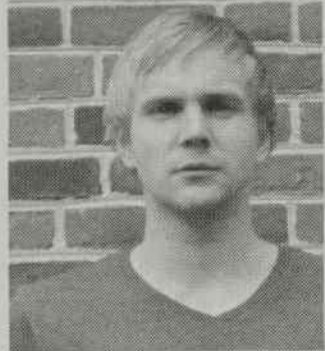


NEWS & OPINION

NCWC Faculty Members Assess Presidential Primary Season



By John Kostet
Opinion Editor

The Republican race for the presidential nomination has tightened, as several states have split their preferences so far in the primary elections.

What many expected to be an easy path to nomination for Mitt Romney has turned into a struggle with the dark-horse candidate, Rick Santorum. The former Pennsylvania senator led the combined average poll by 5 percent over Romney with less than two weeks to go before the Super Tuesday votes (March 6) when ten more states will make their decision. The nomination race has been closer than usual and our professor in political science, Dr. Cameron Matthews, thinks the process might last even longer. "The big three right now, Romney, Santorum and Gingrich, seem to have found separate bases among the [Republican] base," he said.

Santorum, whose conservative crusade has gained support among veterans, evangelicals and social conservatives throughout the South and the Midwest, has managed to shift the focus from the economy to controversial social issues such as same-sex marriage, contraception and abortion. A lot of people, including English Professor Steve Ferebee, think it's remarkable that candidates have stressed these matters during a time of recession. Dr. Ferebee said that unemployment should clearly be a priority in the political debate instead of Santorum's discussion on "Obama's attacks on religious freedom." But regardless of Santorum's unconventional tactics, both Dr. Ferebee and Dr. Matthews are convinced that Romney will receive the Republican nomination, because of his organization and vast campaign funds. "Those two characteristics are hard to beat in the

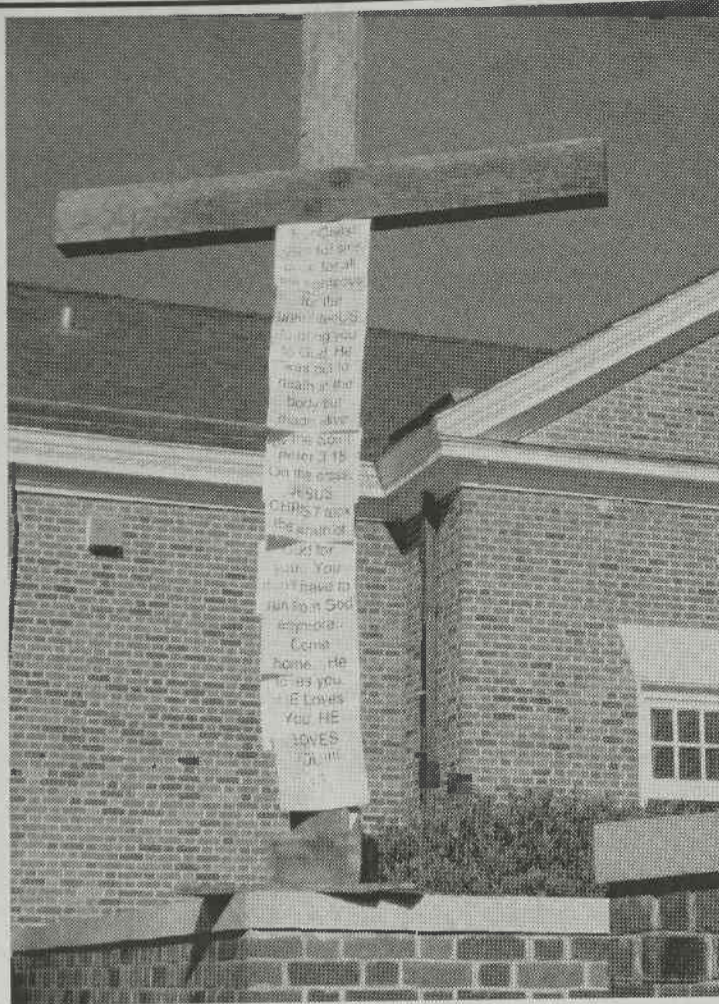
long run," Dr. Matthews said.

Music instructor Gene Heavner believes that Romney will win because Santorum lacks broader support. "I think that the other candidate [Santorum] appeals only to certain factions within the Republican party," he said, adding that most Republicans will support Romney because he's a greater overall contender to the presidency. Dr. Jonathan Sarris, associate professor of history, thinks the race between Romney and Santorum will be a tight one. And he believes the two may join forces for the fall campaign. "I'm guessing it will be a Romney/Santorum ticket," he said. "Republicans don't usually go for an insurgent candidate but Santorum will allow Romney to solidify his social conservative credentials."

Santorum's ability to highlight religion, social and moral issues might not produce the result that the Republican Party seeks in the long run. "If the right keeps up its attacks on Obama as anti-American and anti-religion, it will backfire and give the President the independent vote – and the election," Dr. Sarris said, as he explained how radical right-wing views can scare moderate voters.

Faculty members believe that the candidates' plans for the economy, and not social issues, will be decisive in both the Republican primaries and the presidential election eight months from now. "No reasonable person, on the left and right, thinks \$1.3 trillion annual deficits are sustainable. The question is how to walk away from that," Dr. Matthews said, as he stated that employment and the perceived direction of the country will be the major keys to winning the presidential election. "If these improve, the President will benefit. If they don't, he will suffer for it," he said.

But regardless of what the economy will look like in November, President Obama will still have a substantial advantage against any Republican candidate. "It's always tough to beat an incumbent. Since 1948, there have been nine presidential elections that included a sitting president. Only three saw the incumbent lose," Dr. Matthews said. Most of the faculty interviewed thinks Obama will be reelected. "Americans generally need a really compelling reason to throw out an incumbent president, and I'm not sure it's there," Dr. Sarris said.



Two student groups have stationed a cross on campus in an effort to spread "Christ's love." Not all members of the NCWC community are happy about the move.

Photo courtesy of K. Winslow.

Two Student Groups Raise Cross on Campus

By John Kostet
Senior Staff Writer

Two religious groups, Refugee and newly formed Crusade for Christ (CRU), raised a tall wooden cross on campus in a joint attempt to create "some kind of visual for Christ's love," Jesse Southerland, CRU president, said.

The cross was stationed near the entrance to the college library at the beginning of the semester. According to Dean of Student Affairs Randy Williams, the two student groups were not, at first, authorized to set up the cross on campus. "Our biggest concern was everyone's safety," Dean Williams explained. "It was raining heavily one day and the cross had an unreliable foundation."

In addition, the groups had not followed proper procedure established by the college for posting their messages. Pinned to the cross were quotes from scripture; other literature was placed in a box at the base of the cross. In the early weeks, loose pages were scattered around camps by the wind. "The way they did it was unacceptable," said Williams, who said he was concerned about the litter.

He noted that the student handbook provides guidelines for any type of posting on campus, and they require student groups to submit a posting request to the director of student activities. Williams welcomes any religious student group to spread their message as long as they do it according to the college policy. "There has to be rules for these things," Williams said.

From the outset, the mysterious cross caused curiosity among students, staff and faculty members. "Nobody knew where the cross came from or what it stood for," Williams said. When it was clear that CRU and Refugee had raised the cross, they were forced to make changes in accordance with the posting policy.

Since January, the cross has been moved to the Hardees Building patio and other locations on campus. "We want to make sure we do it right this time," Southerland said before raising the cross again with a more solid foundation in between the Pearsall classroom building and the library.

Southerland said the idea of raising a cross on campus was given to him by God in a vision over the winter break. "We see crosses everywhere, but I think we tend to overlook the meaning of it," Southerland said, as he explained that CRU and Refugee raised the cross and fastened the scriptures to make members of the Wesleyan community think about Jesus

Christ. "God is alive on this campus, the fire is ablaze and big things are happening," he said. "Some students told me they felt encouraged and refreshed by the cross."

Not everyone on campus has been pleased. English Professor Steve Ferebee considers the installation of the cross inappropriate on an academic campus. "Everyone has the freedom to express themselves, but no one ought to force their religious beliefs upon someone else," Dr. Ferebee said, emphasizing the importance of religious freedom.

Dean Williams indicated that there is nothing wrong with the cross since members of all religious groups are allowed to express themselves. "It is reasonable for a Christian school to have Christian symbols on campus," he said. "But this is also a very multicultural campus and we need to stay open to students of different religious backgrounds."

But raising a cross on campus is not about expressing religious beliefs, according to Dr. Ferebee. "It's a right-wing political statement," he said, noting that religion has become a political tool and the cross has become a symbol that separates people. "Anything that is different from the right-wing sense of conformism is conceived as the devil, especially here in the South," he said. "Even the [U.S.] president has to consistently overstate his Christian devotion, to not be labeled as an unfaithful terrorist."

Southerland said that the 10 members of CRU and 30 members of Refugee do not think they are better than anyone else. Instead, the religious groups are trying to reach out to "pray with you, talk to you and show you the love of Christ," he said.

Rebekah Cain, president of Refugee, understands that some people will be offended by the cross. "Being afraid of offending someone just leaves a ton of people who stand for nothing," she said. But she also explained that it was not meant to provoke anyone. "We're just trying to get our point across."

Both Southerland and Cain mentioned that Wesleyan students usually don't talk about religion. Dr. Ferebee agreed but thinks that the students don't care, and don't question religious, patriotic or political symbols because conformist norms tell them not to.

But CRU and Refugee now hope that the cross will raise some religious thought among the student body. "We wanted to plant a seed," Cain said.

BREAK from pg 1

Samia Kacher also complained about money getting in the way of her spring break plans. The Paris native plays tennis and the team will be practicing most of the break but hopes for a few days to themselves. Last year Kacher and a few teammates went to Myrtle Beach but they don't want to go back. "Being from another country," she said. "I want to visit as many places as I can while I'm here. It's pointless to go somewhere twice." With her limited vacation time, she wants to go somewhere close and inexpensive. "I want to see as many different places as I can while I'm in America," Kacher said.

Junior Courtney Bellamy has big plans for her break, but the Rocky Mount resident feels she has plenty of time to make them. With only one week left before break starts, she was still considering booking a cruise for her and her mother. She wants to go on a Jamaican cruise for the week. "I need to get warm," she said. "Jamaica is so pretty and I love the accents they have." Her back-up plan is also with her mom and they are considering going to Texas to see her brother. Money is not a hindrance for either plan. "I'm really close with my mom and I know we'll go somewhere, but we just have to figure it out," she said, noting that it will be somewhere relaxing and warm.

Senior Ric Yarbrough will be going to Memphis for a couple days with teammate Justin Griffith. They will be staying with Griffith's family. "We'll probably just go into downtown Memphis and kick it," said Yarbrough, who had hoped to still be playing basketball for the Bishops. "We were going to go to Myrtle Beach but the beach house isn't ready yet. But that's okay. We can just go another time," Yarbrough explained.

Many Wesleyan athletes will be competing during spring break. Jake Alexander, a junior from Virginia Beach, will be going to Myrtle Beach with the baseball team for most of the break. The week will wrap up with a trip to face conference foe Averett University. "I love baseball and I'm excited to finally be getting into the season but it would always be nice to be able to go home and see my family," Alexander, a middle infielder, said. "The team needs to focus and we'll most likely have a few rigorous practices to prepare for the tough competition." If Alexander wasn't playing baseball, he would be going to Miami. "I'd go to South Beach for sure," he said. Money is not an issue for Alexander due to his second job in the Taylor Center.

While the baseball team hopes to bring home some big wins, the softball team heads to another beach to battle their way to victories. After working a few days at a local Dollar General, senior Andrew Fa't of Chesapeake Virginia will spend some of his break at home. While there, he plans to head just down the road to Virginia Beach to watch the softball team compete. Fa't added, "I want to go home and be able to relax with my dad and my brother."

Sophomore Laine Hicks, a lacrosse player from Austin, Minnesota, said that she and her teammates will get a few days to themselves before resuming practice on March 1. She intends to spend five days in Houston, where she will stay with her aunt and uncle. "They live on a ranch so I'll probably ride horses and go to the beach and I think we might be going somewhere else but I'm not sure quite yet," Hicks said with a huge smile on her face. She explained that she does not see her relatives often and shared her excitement. "They called my dad and asked what I was doing and they said they would love for me to come see them!"

The lacrosse team plays its first conference game against the rival Christopher Newport Captains on the 3rd. "We have a great team and if we work hard enough we should give them a run for their money," Hicks said.

Fun in the sun seems to be the theme for this year's spring break; from a Jamaican cruise to horseback riding in Texas.

THE DECREE

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