

EDITORIAL

An unfair policy

For too long mothers and mothers-to-be have faced undeserved discrimination.

A case in point is the University's decision to follow national pageant rules that exclude student mothers from participating in the Miss ECSU contest.

In her letter of resignation protesting the policy, former Miss ECSU Kimberly Jones wrote, "I find it offensive that any pageant or place of learning will condone a criterion that determines a female's inability to be a positive representative because she has a child."

We agree, and we commend Kim Jones for having the courage to act on her convictions. It's unfortunate that the SGA and their sponsoring officials lacked the vision to take a similar stand.

The rule that excludes student mothers--and the thinking which holds that they are somehow unfit--is antiquated and unfair.

The University is serving an increasingly large percentage of non-traditional students, including those with children. Instead of condemning them let's try to help student parents by considering their needs for affordable child care and by allowing children in dorm rooms.

Having children doesn't prevent students from making contributions to the community and being model citizens.

ECSU's student mothers are struggling to rise to the challenges of parenthood and meet their academic responsibilities. Instead of criticizing them, we need to encourage them in their efforts to improve their lives--oftentimes against tough odds.

Two prospective candidates for Miss ECSU--who also happened to be mothers--were rejected because they didn't possess the "sterling" image administrators are apparently seeking in a campus queen. What kind of message does this send out? Are we encouraging student mothers who want to succeed despite the odds or are we judging them according to an outmoded code of values?

Moreover, the University needs to provide more pregnancy counseling rather than simply supplying pregnancy tests. We need to address the next stage if the test is positive, instead of leaving the student to face the crisis alone.

"Leaders for the next millennium" aren't just students but their children, too. In our zealous race to enhance enrollment we should consider the needs of students already here.

THE COMPASS

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LETTERS

Study abroad needed for future careers, ECSU prof believes

To The Editor:

As graduates prepare for the 21st Century and the global environment, it is imperative to have a study abroad experience as part of ones undergraduate experience. More than 84,403 students studied abroad last year and only 2.8% of these students were minority students. If this trend continues, there will be fewer minority students prepared for international careers.

The Dominican Studies program at ECSU serves as a model for other HBCUs and majority institutions that have a desire to internationalize their curricula and provide a opportunity for student to gain a valuable international experience. The ECSU Program combines academic study at the National University of the Dominican Republic (course in Spanish and Caribbean Culture) and a pre-employment work experience (internship) with multinational corporation, governmental or non governmental agency, U.S. Embassy or international development organizations. This internship component is designed to provide a valuable work experience to students regardless of their academic discipline. Academic credit can be earned, so as not to delay a student's graduation timetable.

Students must have approved academic programs prior to departure, in order that academic credit can be transferred to their home institution. The academic program prescribes the products and tasks that the student must complete to be awarded academic credit. The program provides orientation for each student which covers cultural, political, economic, and social issues. Most students have been able to financially support this project through

a combination of financial aid and personal resources, which has been sufficient for a semester of study.

Some students find it difficult to live and adjust to a cultural environment that is not American. Some of the concerns in the article on the Dominican Studies reflect that difficulties and perceptions of students while living in a foreign environment. There have not been any incidents reported by any of the 72 students representing 18 universities who participated in this program as having been arrested or nearly arrested. Yes, electricity does sometime go off from time to time, and water, as a scarce resource, is valued. American students living abroad have to learn to be less wasteful and more sensitive to living in a limited resource situation. Student housing is provided with host families who are generally middle income and middle class. No student is placed in an unsafe or unhealthy situation.

Living abroad requires a mature, culturally sensitive, well motivated, focused, and flexible student who is able to observe and learn from the cultural experience. What better opportunity can one have than to have an entire country as ones classroom? A study abroad experience is and will continue to be a necessary requirement for the careers of the future. Our challenge at ECSU is to provide the opportunity for our students to be competitive in the global environment for the next millennium. The Dominican Studies program is an effort to provide such an opportunity for ECSU students.

Earl M. Brown, Jr.
 Instructor & Director
 International Program

POETRY

American Sistah

Darn--these kids are driving me up the freaking wall.
 No job.
 No child support.
 I'm freaking to pay my bills.
 Dishes, laundry, crumbs on the floor.
 I'm cussing you out cause I cannot flaw
 in front of my babies.
 Shoot, I'm mommie personified.
 I can't even enjoy a little high
 every now and then.
 They say crack got stressfreezone.
 I bet that's some good stuff.
 But I'll just use latex and pray,
 cause Heaven is the answer
 for a poor Black woman in hell

by Rosalind Bryant