

The Daily Tar Heel

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World Wide Web Electronic Edition
http://www.unc.edu/dth

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Democracy at risk

■ The 4th Circuit Court's decision to invalidate voting districts in North Carolina is unfair to both voters and candidates.

U.S. Chief Justice William Rehnquist, if he is of sound mind, will grant the emergency request filed by the state to allow congressional primaries to proceed as scheduled. A panel of three federal judges declared the 12th congressional district unconstitutional because its design focused on racial considerations.

N.C. Attorney General Mike Easley targeted Rehnquist to receive the plea because he oversees the federal judges who sit in the U.S. Court of Appeals' 4th Circuit, which includes North Carolina. Rehnquist, assuming he accepts some responsibility to the people of North Carolina, will grant the stay to postpone the redistricting until after the 1998 elections and prevent all this turmoil.

The date for the primary is May 5, and the General Assembly will not have time to redraw the districts, much less have the new plan approved, before this date.

Even if it wasn't impossible, the General Assembly would do its best to protect incumbents and represent partisan loyalties, rather than respect broad racial representation.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that incumbency protection is legitimate for the legislature. But when these now illegal districts were drawn, there weren't any African-American incumbents. The lines were drawn with hopes that soon there would be. The design will be up

to the federal court, either to draw themselves or designate to a neutral planner, if the state fails to produce.

If there is no acceptable compromise, voters could be called to vote in the May primary and in another in September, unless the new districts are drawn and approved. Taxpayers will be expected to fund each of these elections costing about \$3.9 million each.

"I know this is not their aim, but if the judges are trying to find a way to cause the people not to come vote, they couldn't have found a better way to do it," Rep. Eva Clayton, D-Warrenton, representing the 1st District, told The News & Observer.

She's right. Democracy will suffer because of voter confusion. Candidates can expect apathy if voters are ignorant of where to vote or who might represent them. At this point, the U.S. Supreme Court has the power to avoid all of this by granting the stay. The nonsensical federal court ruling would only effect the 1998 and 2000 elections. Postponing the decision until after this year's elections will allow the General Assembly ample time to redraw the unconstitutional districts.

Also, this way the N.C. House and Senate will get some much needed practice. All districts will be redrawn according to the 2000 census anyway.

Don't rush in

The University should look again into implementing a deferred rush for fraternities and sororities. The issue has been brought up in the past, and UNC has chosen not to delay rush until the spring semester. But with other schools, such as the University of Virginia, beginning deferred rush programs, the idea is becoming a viable option that would help both the students and the Greek system.

Deferred rush would provide potential brothers and sisters a longer time to decide which Greek organization to rush. Freshmen who rush during their first semester do not have a chance to familiarize themselves with the realities of each fraternity and sorority, as well as those who wait and meet people throughout the semester. It is important for students to know exactly what kind of organizations they are joining.

Often, fall rush carries with it certain obligations that interfere with many of the new responsibilities of freshman. Delaying rush would give more adjustment time for these students. Freshmen deciding to rush in their second semester would have a better grasp on how things work at college.

One argument against delaying rush is that the Greek systems would be financially worse

off, especially with the new sprinkler system requirement.

Greek organizations are not going to be in bad shape if rush is delayed. There will be plenty of people choosing to join one of the organizations, but the prospect of helping a student make the right decision for that individual should be the main focus, not making as much money. Greek life will survive.

Another point against delaying rush is that many freshmen do delay their decision to join Greek organizations, so leaving it up to the student is the best idea. Everyone knows that more information and more time is better when making a good decision.

It is also easy to want to get involved in something quickly without thinking it through, especially when at a new place and wanting to meet people. If freshmen did not have the option to make a hasty decision, the problem of regretting it later on would never arise.

Going to college is not only about joining one of the fraternities or sororities, but at the same time, those who wish to are welcome to do so. But the choice to rush should be made after researching the Greek organizations on campus and after allowing some time to pass to figure out what activities to get involved with.

Some TAs exceptional, many just bearable

While capitalizing on Appreciation Week for Graduate and Professional Students as a satisfactory column idea, I am going to start out writing this week about the marvelous graduate student teaching assistants at the University.

Have you ever had a teaching assistant who was by all means simply marvelous — exceptional in all ways?

Now I'm talking about academics here, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. I have, in fact, never sampled the finer sides of any of my TAs, but that never stopped me from dreaming! I'll never forget you, Chemistry Lab Kevin.

Have you ever had a teaching assistant who really went out of his way to be available for every office hour scheduled? Or maybe you were blessed with a teaching assistant in the Department of Math who could actually speak understandable English?

Perhaps you have had a TA who not only knew and understood the material in class but could also relate the information to you in a half-clear manner?

Probably not, but hey, this is my fantasy column, and, damn it, these kinds of graduate school instructors do exist ... somewhere, even if only in the minds of childish adolescents like me.

But enough of this talk of outrageousness. I can honestly say that one of my teaching assistants from last year had an absolute value far less than epsilon (if you just understood that, your science background is way too extensive). She was a nice enough gal, and all but her knowledge of the subject material was a little ... oh ... lacking.

It is unfortunate that the University has this strange notion that just because a person is in graduate school he must understand the particular discipline you are studying.

Of course, whether he has a grasp of the material does not stop him from grading your

exams as if he was the Master of All Information.

Another TA of mine loved to confuse our recitation so badly that by the end of the hour, I usually had forgotten who I was. It was a game for him to store all information like water in a fire hydrant and when we least expected it, to bring it forth like a ruptured fire hose, spraying in all directions.

Last semester, I had a TA who valued the syllabus more than all of us in the class combined. Perhaps you have noticed that most TAs will put their e-mail addresses and phone numbers on their syllabi.

During my first two semesters here, I e-mailed a TA of mine three or four times. He didn't reply to any of the messages. (Thanks a lot, big guy!)

While they are not always to our liking, I can honestly say that no teaching assistant has ever bored me so thoroughly that I fell asleep in one class and woke up in another. It does happen, you know.

In reality, we can never expect all our teaching assistants to measure up to our ultimate ideals. If they did, I would be taught daily by superhuman men with the minds of Albert Einstein, the personalities of Dennis Miller and the bodies of any one of the Baldwin Brothers. Something has to keep my attention in class.

The best TA I've had was the darling I wrote about in a column many eons ago. He's the one with the tattoo on his back that would put a Rembrandt to shame.

While he wasn't exerting all his angst for



LAURIE SCHULTZ
ONE CHICAGO GIRL
TOO MANY

Southern society and his supremacy as a graduate student, he was busy pushing us beyond the limits of sanity to be the best Latin students ever.

He was not shy about voicing his disapproval of us. On one badly done homework set of mine he wrote in striking red ink: "Plain old laziness just won't cut it."

Still to this day, that assignment adorns my bedroom wall as a constant reminder of my mediocrity and as a tool that inspires me to work hard, so I am never pushed below the floors of disapproval again.

Most of the time I feel sorry for my TAs. They are under a great deal of pressure, and they do spend most of their lives huddled away in carrels somewhere in Davis Library. I suppose I wouldn't care all that much for students I was teaching if I had to put in all the slave labor hours they do.

I do not think that you should worship your TA for the long hours they spend trying to advance their knowledge and complete their advanced degrees, but at least admire them for the hell they go through while they are here.

I consider myself lucky this semester, all my TAs are more than knowledgeable about the subjects they are teaching, and they have approachable personalities. A few have office hours I could never attend if my life depended on it, but at least they answer my e-mail when I have questions.

I suppose I haven't been completely fair. Most TAs try their best to help you understand confusing material, and some will even bring you doughnuts to class if they think it will calm your nerves.

You just have to draw at straws when signing up for classes and hope you pick a good one.

Laurie Schultz is a senior biology major from Chicago.



Value of women's bodies not equal to intellectual worth

TO THE EDITOR:
To Kimberly Kleyla and Phillip Mangum, who wrote in support of Playboy, I can only say that you left out the question of power in society.

Setting aside "This magazine does not exploit women" and "There is nothing sexist about the human body," — wow, Phillip, you have a career in spin control ahead of you! The magazine has a tremendous amount of money with which to spread its gospel of the objectification of women. Is it really a "free choice," let alone "honor," to be portrayed on this "pedestal"?

The valuation of women for their bodies is in fact not equal to the valuation of intellect. It is quite the contrary, and it continues to cause untold pain and suffering from the inability to compete for the position of perfect body. Valuing women for their bodies is a crime, not a free speech issue.

Katie Anderson writes that it is indeed degrading but that The Daily Tar Heel should not censor it. The censorship occurs when fabulously rich people can decide what we see and hear, not when the DTH takes a stand (which it didn't) against this monopoly on "free" expression.

Who is "falling victim to propaganda" — Playboy opponents? Or Playboy boosters? Smells like Nike spirit.

Dave Lippman
GRADUATE
COMMUNICATIONS

Locked-up guns still unsafe; only solution is total ban

TO THE EDITOR:
It seems to me as if the author of the April 7 editorial "Locked Away," missed the boat a little. Gun ownership in this country is a right, not a privilege. At least that is how many interpret the Second Amendment to our Constitution. Not all in this nation were shocked by the news from Arkansas. Saddened, again, but not shocked.

Moreover, and not entirely contrary to your claim that the issue is about a "veritable rash of youth homicides and suicides,"

Computer plan bad for UNC; details must be made public

TO THE EDITOR:

When I read the Daily Tar Heel's writeup of the April 2 meeting of the People for Computational Freedom, I felt that they left out quite a few of the major points we had to make.

1) The Carolina Computing Initiative is so poorly publicized and its details so sketchy at this point that the administration can easily claim that everyone misunderstands it. The UNC administration has to spell it out. They should put it on-line where everyone has access to it.

2) If the University requires that every entering student purchase a computer of a specific type this will pose several problems. For example, this is tantamount to adding \$2,000 to the first year tuition for each class entering in the year 2000 and beyond. If a student already owns a computer which is not exactly the right brand name that student will be forced to buy the computer the University requires. What kind of message is that sending to the parents of prospective students?

3) Who is charged with determining the best value for a computer? Is it a single person? A committee? Isn't the computer user (who in the end will be the one buying the machine anyway) the best person to determine value?

4) With a strong base of different computing systems already in place on campus, won't someone need to retrain professors and students on how to use new systems? In the Physics, Astronomy, and Math departments, 67 percent of their computers are Macintosh, 28 percent are Unix machines or hubs and only 5 percent are PC clones. That is a lot of retraining and thousands of dollars spent on new computers, not to mention new software!

5) If you are concerned about having to learn or buy new computing systems as a professor, student, or staff member at UNC or as the parent or older sibling of someone who may be affected by the Carolina Computing Initiative, please get involved. People for Computational Freedom needs you. Contact us at drewg@email.unc.edu or elijah@email.unc.edu.

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THE DAILY TAR HEEL

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Editorial Production: Stacy Wyrm, manager.

Printing: Triangle Web.

Distribution: Triangle Circulation Services.

NNA
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION
Office: Suite 194 Carolina Union
Campus Mail Address: CP 4270 Box 48, Carolina Union
U.S. Mail Address: P.O. Box 3270, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3270

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The Daily Tar Heel is published by the DTH Publishing Corp., a non-profit North Carolina corporation, Monday-Friday, according to the University calendar.
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