

Editorial

University legacies: Unmerited tradition Preferential treatment shows unjust reverence for wealth, power

Elite colleges should host only the most elite students — those who excel far beyond the measures of other applicants — but what about those who are sub-par in personal achievements, but well supplemented in other areas? These are the students who thwart the system, using the alumni status of their family members and monetary gifts in their name to gain acceptance to their school of choice.

Essentially, parents who contribute substantially to the universities their children apply to are parts of a significantly unequal whole. They pad their children's applications in the most covert ways — their past and current financial contributions cast a glittery shadow over what may be an application far below standards others have to reach.

Legacies make up 10 to 25 percent of the student population at selective schools, a New York Times article said. This could seriously affect the populations of people without alumni connection who hope to get into college. Preferences toward legacy students are defended as a way to increase donations and sustain traditions, but there is no statistical research that supports this claim.

There is also no overwhelming evidence of this practice on the international

front. The United States appears to be the only country that cites alumni connection as a serious factor in college acceptance.

Granted, there is absolutely no truth in the statement that children of alumni are granted acceptance to college because of their legacy status alone. They must participate in the application process like every other prospective student, and agree to adhere to the core principles of the institution they hope to attend. But additional attention paid to factors outside of a student's control is unnecessary, and inappropriate.

When debates about the fairness of affirmative action began to surface (the fundamentals of which is based on special consideration to systematically disadvantaged populations), many cried foul. Does the idea of skin color so defeat our notion of equal treatment that we ignore the fact that paper currency is the driving force behind numerous institutions, most of which intend to provide a just, fair life to those who may run them in the future? The cyclical nature

of promoting elitist power players continues to overwhelm the education system. Those of minority status have been so routinely oppressed that institutional efforts to reverse low enrollment rates at colleges nationwide shouldn't be frowned upon.

What should be frowned upon is the idea that tradition demeans the notion of equal opportunity.

According to the New York Times, being the child of an alumnus is the equivalent of adding 160 percentage points on a traditional SAT scale, and increases one's chance of being admitted by

20 percentage points.

And according to a 2008 Duke University poll, these extra-credit points are afforded to those who don't deserve them. A sociology professor at the school, Ken Spenner, claims that legacy students tend to underperform once class starts.

"(They) collectively have lower-than-expected grades during freshman year, slightly lower SAT scores and typically do not choose to major in the natural sciences

or engineering," he said.

"According to self-reported academic skills, legacy students also had slightly lower levels of ability and confidence."

Historically, the Supreme Court has read the amendment to prohibit laws that judge individuals on their parents' actions, such as those that promote the punishment of children born to unwed parents. So would preferences based upon lineage be any different? The 1866 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of "ancestry" and race, may well be applicable to the issue of advocacy on the basis of affirmative action for the wealthy — and their children.

The business activity that occurs between an institution and its alumni population should have no bearing on students affiliated by relation. Penalizing a first-generation college student because of their parent's inability to attend school is unacceptable. Pushing a revolving door that rewards future behavior before assessing present eligibility is unethical. Reinforcing a system that places higher value on wealthier students goes against the very principle of our nation: that all have equal opportunities to the same goals. College acceptance should always be based on merit, and nothing else.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

I was a victim of a sexual assault. I do not bemoan my situation, nor do I live my life with regret over what happened. But the effects are lasting. Every time a story comes up in any kind of media that depicts forced sexual contact or violence I am admittedly reminded of what I went through.

What hurts me even more than these remembrances, though, is when there is some kind of implication that the harassment or assault was warranted.

When there is an assault, it is never the victim's fault, no matter what they were wearing, what they were doing and what they were saying, unless they were saying "yes." As the saying goes around Elon, consent is sexy.

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be consistent with public opinion. The Center for Public Integrity, an investigative

journalism website, reports that cases of sexual assault frequently go unreported and without justice. The Center provides dozens of examples where students reported their assault only to have their campus judiciary system dawdle.

Many times, victims are asked embarrassing and demeaning questions such as, were you wearing a low-cut top? Were you drinking alcohol? Did you give any indication that the sexual act was warranted?

These questions completely miss the mark. Again, it is never, ever the victim's fault when they are assaulted. If the victim says no, it means no. It shouldn't matter what the extenuating circumstances are, because at the end of the day, the assailant ignored the most important part — the victims unwillingness to go through with a

sexual act.

Recently in the news is the case of Mexican sports reporter Ines Sainz, who was whistled at and catcalled after interviewing New York Jets players in their locker room. The focus almost immediately became lasered in on Sainz's impressive physique and, one might say, "sexy" clothing.

Why is this acceptable? Why has no one pointed fingers at the lack of control the football players showed? She did not invite the catcalls by her outfit. She showed up to do a job and was harassed.

Sexual violence is hell to live through and just as hard to recover from. What the victim doesn't need is constant second-guessing to go along with a sense of shame and guilt. The victim needs understanding, support and justice.

-Anonymous

TO COMMENT ...

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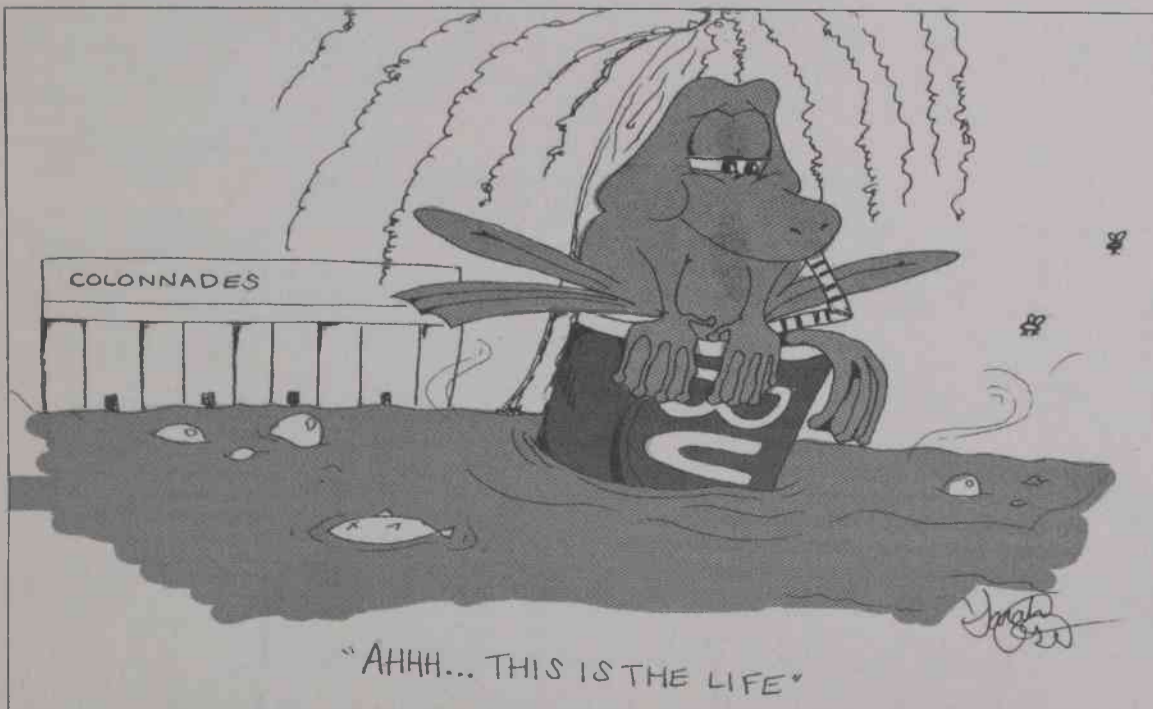
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