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The Daily Tar Heel

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EDITORIALS SERIES

Saying It Loud

The Employee Forum has the potential to be a strong advocate for University staff. But for it to be effective, it needs more support.

The voices of staff members at UNC do not garner much attention individually. But through the Employee Forum, UNC's workers can come together to improve their status and draw attention to their concerns.

Working for Change

The Employee Forum is an advocacy group. Though it has no legislative powers, it does represent the collective voice of the staff of the University. Here are just a few examples of issues it has spoken out on:

■ In September 1995, the forum passed a resolution that recognized the efforts of UNC staff members during flooding from the remnants of Tropical Storm Jerry on August 27, 1995.

■ In May 1996, the forum passed a resolution lobbying for pay increases and improved working conditions for housekeepers and other low-paid employees. Also, forum members warned against any wage cuts that the University might enact to lower running costs.

■ In June 1996, it rallied against proposed changes in the grievance procedure for state employees that would limit the topics of grievances, thus lessening the ability of staff members to speak out when they felt they were wrongly treated.

As these actions show, the Employee Forum can be an active voice on campus when it chooses to be. But as we look at the state of the forum today, there are some issues that must be addressed if it is to be an effective advocate for staff members.

Filling the Ranks

One problem that has come up within the Employee Forum is representation. In order to prove to administrators that it is an entity that should be taken seriously, efforts must be stepped up to keep the ranks filled.

According to last year's annual report of the Employee Forum's Nominating Committee, the group has had problems in recruiting members from staff areas such as housekeepers, general laborers such as groundskeepers and vehicle operators and skilled craftsmen such as lab mechanics.

There have been some ideas tossed around the forum for boosting awareness and increasing participation.

These include a monthly forum newsletter for all University employees, giving out pins as a show of pride to forum delegates and pumping more publicity into the Three-Legged Stool Award, which recognizes employee achievement.

All of these measures would not only bring more recognition to the forum; they would also bring in fresh blood and a louder voice.

Dollars and Sense

Another employee concern is that the forum must be a stronger advocate for increasing benefits. As its vision statement

states, the forum is a place to "improve the quality of life" for employees.

One quality of life issue the forum's efforts could affect is helping employees obtain a better education at UNC.

Currently, UNC employees have to pay a \$55 application fee to take classes here, and the forum has looked into ways of waiving this cost.

But after discussing the issue with Norm Loewenthal, director of the Division of Continuing Education, the committee reported that "the division could not simply absorb this cost and ... the fee would need to be paid from some other source on behalf of the employee."

This goes against the grain of what the University usually touts in employee recruiting efforts - the opportunities for career development available at UNC.

By finding alternate funding so that the application fee can be waived and fighting to change the current policy of requiring supervisory permission for non-job-related courses taken on University time, the forum can make UNC a much more attractive place for employees and a place where upward mobility is possible.

Stable Work Force

Recruitment and retention is another problem for the University's staff.

There are about 600 staff positions open at UNC, said Linwood Futrelle, the 1998 chairman of the Employee Forum. This means University employees have to do more than just their jobs - they have to take on work that the nonexistent employees should be doing.

One of the main problems UNC has in hiring is that in some cases a department's job specifications, the description of the qualifications needed for a certain position, have not been modified since the 1960s or 1970s.

At the same time, the human resources department's rules, by law, do not give departments flexibility in hiring people based on skills not included in the job specifications.

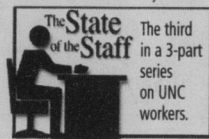
By advocating an update of the University's hiring method, the workload of employees burdened by more than their fair share can be remedied.

Room for Improvement

The Employee Forum needs to do more. However, for its efforts to come to fruition, the state must also change some of the ways it deals with the UNC system. Because UNC is part of the state education system, state legislation treats UNC employees like other state employees.

But a university is a much different setting than a Department of Motor Vehicles office and should be treated as such.

It's a reciprocal relationship - the forum needs to lobby the University and the state, and they need to listen.



Disc Golf: The Sport of Champions

"Golf is a good walk spoiled."
-Mark Twain



BRIAN FREDERICK
ON TAP

This weekend is the 64th Masters Tournament, the most elitist tournament in the most elitist sport.

OK, maybe I'm a little bitter. I blame my lousy golf game on the golf pro in Illinois who convinced my folks that I should switch to right-handed clubs.

Most of the golf courses are designed for right-handed hitters, he told them, as if I were going to be on the PGA Tour someday.

But I never had the patience for golf anyway. Too much time. Too much money.

I play disc golf. Frisbee golf. Poor man's golf. Hippy golf. (Actual slogan: "Throw discs, not bombs.")

No need to pay for balls and clubs, they're combined into one. No more greens fees or cart rental.

(Although the best part about playing golf is getting drunk enough to drive the cart into the pond.)

You can play disc golf anywhere. No need to tear down the forest. Just throw up some baskets in the park.

Hell, you don't even need baskets. My dad used to tell us to throw at the neighbors' mailboxes.

(Which may have led to my fascination with blowing them up, but that's another story.) Other targets include fire hydrants, tombstones and kids.

The University has a course at the Outdoor Education Center. There's also a couple courses in Durham. I think one involves hitting the BMWs at the Duke campus.

There's even a tournament coming up at the O.E.C.

And there is no greater thrill than hearing the roar of the crowd as you approach the 18th hole in a disc golf tournament.

The O.E.C. tournament will take place next Friday afternoon. Call 962-1153 for more information.

Sure, the Masters will feature such pros as Duval, Nicklaus and Motorola. But the UNC disc golf tourney will have Peete, Canyon and Two-Beer.

Instead of a green jacket, the winner gets a pair of Zubaz pants (Remember the tiger stripes in assorted colors?), a tank top and a pair of wrap-around Oakleys.

Now that your eye's on the prize, head to the sporting goods store. You're finally gonna own your own clubs. Kiss the bright yellow rental bag goodbye.

No need for 15 clubs. As if you could really tell the difference between a pitching wedge and a sand wedge. You can play disc golf with just two discs. A driver and a putter. It will only cost you 20 bucks. Hell, you can just use one if you're really broke. Or if you throw your driver into a pond. (Damn first hole at the O.E.C.)

And while golf equipment sports such regal names as Titleist, Spalding and Calloway, discs have names like Viper, Whippet and Bomb. Plus they come in cool colors like purple, red and camouflage.

(Unfortunately, our leftist friends who make the discs have chosen to use kilograms for weight.)

In golf, you aim at a tiny little hole that needs a flag so you can find it. And if you make your shot, it makes this little rattling sound. There's no missing the basket on a disc golf course. It's gray and yellow with chain links that are built to withstand a nuclear war.

And when you make a shot, it sounds like some schoolyard bully just threw a smaller kid

into a chain-link fence. (Insert disc-in-hole joke.)

Fairways on a golf course are manicured daily. With any luck, the disc golf course is plowed once a year by the city. If you should throw it into the tall rough, you're liable to find a member of the cast of "Hee Haw."

Only in disc golf is there a chance you'll get poison ivy. Other potential dangers include chiggers, stray dogs and skateboarders in the parking lot.

A good pair of sneakers is necessary for hiking through mud, creeks and family picnics in search of your disc.

Sure, you don't have golfing spikes, but at least you can go dancing in your disc golf shoes without fear of putting a spike through your girlfriend's big toe.

No more sweating in the required collared shirts and Dockers. Standard attire in disc golf is an X-Men T-shirt and cut-offs.

Ironically, the beer of choice on the golf course is a case of cheap beer, while on the disc golf course, guys carry six-packs of imported bottles.

While Tiger whines at any fan who breaks his concentration by talking, you'll learn to ignore car horns, screaming kids and the Black Sabbath blaring out of the Firebird on blocks in the parking lot.

Before you know it, you'll be a professional disc golfer. On the tour. Which is sure to bring you to such disc golf havens as Portland, Ore., Boulder, Colo., and Blowing Rock. You'll make tens of ones of dollars off sponsorships with 1-800-COLLECT (anybody can get sponsorship from them), and have a good time playing a sport almost as lazy as regular golf.

The best part about disc golf? You can roll joints off your discs. Try doing that off a 9-iron.

Brian Frederick is a graduate student in journalism and mass communication from Lawrence, Kan., home of the Frederick-Bunch Disc Golf Invitational. Reach him with questions and comments at bfrifred@yahoo.com.

BAROMETER

Ill-Advised Decision
Officials have extended the deadline for students to nominate outstanding advisers for an award. They're missing the point. If there were outstanding advisers to nominate, students would have done it.

Changing the Guard
New student leaders took the helm Tuesday eager to start doing wonderful things. A whole new administration most students don't give a damn about.

Taking Attendance
Saturday is the last day of the three scheduled snow makeup days. Thank God they're over, but for most of us, they never really began. By the way, who even goes to class now that it's spring?

Unbelievable, Baby
We might not have won the national title Monday, but UNC's unexpected Final Four appearance at least served to stop the Weber State jokes.

TAR HEEL QUOTABLES

"We're going to take her to the grocery store to let her pick out different foods."

CHAPEL HILL MOTHER
MAUREEN EARNHARDT

Discussing her plans for entertaining a German exchange student this weekend. Way to refute the stereotype of fat Americans, Ms. Earnhardt.

"We were yelling things like 'life sucks' and throwing clothes around the room."

JUNIOR JAIME ARGILA

Commenting on his reaction to UNC's Final Four loss. Put away the razors, Jaime, there's always next year.

"He just kept on harassing me. So I finally broke down."

FRESHMAN JILL FOWLER

Explaining why she bought salon services from a salesman on campus. Hey, Jill, get some willpower. Did you really need your eyebrows plucked that badly?

"I feel I can make the 82nd session as effective (as the 81st)."

NEW STUDENT CONGRESS SPEAKER
ALEXANDRA BELL

Talk about low standards. Don't sell yourself short, Alexandra.

READERS' FORUM

Letter Writer No Dummy, Simply Has An Opinion

TO THE EDITOR:

This letter is in response to Jay Wilson's personal attack on me in the April 3 Daily Tar Heel. Jay not only misses the point of my original letter, but he incorrectly stereotypes me as either a 21-year-old student or a 26-year-old dunce.

First of all, like many students, I did not have the privilege of going to college directly out of high school. First I spent five years in the Marine Corps, where I traveled extensively around the North and South as well as much of the world.

I know that in this town the military does not get much respect, but remember, these people are the ones protecting the way of life of every single tiny faction we have in Chapel Hill, including the feminists, homosexuals and the kids at the post office. So no dumb Marine jokes, please.

After a year abroad I came here to UNC to study and am graduating in less than three years with honors. You do the math for my age. I am sorry, Jay, but I don't fit any of the categories you outlined for me. This mis-

take is easy to make, however, in this town where most people are easily categorized.

My first letter was never meant to insult anyone. All I did was point out my personal observations based on my experiences. I still believe people in the South prejudice me more than those in the North. I have actually done field research on this very issue, so it is more an educated statement than a "jealous invective" as Jay suggests.

And no, I do not think Southerners are dumb just because they have an accent, but the fact remains I still haven't had a professor with a Southern accent at a North Carolina state college.

Finally, I believe a large number of kids in this town are given many things they have never earned, including expensive cars, cell phones and even perhaps degrees from UNC. This is often represented in a very elitist attitude. Jay, you can question my experiences and opinions, but don't question my IQ.

Aaron Breedlove
Senior
Psychology

The length rule was waived.

Columnists Gave Courageous Defense Of Christian Doctrine

TO THE EDITOR:

I wish to give my support to Josh Self and Marty Baldwin for their Viewpoints guest column titled "Relativism Runs Counter to Tenets of Christianity" (April 3).

I was pleasantly surprised by the column and found it to present a solid defense of Christian moral standards and a solid presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Far from being condescending or callous, the column was a courageous stand for the principles of the Christian religion, a stand which many people on this campus would just as soon have suppressed, if the truth really be known.

I would like to thank both of these men for their witness to the truth of the Gospel, that it is the means by which God seeks to save each and every one of us, if only we would turn to Him with contrite hearts.

My hat is off to Self and Baldwin for their defense of the faith.

Tim Dunkin
Graduate Student
Department of Chemistry



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