

Viewpoint

African-American student recognition is long overdue

We gathered to applaud our academic achievers. We are students. We are leaders. We are athletes. We are Greeks. We are talented. We are exceptional. We are African-American. We are few in number. And yes, we are usually overlooked.

Forty-six African-American students were awarded for their dedication to academic excellence as their families, friends, and members of Elon's faculty and staff supported them. This is the first event of its kind. This is Elon's first annual Black Excellence Awards. It is a rarity to see the African-American student celebrated on this campus.

Elon College is 93 per cent white, 6 per cent African-American, and one per cent of other ethnic backgrounds. It's easy to get lost in the white sea that we swim in everyday- to be the only "one" in your classes, your organizations and on your residence halls.

I recall an experience from my freshman year at Elon. It was the first week in the semester. I walked into my freshman English class. I was "one" in number, once again. As 27 white students surrounded me, I took the initiative to answer a question on a short story that we had been assigned to read. Several students turned and stared at me almost puzzled, as they heard me speak. What was wrong with me? Was it that a person of my skin color spoke audibly and clearly and in complete sentences? Or, was it that I shattered the dominant negative image of the "blacks" portrayed on their T.V. screens as illiterates, in their movies as prostitutes and drug dealers and in generally as simply inferior? Unfortunately, this still happens to me and other African-Americans everyday and we continue to grow numb to these incidents that have come to shape our lives.

We are challenged in a way that many will never understand. We have accepted the burden of breaking the stereotypes and ignorance that the color of our skin seems to provoke. We have accepted that responsibility by knowing we have to perform twice as well, work twice as hard and know twice as much in order to be truly recognized. We have also learned that education is the only way to achieve our goals, to make our dreams come true.

We know that the many windows of racism will never break within our lifetimes. We can see these obstacles standing in our midst, yet we still hurdle them. We soar above them, to achieve in spite of ignorance, to love in spite of hate, and to shine in spite of invisibility.

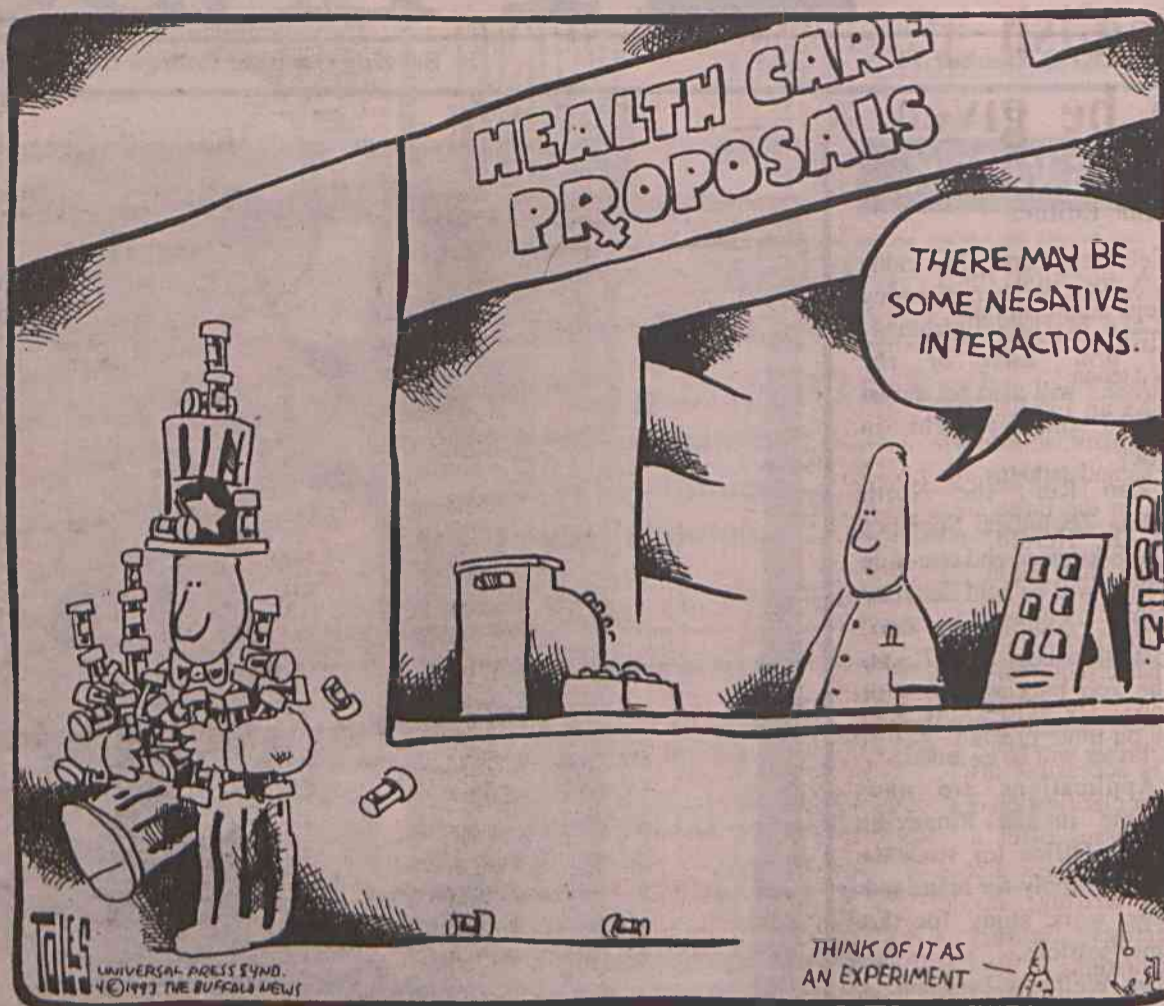
To all of you that have persevered, to all of you who have made the grade, you are exceptional.

- Tonya Taylor

The Pendulum

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An open letter to the faculty

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

- Leo Tolstoy

After you voted in the four-hour class format I found myself in an emotional flux. First rage burned inside me - there had not been adequate exposure or public discourse for a proposal of this magnitude.

Then apathy soothed the raw nerve - who cares if what seemed like a possibility for real change had been lost? I was graduating in a month anyway, I'd never see another class.

But then I sat down and thought about it with the skills of reason I had been taught under the three-hour system:

(1) Pedagogically speaking, students have only token input. (The merits of such a policy are another column - or thesis).

(2) The vote has been cast and there is little recourse available to students, or even the student body *en mass*, to change that vote. (One could transfer to another school though this is ultimately an escape and not a solution.)

Thus, as editorialist, I am left with only one venue of expression - endorsement of the new four-

Jack Duval



hour system. For I will not play the role of dissenter when cohesion is what is needed.

The Tolstoy quote above seems extremely apt to the changing times in which we find ourselves. You, by your vote, have changed the world of Elon - that was the easy part.

Now you have to change yourself, for you will no longer be able to teach in the same manner, regardless of your teaching style in the past. And that is the terrifying/painful/unknown part of the four-hour format... though it can be the innovative part as well.

We know from experience that you cannot lecture productively for 100 minutes, or even for 80 minutes - lest you have even the most ardent students tracing the flight of the bumblebee outside the window.

Read: adding a few group projects to your syllabus and continuing to lecture as par usual

isn't innovation. I've had four-hour Economics classes like that (the business department already has the four-hour class system) and I can only liken them to a cookout with David Koresh.

Any teacher who does that is a slacker and a disgrace to the profession.

Now, I can see many of you out there thinking to yourselves - hell, this won't be bad, I'll just do a couple more something-or-others in class to liven it up.

That's not it either.

I've seen the parchments some of you have your notes on - they're old and yellow and appear as if they're written on the back of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

How easy is it going to be for you to change your pedagogy? You who have been teaching these classes the same way, year after year? I'm not saying you've done a bad job, I'm saying you're going to have a new job.

And that's what it comes down to. You.

You, the faculty, are the ones who have to make this thing fly.

I can't say what will have to be done because I don't know. But I do know it will take all of you taking chances.

Make it work.