

Chancellor Responds To December Compass Article

By

Chancellor Mickey L. Burnim

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify some of the remarks which I made during my fall interview with The Compass editorial board. In particular, there were four points made in the December 19th article titled "ECSU Chancellor answers the tough questions; urges students to get involved" which I would like to address.

The first point has to do with the suggestion that the University's Attendance Policy, which was instituted in the spring semester of 1996, is a big negative drag on student motivation.

Let's examine the process through which the new policy was developed and approved, and identify some ways that students could have been more involved.

The policy was initially developed and approved by the University's Curriculum Committee, which includes all of the academic department heads plus other persons, including two students. Mr. James Cherry, SGA President for 1995-96, and Ms. Tenace Fayton, Miss ECSU for 1995-96, were the student members. This committee then sent the proposed policy to the Chancellor for approval and forwarding to the Board of Trustees, (where Mr. Cherry also sat as the student member).

The new Class Attendance Policy was approved by the ECSU Board of Trustees on December 19, 1995. The two points to note are (1) that the policy was developed by a University committee of faculty/chairpersons and students who were acting in what they believed to be the best interests of students, and (2) that the process afforded students good opportunity to make their views known and influence the outcome.

Because Ms. Fayton and Mr. Cherry, both outstanding students, were serving by virtue of their being elected student representatives, their job was to represent student views during the deliberations. Through them, ECSU students had the opportunity to make their views known. In our representative form of government, the same principle applies at the local level (school boards, city councils, county commissions), state level (elected representatives, senators and governor), and at the national level (the President and Congress). Learn to use the system to effect desired change.

Next, I want to address the suggestion that greater emphasis on academic priorities has caused social life at ECSU to suffer. My point to the editorial board was that ECSU's mission is to prepare its students for responsible leadership and we intend for that to be the primary focus in everything that we do. To the extent that we can do that and promulgate a rich and wholesome social life, we will. I firmly believe that meeting those dual objectives is pos-

sible. However, when those two objectives conflict, we will give priority to the preparation of responsible leaders. This is the reason that I made the decision to permit Viking Fest, but not to cancel classes for it. Our faculty believes that class time is critical for maximizing learning for our students and we don't want to do anything that impedes learning.

We certainly want students to have fun during the years they spend at ECSU, and many are doing so! Many students who participate in intercollegiate athletics, intramurals, social organizations, SGA, the Student Leadership Academy, ROTC, campus organizations and the Honda All Star competition are having fun! So are those who have participated in international educational experiences in Ghana, Santa Domingo, and Europe. Likewise, many of the students who have participated in student discussions at the Chancellor's residence, or attended the receptions in honor of the Chancellor's Scholars, and volunteer activities with Elizabeth City youth, have had fun at those activities.

The point is that there are many opportunities for having fun while developing your leadership potential.

In fact, I believe that your opportunities for having fun are limited only by your imagination and your willingness to work to create the environment that you seek. If you want more recreational activities, then follow the examples of two great leaders and work with others to bring that to reality.

Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned an America where freedom and justice prevailed for all people and he worked assiduously to bring that about. Nelson Mandela hoped for a free South Africa where every citizen would have an equal vote and there would be majority rule and he dedicated his life to achieving that. If you want more fun activities, work with Dr. Fontaine, Dr. Bibbins, Ms. Berry, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Eley, and others to make them happen!

The article suggested that I might be out of touch with today's youth.

My contact with students, like the hour-long interview with The Compass editorial board, the discussions groups in the Chancellor's residence, luncheon gatherings with the Honda All-Star participants, and one-on-one discussions with students like those who have been guests on my radio show, and parenting my own young adult children, have given me a pretty good feel for today's youth. I am quite aware of the many things that are popular with young people today, but that does not mean that I must accept all of them as being desirable or appropriate.

My job is to teach and provide sound, responsible leadership.

This is where experience and wisdom should be a decided advantage; hence, my reference to my age and ex-

perience during the interview.

What will better serve you in the future? I submit things that build character: integrity, truth, honesty, self-control, things of good report.

For me not to speak out against what I saw in the "fashion show" and the Saturday concert would be to abdicate my responsibility to teach and lead. No person ever enhanced his/her reputation among well-meaning people by using vulgar language.

Further, some of the items that were modeled, and the way they were modeled, were inappropriate for a college campus, particularly one whose aim is to prepare responsible leaders for the next millennium.

In my view, the message being conveyed by those parts of the show was character destruction rather than character building.

Finally, regarding the questioning of whether we are attracting a better prepared, more highly motivated student body, it's still a little early to tell conclusively, but I sincerely believe that recent enrollees are better prepared to do college level work and are coming with a better attitude for learning.

Whether you accept that or not, motivation is something which should come from within oneself. To depend upon some external factor or person for your motivation is to concede your destiny to others. Real leaders motivate themselves from within and you

should also.

I hope this clarifies some of my positions as reported on in December issue.

We feel that ECSU students are wonderful people and we are very fortunate to be able to work with you. Likewise, we are committed to doing all that we can to prepare you to be the very best leaders of the next millennium!

**INSTITUTE FOR DIVERSITY IN
HEALTH MANAGEMENT OFFERS:
1999 SUMMER
ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**
\$(A Twelve week PAID
summer internship)\$
NO LESS THAN \$9.00 An Hour
Pre-Career Program

- Work for and shadow a health care manager
- Attend the National Leadership Development Program in Chicago
- Travel and housing available (if placed away from home)

ELIGIBILITY:

- Rising college juniors, seniors, recent baccalaureate graduates or rising first year graduate students in a health care management program or related degree
- 2.5 GPA or better on a 4.0 scale

For further details, please contact:
Career Services Office
H.L. Trigg Bldg., Room#103
335-3287

Correction

In our last issue we incorrectly identified Mr. Dennis Brown as the University's Director of Financial Aid. Mr. Brown is Director of the Incentive Scholarship Program. The Director of Financial Aid is Mr. James E. Swimpson.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

January 29, 1999

NATIONAL COUNCIL of NEGRO WOMEN, INC.

Northeastern NC Section
2502 Riddick Road
Elizabeth City, NC 27909

Dear Ms. Covington,

You may or may not have heard of this organization, but it is a national organization, founded by Mary Mcleod Bethune, in 1935. It has over 240 sections through out the country and 37 national affiliates, such as sororities and other national groups. We were organized in the Albemarle Area about a year ago. I am a retired educator and community activist who relocated here from New York City about two years ago.

I read, with interest, in the December 14, 1999 issue of The Compass, your article entitled, "Are We Being Prepared for the Next Millennium?" It is very disconcerting to read your opinion that you feel many of the graduates are not truly prepared with basic skills to gain entrance into the real world of work. There is so much that needs to be addressed that I really can't write it all on paper.

My other concern, which you did not address in your column, makes me want to ask the question, "Is ECSU

preparing its students to be able to make the best investment choices in their company pension plans, assuming they are able to gain entrance into their field of choice." From my own experience and statistically speaking, Blacks basically are not knowledgeable about wealth building. There are so many myths and lack of knowledge that keep us from investing so that we, instead of building wealth, are consuming and making others rich instead of ourselves.

About two months ago, I proposed to a department head at ECSU, an idea of my giving an Awareness Seminar or Course on "How To Build Wealth." It would be a course of introducing young people to the basic introductory concepts of investing. I have done a lot of research and want to share this knowledge with our young people of ECSU; thus making them more prepared for the New Millennium. He agreed with the idea, but I never heard again from him.

I am writing you hoping that you are interested enough in my vision that we could get together to explore it further.

Sincerely,
Lena Council