

# The Daily Tar Heel

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## Living in closet stifles schoolwork, friendships

I can't believe I missed National Coming Out Day. I mean, if I was on top of things like a good columnist, instead of dressing up in army fatigues and combat boots for a night on the town, maybe I would've seen the fliers around campus two weeks ago.

But now, I've got to come out all by myself. No parading comrades, no heartfelt poetry, not even a loud microphone in the Pit.

Maybe my apartment-mates have guessed something was up. I don't know if even they suspect a thing about my secret, cause I do a good job of covering it up out of shame.

I'm tired of living the lie. I want to stop hiding my true self, no matter what others may think or say. OK... I'm ready. I'm going to admit it.

I have attention deficit disorder. (For you voyeurs who were waiting for me to disclose my orientation, right now it is south-southwest. Go back to watching Ellen, and I'll b-glad on my own time.)

Remember those Warner Bros. cartoons? My favorite was the coyote who was always dropping anvils off cliffs and setting up Acme bomb-laden traps to catch the roadrunner. Ever wonder why he didn't just retire from the apparently lucrative roadrunner trade?

Put yourself in Wile E. Coyote's shoes. You've got this one-track mind to obsessively chase after this elusive roadrunner. Every time you get close, he rounds a sharp curve and next thing you know, you've clear run off the edge.

Welcome to the world of ADD, where reaching simple goals seems near impossible and each tenuous step increases the feeling of impending collapse.

You've experienced ADD if you've ever read Calvin & Hobbes. Early on, I identified with alternately hyper and lethargic Calvin. He is ADD personified. Tuning out the world in vivid daydreams and unable to comprehend what's going on around me, I walk around in Calvin's shoes every day.

Since being diagnosed my sophomore year, I've kept my "problem" a secret. Only one person at UNC knew; she just happened to be there the day I found out. Until today, I've been in hiding. Not even my parents know.

My secrecy was based on how stupid I felt compared to classmates. My "closet" was Learning Disabilities Services (literally a series of walk-in closets beneath Wilson Library). I would duck in there during the day, telling friends I was really going next door to Academic Technology Networks.

College is overwhelming in its demand for personal discipline. Lately, I've been running the "perfectionist" treadmill, taking on numerous activities to appear I have it all together. I've created a facade of control and fulfillment while simultaneously feeling confused and empty.

Mixed in is the "Who cares?" attitude. Since I won't fully comprehend my readings, I reason: Why not drive two counties away at 2 a.m. for a hot Krispy Kreme donut?

At full swing, I take procrastination to record heights. (This paper's due tomorrow, but sure, we can make it to Wrightsville Beach tonight!)

Lapses in my attention span also affect my physical ability. Body coordination is not my strong suit. Plus, team sports require close attention to what's going on and I can't change my focus as quick as the ball changes hands.

Living with ADD wouldn't be bad if it was limited to just academics and athletics. I can be in Hamilton 100 and no one knows if my mind is there or wandering across campus somewhere. Academic failure is only a letter.

Likewise, I'd love to stay alert enough to guard another player on the court, or be coordinated enough to receive a pass while running. But I'll settle for watching pro sports.

However, I can't do the same with friends. I can't check out in the middle of a conversation, because social fouls lead to much worse: possible anger and/or rejection.

For example, I can barely follow long con-

versation. Either I dominate the talking to force myself to concentrate, or my mind goes rummaging through random thoughts. Mostly, I just smile and nod my head, staying silent if lost in the verbal chatter. And with a mind like a sieve, "verbal incontinence" (or "foot in the mouth" disease) occurs. Secrets are divulged and rumors spread as words slip out. Inappropriate thoughts and comments escape, causing friends to doubt me.

Imagine a miracle operation existed where neurosurgeons could remove the "ADD" gene from the brain. Would I rush down to UNC Hospitals?

No. Not because I would fear the risks involved in brain surgery. Not even because I probably couldn't foot the bill.

Simply because I just couldn't imagine living without ADD.

Distractibility allows for creativity, not locking me into the "ordinary" way. Hyperactivity is advantageous if I can manage to channel it into schoolwork. And impulsiveness can be attractive; spontaneity makes you more fun and exciting. Most importantly, I believe I have ADD for a reason. God doesn't give His children anything they cannot handle. So it is enough for me to realize my Lord hasn't cursed me, but rather challenged me with ADD.

Don't get me wrong, there are days when I blame God for messing up my life with this "unfair" burden. I see others doing more and meeting friends with greater ease than me. And jealousy over their unintentional way of making me feel inferior certainly is a daily struggle.

I don't know why I have ADD. But it is a continuous, humbling reminder of who has control of my life. My ADD-induced lack of self-control gives me more reason to let God take the steering wheel. I don't face as much temptation to be a backseat driver since I know I can't. Maybe that's my silver lining.

"Know what I pray for? The strength to change what I can, the inability to accept what I can't, and the incapacity to tell the difference."—Calvin

Dave Snell is a junior political science major from Wilmington who thanks Krissy and Monica for being there and Jeremy for pushing him on his swing.



DAVE SNELL  
IGNORANCE IS  
STRENGTH

### BOARD EDITORIALS

## Key communication

While the Department of Disability Services helps many students gain an education, one disabled student's withdrawal from UNC raises questions.

The recent UNC graduate student's decision to withdraw from the University, citing inadequate disability services, raises many questions about advertising and communication within University departments.

The Department of Disability Services at UNC should provide an equal opportunity in higher education to disabled students. The department claims that the services it "provides are developed and provided on an individual needs basis." It's quite disheartening then, that Sara Laufer, a hearing impaired student, felt as if the University could not provide her reasonable accommodations, but even more disheartening that Disability Services is not really discussing the issue.

Laufer asserts that she went to a number of lengths and spoke to University administrators in order to address her concerns. She claims she was misinformed about the University's existing facilities for hearing impaired students and that little progress had been made after speaking with the appropriate officials.

Laufer is only one student out of many who rely on Disability Services for help with school. Many more disabled students are able to finish their education at UNC than leave. However, even if one student leaves citing a significant communication problem, any department should look into the way that they communicate with students.

The Department of Disability Services should closely scrutinize their enunciation and

organization policies so other disabled students don't feel alienated or inadequately treated. Students should be made aware of all available services, because the services the University can provide are no good unless students are able to take advantage of them.

Furthermore, disabled students should feel encouraged to confront the department with suggestions for improvement and change. After all, it is their needs that the department is trying to meet. Help without communication can be very ineffective.

Finally, this incident should serve as a warning for all University departments who might fall into the same miscommunication problems. University representatives should be extremely clear about the services that they make available to students — even if it means repetition. Sometimes a little repetition is a good thing.

Whether the departments are providing classes, academic aid or living services, everyone should be clear in what services are actually provided by UNC. All University officials and representatives should be willing and informed enough to correctly and clearly answer any questions that prospective students might have. And all departments should work with their students to address any concerns or suggestions that arise.

Regardless of the conditions surrounding Laufer's withdrawal, it's a shame that a student felt the need to take such a drastic and final action.

## Snoozing around

The alarm clock goes off. Instead of starting the day, you hit one of the greatest inventions on the face of this planet — the snooze button. After striking this bar a few times, it is necessary to drag yourself out of bed to face your early morning classes. The only problem is that you are not awake, and rather than thinking coherently you utter sentence fragments and have problems with academic endeavors.

However, researchers from Brown University have discovered that when teenagers begin puberty, their biological clocks shift which makes it difficult for them to get up in the morning. Due to this shift in their biological clocks, teenagers do not release the sleep-inducing chemical melatonin in time for a full night's rest. Some Minneapolis educators have adjusted to this scientific discovery and have delayed the high school schedule by 75 minutes.

Minnesota legislators are trying to pass a bill to require high schools to open at a later time. A group of schools that has begun opening later have reported that there has been a decline in absenteeism, tardiness and snoozing in class.

With these results in mind, we should consider the logic behind 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. classes for university students. By the nature of the work load at a university, college students find it necessary to study into early morning hours to finish the assigned work. On nights that they desire to attend a social function, sip a few drinks at a bar, or enjoy the company of some friends, they usually do not go out before 10:30 p.m., which makes it difficult to wake up

for their important early morning classes. University students even more than high school students have their biological clocks disrupted and therefore need later class, a 10:00 a.m. or later, in order to be able to fully comprehend and participate in their classes.

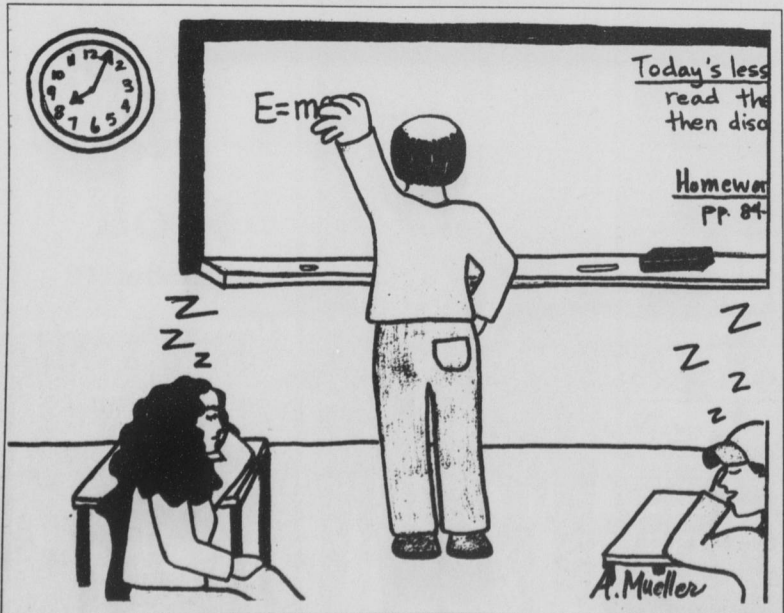
With all of the recent discussions about the intellectual climate, later classes could be a considerably beneficial addition to ensure that each and every student has the opportunity to perform up to their utmost ability.

Classes at 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. are difficult to get up for and should no longer be offered. Professors would appreciate classes in which students were not always nodding off and are filled with alert students that would actually participate.

Students and faculty would benefit from later morning classes. Students could obtain the needed sleep after later hours of studying to attend their classes alert and awake. Professors and faculty could use this time for research, office hours or as quality family time. Shifting the schedule of this university back two hours would not be disruptive because of the manner in which college life is conducted.

Later morning classes make sense in a university setting. We should consider all options that would allow each student to achieve his or her academic best and enhance his or her education.

With the deletion of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. classes, the intellectual climate would greatly benefit.



### Future of computers makes computer literacy essential

TO THE EDITOR:

Let me commend your Oct. 21 editorial addressing the student government's recent discussion of computer literacy requirements. You're right to advocate that computer literacy instruction be integrated into a variety of undergraduate courses and that we concern ourselves with more than the "technical skills" needed to operate computers. It seems clear that computer-based research and communication is evolving in all disciplines and that we must teach not only competency with the basic operations of computers, but also a critical understanding of and fluency with electronic forms of research and communication.

As an institution, our reputation in part depends upon our ability to demonstrate that students are computer literate. As members of the UNC community, however, we owe it to ourselves to extend the definition of computer literacy to include familiarity with the many ways that technology is being integrated into the work of the University. In composition studies, debates about the rhetoric of hypertext and the authority of Internet resources are taking place. In communications, hybrid messages that mix elements of spoken, written and visual texts are being studied. In sociology, virtual worlds and interactions are analyzed. We're studying electronic commerce and debating professional issues in online scientific communities. In short, each discipline already uses and wrestles with computer-based tools and issues.

If we focus on introducing students to computers without teaching them something about these technology-related issues that are evolving in every field, we will fall short of meaningful instruction in "computer literacy" and do more long-term damage than



### READERS' FORUM

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 400 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: dth@unc.edu.

good to our students and our reputation. If, on the other hand, we enable the many talented individuals who are already working with technology in every field to introduce that work to students, we'll foster competency with computers and critical understanding of the complexities of computer-based research and communication. As important, we'll encourage those who are already considering and practicing computer-assisted research and teaching to continue that work. We'll provide an opportunity for instructors and students to study further the best ways to integrate computers into the many complex disciplines of knowledge that make up the University.

As we integrate technology into instruction at UNC, we'll continually have to make choices. How should we teach computer basics? How can we integrate advanced communications technology into our classes? Which classes? How can we teach with tech-

nology in ways that benefit our efforts at research and scholarship? What possibilities does instructional technology present for realizing the intellectual climate we desire at Chapel Hill? What roles should students have?

Whatever method we pick for teaching computer basics, let's endeavor to choose with a mind full of the many questions that we'll need to consider if our students are to develop an understanding of computers that is sophisticated enough to count as computer literacy.

Daniel Anderson  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

### Panel discussions celebrate women's roles, lives at UNC

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for your continuing excellent coverage of the Centennial Celebration of Women at the University. I wanted to extend a special invitation to students to join in the General Alumni Association's remarkable five-week program, Self-Made Success: One Hundred Years of Women at Carolina.

From Oct. 23 through Nov. 20, Thursday afternoons at 3:30 p.m., the Alumni Center will be hosting five phenomenal panels on women's contributions to the University. Faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the University can register for the entire series or for individual sessions at a nominal cost. Students are admitted free. Please come and hear the wisdom, wit and words of 25 of the most remarkable women — and one man — as we celebrate a century of progress at Carolina.

Rachel Willis  
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AMERICAN STUDIES