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The Daily Tar Heel

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BOARD EDITORIALS

Face to Face

Tonight is students' last chance to hear directly from one of two students who will be the next student body president.

At 10 p.m. Sunday, after dozens of phone calls, powwows with campaign staffers and questions about the minutiae of the format, Brad Matthews finally agreed to face challenger Erica Smiley in a debate at 9:30 p.m. in 111 Carroll Hall, sponsored by The Daily Tar Heel.



Brad Matthews



Erica Smiley

Students should grab a late-night snack, take a seat and watch a debate that should get hotter than Hinton James in the summertime - and get a healthy dose of information to take into the polls Tuesday. That's when students cast the final vote for the next student body president, either Matthews or Smiley.

Obviously, this late at night is not conducive to drawing the large crowds, but tonight's debate will be the last chance for students to hear right from the horses' mouths.

This time of year, candidates are forced to make an appearance at a host of forums - every group from the Black Student

Movement, Masala, Campus Y and the Basketweavers of America.

And while such events must prove tedious for the candidates, they do serve a vital role in making sure the campus is as informed as possible.

Tonight, interested students will have the chance to not only ask questions directly of both candidates, but to hear the candidates challenge each other.

There are pressing issues facing this campus, and it's necessary for students to participate and to ask the tough questions.

It's the only way we'll know what these two folks are really bringing to the table and what they can do or not do for UNC.

Both candidates have constantly preached about accessibility and how they want to really connect students back to student government.

Tonight, you can see firsthand if they practice what they preach.

It's the last round... bring it.

Ship of Fools

Year in, year out, the Elections Board finds some way to screw up elections. Voting by computer would help end that losing streak.

The only thing reliable about the UNC student government Elections Board is that every year it'll mess something up.

Last year, it was about how it counted graduate students' votes. Three years ago, it took about 72 hours to count Student Congress votes because the board's only Scantron machine broke. This year the database supporting the Scantron machine that counts ballots failed.

Candidates and their campaign staffs fumed, slept, played cards and finally headed to Franklin Street watering holes. Only later did the Elections Board realize that Student Congress had redrawn voting districts and that the new districts had never been entered into the computers.

That's 0-for-3 if you're keeping score. Obviously, the Elections Board needs to get it together. Humans, apparently especially if they're Elections Board members, are bound to make mistakes. They should leave as little room for human error as possible and give most of the job to computers.

If we can register for classes online, we can vote online as well. The Elections Board - with some help from Academic Technologies & Networks, of course - could use the Student Central Web site as a starting point, because it already contains students' addresses and class standing.

With one swipe of the UNC ONE Card at a campus poll site, a student's voting choice

would be set appropriately.

Of course, the Elections Board must run a test vote so that all the kinks are worked out before election day.

Also, students should vote in booths, not out in the open. Voting by secret ballot is the only fair way to do it.

This year's ballots were unprofessional. For example, Carolina Athletic Association presidential candidate Corey Bell's name was written as "Corey Lee 'C-TOPS Dude' Bell."

Candidates should not be allowed to have nicknames on the ballot unless, like Tee Pruitt, they could not be easily identified by their full names.

Finally, Student Congress should shoulder some of the responsibility for this year's elections problems.

It is not at all necessary for Congress to redistrict every two years, as the Student Code requires. Hinton James Residence Hall always has approximately the same number of residents.

Yes, the campus will be changing in the next few years with increasing enrollment, but Congress should amend the code to limit itself to redistricting every five years. That way there will be less of a chance of messing up districts when it comes time for elections.

If the Elections Board makes a few feasible changes in the way it does things, then maybe it can end its perfect record - of screwing up.



Politicians Should Go to Bed Early

Don't bother checking your mail today. You won't have any - not even an offer for a credit card with a 50 percent interest rate. Those companies don't really give us much credit, do they?

Nope, there'll be no mail today because we are celebrating Presidents' Day in honor of Presidents Washington and Lincoln, who conveniently both have birthdays in February.

But there's another reason to celebrate this evening: "The official late-night talk show of the millennium" will air tonight with its host, David Letterman, back in action after undergoing bypass surgery in January.

But along with the humor that will return with him, a disheartening trend will also resume - elected officials appearing on entertainment programs. Indeed, public service is not a joke.

Admittedly, Letterman's return comes not a moment too soon.

The show had been lining up guest hosts to substitute for the 16-year late-night veteran, and Regis Philbin was high on the CBS wish list.

Regis, you're a nice guy, but back off. You can't be on every show.

Not that the alternative is any better. Letterman will be returning only on a limited basis. Other hosts will appear this week, including the one person worse than Regis - Kathie Lee Gifford.

Letterman's return has been much anticipated by viewers who enjoy his comedy and feared by politicians who hate it. Before his hiatus, Letterman had a daily segment titled "Campaign 2000" in addition to the usual monologue jokes about George W. Bush's drug habit and Al Gore's personality. Letterman used the segment to pressure candidates to appear on his program.

"If you want to win in New York, you have to come on this show, sit in this chair and see the big man," Letterman announced to Hillary Clinton.

After weeks of badgering the first lady, who is seeking a U.S. Senate seat in New York, Letterman finally forced her to appear. In a



BRANDON BRISCOE VOICE OF REASON

tightly scripted interview, Hillary swapped jokes with Letterman and offered her own top 10 list, much to viewer's delight.

There being "no 'off' position on the genius switch," as Letterman often notes, the Late Show continued the "Campaign 2000" running joke by challenging George W. Bush to appear on the show next. A Bush appearance might prove that some folks don't even have a genius switch.

And Letterman is not the only late-night comedian drawing on this year's elections for material. Jay Leno has used John McCain in a skit; and Vice President Al Gore appeared on Leno's show recently, despite the barrage of jokes made at his expense over the years.

"Jay, do you know what we do at home for fun?" Gore asked. Good question, Al.

"We gather in the living room in the evenings and tell jokes about you."

Rest assured, Al did not write that line, although there's no evidence that he is capable of even that little humor.

As much as politicians worry about the nightly beatings they receive on TV, the programs are equally interested in appeasing the politicians enough to book them as guests.

Letterman was clearly nervous and worried about Hillary's feelings when she appeared on his show, and Leno could be seen after his interview with Gore to whisper, "Was that OK?"

Although highly entertaining, all of this is a bit unsettling. The first lady of the United States of America should not appear on a television program just after they clear off the

stage from the "Stupid Pet Tricks" routine. And the vice president's appearance on Leno's show is no better.

The line is murkier for candidates not in office, but even they should have some respect for the office they're seeking. Thankfully, President Clinton declined Paul Shaffer's invitation to join the CBS Orchestra with his saxophone during Hillary's appearance, although Clinton could hardly disgrace his office more than he already has.

It's an understandably difficult problem for politicians.

The shows offer oodles of free publicity, and it's a sure bet that the hosts will ease up the scathing humor for a week or so after meeting the candidate on the show.

In the presidential race or a close contest like the Senate race in New York, a week can make a big difference.

What's more, Letterman's approach is especially devilish.

By challenging guests to appear, he makes them look scared if they refuse or ignore his requests.

Hillary tried to stall when her spokesman chatted with Letterman during one show. The poor fella tried some humor of his own, but he was no match for the mighty wit of Letterman, who placed the man on hold and scored with the audience, saying, "Apparently this loser doesn't get it - I'm the one telling the jokes around here."

But with the privilege of power comes the possibility of bad press. Politicians know they're playing with fire, and they ought to maintain the dignity of their office by limiting their TV appearances to serious news programs.

Good politicians, who understand the extreme importance and responsibility of their office, earn themselves a national holiday.

Brandon Briscoe is a junior journalism and mass communication major from New Orleans. Send your tips and Late Show invitations to brandon_briscoe@unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Bus Rider Goes Public With Why He Filed Gripe About Driver

TO THE EDITOR:

I am responding to your editorial "I Am Somebody" dated Jan. 24 in which issue is taken with an individual who "complained" to Chapel Hill Transit regarding bus driver Robert Moore's use of the loudspeaker to express his feelings and ideas.

The individual was described as a "cold-hearted commuter" and a "pessimist" who "silenced a positive voice." I am that "cold-hearted commuter," and I am offering an explanation as to the motivation for my actions.

In the American legal system there is a term called "invasion of privacy." I think most people are familiar with this concept. No individual is permitted to enter another's home without invitation, and most do not consider this a controversial issue.

What happens, however, if someone enters your consciousness without invitation? Is that a civil offense? Certainly not in any courts in this world. In effect this is what Mr. Moore is saying when he begins his monologues: "I do not care what any of you people on the bus are doing right now. If you are in meditation or prayer or contemplation or having a conversation or taking a nap or studying for an exam, it matters not to me for I have a message to deliver. Stop whatever you are doing and listen! My message takes precedence over your internal dialogues, your conversations, whatever, and I require your complete attention!"

This is "invasion of consciousness" or "invasion of attention," and I consider this a crime in a manner of speaking. No individual has the right to "push" their opinions upon another without permission. Granted, we as individuals are bombarded from cradle to grave by those who wish to influence us to see the world as they

see it. Yet, we can't always control all the subtle influences which come our way. In the case of Mr. Moore, however, his aggressive and unfair approach to influence his riders goes too far in my humble opinion.

Please note that I have not taken issue with the actual message which Mr. Moore is attempting to convey to his "audience." It appears that Mr. Moore has been greatly inspired by some charismatic individual or some social, political or religious doctrine. I appreciate and understand how wonderful it feels to be inspired, and sometimes one cannot contain themselves and need to give form and substance to a powerful inner feeling.

This is an admirable state of consciousness; however, there is a time and place.

Steve Friedman Cast Technician Department of Orthopaedics

The length rule was waived.



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