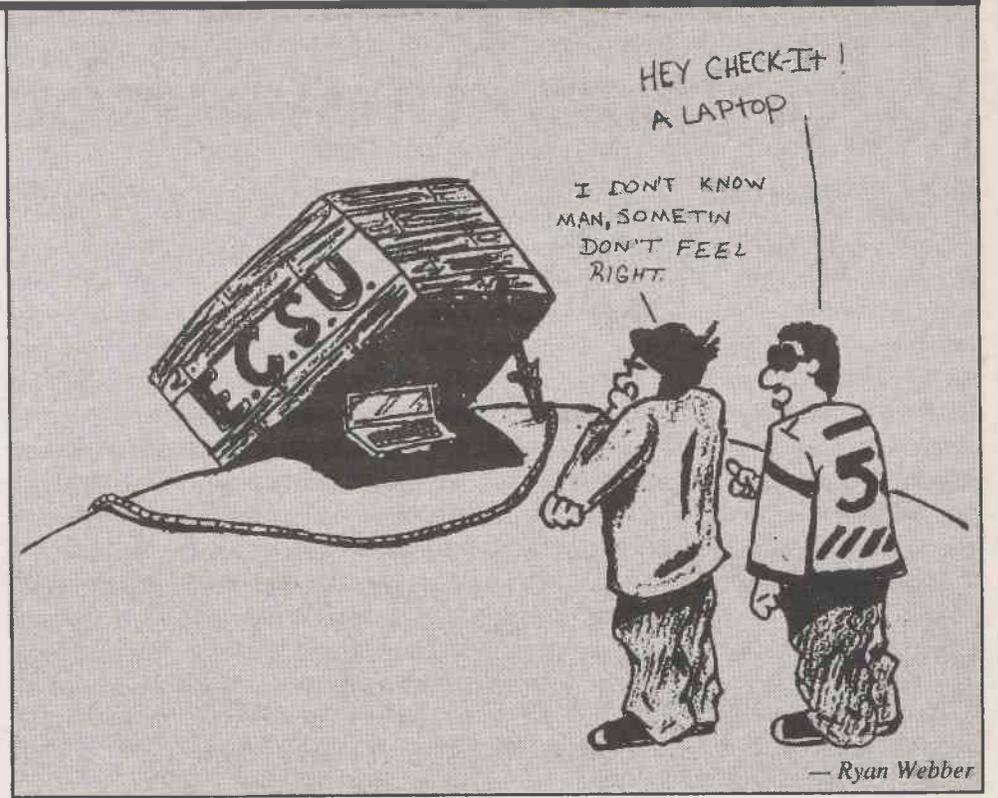
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THE COMPASS welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be sent to ECSU Box 815, Elizabeth City, NC 27909. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. They may be edited for length, clarity, and taste, as well as accuracy and grammar. Because of limited space, not all letters can be published.

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### COVER PICTURE

Amelia Pledger and Eric Quidley at Freshman Candlelighting Ceremony.



## LETTERS

# Why are we at ECSU?

To The Editor:

We are facing a crisis at this institution. There are simply not enough people enrolling at Elizabeth City State University. The reasons are many. Too many to be adequately examined in a short article. The cause is out of the hands of the students presently enrolled. We've made it. Or have we? There is no better time than now to analyze our reason for being here. No better time to determine our role at this university.

Fellow students often seem astonished when a black man puts his heart into academic pursuits. They have been programmed to believe that being black can only mean failing at anything non-physical.

I don't do my class work because I enjoy it necessarily; I do it because I have no other choice. What many of the other brothers and sisters fail to realize is that they may be in a similar situation.

I study under a system that pretends that I do not exist. Part of the reason I excel is to force the system to take notice, and to defy the system, as Jesse Owens defied Hitler. There is a Hitler-type mentality within the American system, and its influence is far reaching. By not doing well as black people, we are simply adding fuel to the white supremacist doctrine which has defined our existence in this country. Thus, we are carrying out the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure which has thrived in America's black community for centuries. Brothers and sisters need to be aware of this.

I am learning this, to degree, in class, but my real classroom is life. College is merely one big GE course that must be passed for enlightenment, and job op-

portunities. Blacks go to college so that the larger society will recognize them as men and women, or simply as human beings.

We say that we are the new age of blacks, speaking boldly and truthfully among ourselves, then we whisper, and shuffle while in the presence of those outside of our community.

Those with a sense of personal empowerment through Afro-centricity have to apologize for it. They have to explain time and again that they aren't and can't be racist, due to the absence of power in the black community, and the fact that power is an integral part of any racist doctrine. We say we're liberated, yet we're still apologetic. Why do we even care what others have said about us? Are we really comfortable with ourselves?

I'm tired of apologizing for being black. I'm tired of apologizing for having doubts about a system that has never believed in me. I'm tired of being one way for blacks and another for whites.

James Baldwin once stated, "to be black and conscious, is to exist in a constant state of rage." This is true, but in today's, supposedly, "liberated, civil-rights guaranteed" society, it also means to exist in a constant state of confusion. With this in mind, we must begin to analyze our words and determine if they are in accordance with our actions. We must define our role at this institution, and determine own reasons for being here. With this knowledge, perhaps we can determine why segments of our population have given up on college. If we don't know why we're here or who we are, how can we expect others to join us?

— Christopher K. Johnson