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The Daily Tar Heel

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Something to Hide?

The Worker Rights Consortium must have Nike's Phil Knight scared — he just pulled a \$30 million gift from his alma mater for joining.

It looks like all those full-page Nike ads in The Daily Tar Heel proclaiming the company's innocence might have been bogus — Nike Corp. might have something to hide after all.

Phil Knight, the chairman and CEO of Nike, has yanked a scheduled \$30 million gift to his alma mater, the University of Oregon, after the school had the audacity to join the student-backed Worker Rights Consortium.

Nike recently pulled a similar stunt at Brown University, when the company decided to stop giving supplies to its hockey team in response to Brown's significant contribution to the WRC.

These incidents are nothing more than scare tactics designed to make other schools reconsider joining the WRC, while simultaneously strengthening the validity of the Fair Labor Association.

Mr. Knight and other CEOs around the country would like every university to join the FLA, a monitoring group that allows representation from corporations, something the WRC refuses to do.

The real crux of the issue, however, is not representation but validity. The WRC checks in on overseas factories unannounced, whereas the FLA notifies each factory in advance — plenty of time to get the sweatshop up to code before Mr. Knight stops by

with his photographers.

The perfect example of this type of pseudo-monitoring is the recent factory tour that Nike officials coordinated with select student representatives.

The students visited 32 factories with an independent consulting firm, but each stop on the tour was announced by Nike beforehand.

The students on the tour were dubious of what was presented to them by Nike — and with good reason.

If Nike's sweatshops have nothing to hide, there is no reason why Mr. Knight should be nervous about the impact of the WRC and its unscheduled visits by monitors.

If the factories are operating as they should, whether a visit is a surprise or a monthly event should make absolutely no difference.

Certainly Mr. Knight has the right to do as he wishes with his \$30 million, but UNC must not be scared into passivity by this little stunt.

UNC generates an immense amount of revenue for Nike. If anyone has the power to shape the future of sweatshops, it's us.

Mr. Knight's action might be understandable on a personal level, but it should be a red flag to anyone who believes in the validity of the FLA or doubts the culpability of Nike factories around the world.

Learn From Your Peers

Thanks to Kristen Miller and Marie-Lucienne Lambert, officials have a great idea for boosting UNC's intellectual climate.

If you ever thought UNC offered just a few too many lame courses that failed to stimulate you in any profound way, well, now it's time to stop whining and do something about it.

Starting next spring semester, you — as an undergraduate — could actually teach a class of your own design, thanks to a program known as Carolina Students Taking Academic Responsibility Through Teaching.

Then, if the class sucks, it's your fault!

C-START could greatly boost the University's intellectual climate by extending academic opportunities for both the students who teach the courses and those who enroll.

Senior Kristen Miller and sophomore Marie-Lucienne Lambert are responsible for the proposed program. They recently received funding from Provost Dick Richardson to design a couple of pilot courses that will be reviewed this fall.

Once those pilot courses are approved, student instructors who decide to take advantage of this new opportunity will be given the green light to start teaching in spring 2001.

It's no secret that the University's class selection just isn't that broad. C-START could add a much-needed spicy twang to the rather bland choice of classes that now exist.

If there's some specific subject or topic you're interested in studying but can't find in the directory of classes, C-START is your answer. Under the program, you would research your topic of interest and participate in teacher training workshops during the fall to prepare for your spring class.

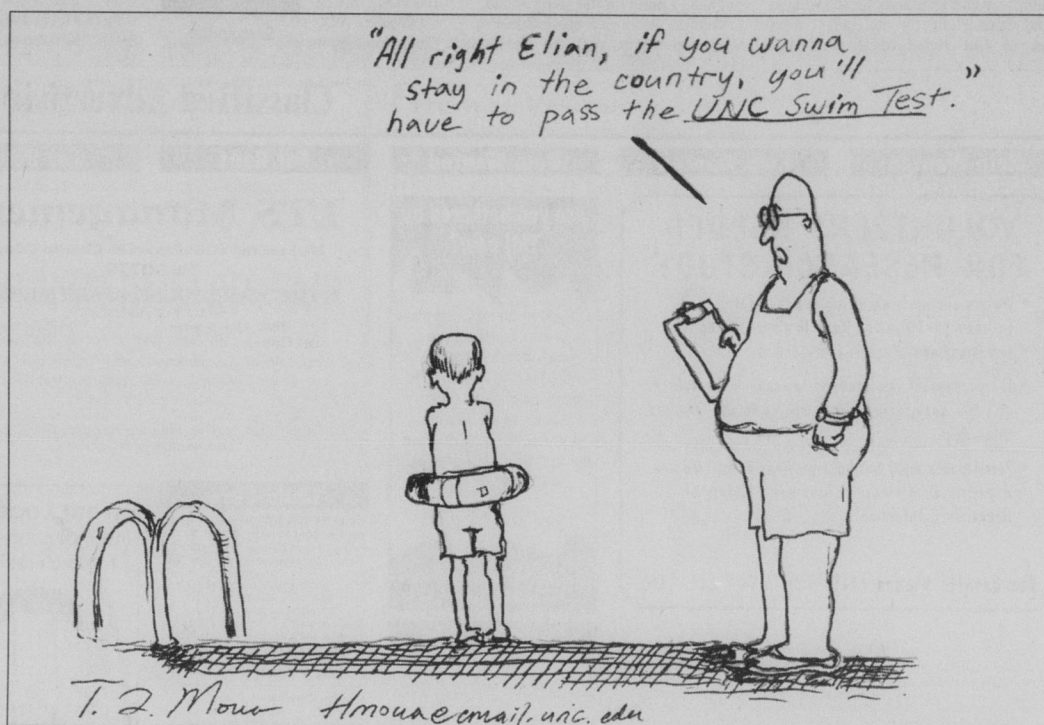
That way, you'll get an educational opportunity to learn about a subject that intrigues you and go on to share that knowledge with fellow students in a structured classroom setting.

On top of that, you get a total of six hours of academic credit for both researching and teaching the class, while your students would receive one hour of credit for enrolling.

But it's too bad the University doesn't already offer a broader, more engaging selection of classes to choose from on all its own.

Administrators should encourage professors to design more creative classes to meet students' interests. Too many professors seem more concerned with finishing their next book than they are with the academic interests of students.

C-START will broaden educational opportunities for all students. And UNC's top priority should always be to offer students the best education possible.



When Teaching, Politics Collide

Although education has always been a means for transferring or maintaining social power, discussions of education have become more and more highly politicized in recent decades. These discussions affect students and educators at all levels, from Head Start to English 11 at UNC.

Currently, several issues are prominent in national debates on education policy. First, on a practical level, educators who value the teaching of skills and content using traditional methodologies often consider themselves at odds with educators who favor more inventive strategies.

For example, in a public school district near Pittsburgh, Pa., last year, a group of parents strenuously opposed the introduction of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' new standards for problem-solving out of concern that their children would not learn basic mathematical operations, such as multiplication.

The chairman of the math department defended the standards, but the ensuing battle took time and energy away from actually implementing the curriculum and developing instructional materials.

Similarly, in the field of composition, teaching "process writing" has found much support among educators. Using this methodology, some English teachers (including the 130 composition instructors at UNC) help students draft and revise papers rather than simply assigning a grade to one final copy; teachers take the role of coach rather than traditional authority.

Opponents to these teaching methods worry, however, that students will fail to learn the grammar they need without traditional instruction.

But no teacher would really suggest that students don't need to learn mathematical operations or meaningful communication skills, and no parent wants his or her child kept from learning problem-solving approaches or tools for self-expression.

These are differences over means, not over ends, and advocates for both sides do a disser-



TARA ROBBINS
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vice to the students involved when they argue as if their opponents' goals differ from their own in cases like these.

The content and teaching methodology of some other fields are more closely linked with specific political agendas. For example, in the study of history, the privileging of certain movements over others effectively conveys a hierarchy of values — slavery is bad, civil rights are good. Those distinctions are now easy to make because our society has come to a consensus over the issue of slavery.

But what about the use of violence in John Brown's raid? Brown opposed slavery and believed that the viciousness and immorality of the system necessitated open rebellion, including the use of violence to achieve its end.

Some members of Operation Rescue, the violent anti-abortion organization, have expressed similarly belligerent convictions.

And what of our treatment of our enemies when we study foreign wars?

In hindsight, it is easy to see the gross injustices of portrayals of Japanese Americans during World War II, but it is still difficult for many people to set aside contemporary stereotypes of recent immigrants or religious fundamentalists, for example.

The fact that politics influences education is inherently neither good nor bad; it reflects the reality of the fact that school communities provide some kind of moral instruction, whether implicit or explicit.

When discussions of contested political and moral issues must play a role in the curricu-

lum, educators have a responsibility to handle those discussions with a conscientious respect for the various beliefs held by members of their communities.

Too often, teachers are tempted (as many people would be) by a desire to produce students who think like themselves, not students who think independently.

It is no more just for contemporary educators to marginalize a fundamentalist Christian student than it was for Christian teachers to anathematize an atheist student years ago.

The same teacher treats issues of cultural difference in the curriculum signals the level of personal acceptance students of different backgrounds and beliefs can expect to find in the classroom.

If students are to learn to participate in a diverse democracy, they need to be encouraged to think independently even, sometimes, of their teachers.

In spite of the difficulty of teaching in communities of mixed cultural beliefs, a common middle ground exists and has been documented.

The book "The Case for Character Education" reports that hundreds of cultures all over the world, in spite of many specific differences, share 15 common values. These values include personal traits like courage, kindness, responsibility and honesty.

In other words, though Asian cultures emphasize the good of the community over the happiness of the individual, whereas Western cultures emphasize the success and fulfillment of each individual, both Asian and Western cultures value a sense of social responsibility, honest dealings with others and a compassionate outlook.

It might be impossible to keep education value-neutral, but prioritizing values like these would help the American educators balance the needs of the diverse communities they serve.

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Crosswords, Pimps and Rape: A Wild Year at the DTH

One year ago today, I became the most hated man at UNC.

On this same page that day, I threatened to remove the beloved crossword from the paper and challenged readers to e-mail me with story ideas to salvage the precious puzzle.

Word spread through campus like fire, evoking some of the angriest e-mail messages and phone calls I've ever received.

It was heaven. And more importantly, it was only the beginning.

I walked into this job determined to make this year anything but business as usual at The Daily Tar Heel.

Waving a banner of "boldness," I said it was the very mission of this newsroom to be edgy, daring and dismissing of the status quo.

In many ways, those goals have been realized — at least in my book — and now, with the end near, I'm forced to come to terms with the madness.

The DTH has taken its fair share of flak in the last nine months.

The "Pimpin' Ain't Easy" storm of September blew hard, with criticism gushing from readers as well as some



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of my colleagues in the office.

It became fodder for some journalism professors and triggered accusations of racism and poor taste.

Looking back, the choice of wording was dangerously reckless, and I understand some folks' raised eyebrows.

The taste argument, however, I'll never buy. For those folks with a clue about pop culture these days, the catchline was clearly a compliment for the elderly gentlemen — a way of giving him credit but using today's lingo to do it.

Get with the times!
And as soon as Tropical Storm Pimp moved out to sea, Hurricane Fennell

worked his way up the coast. A Dec. 3 column by Josh Fennell that linked fraternities to gang rape had the Greek community up in arms — again.

The same bogus "DTH hates Greeks" cries that have swirled around this place since I was a freshman rang loud again. The letters to the editor were furious; the meetings in my office with fraternity and sorority members were intense; the criticisms of the DTH's "irresponsibility" were heightened.

Through it all, I defended the column — not the deplorable point Fennell's hate-laden work was trying to make, but rather his right to say it and the right for this paper to publish it.

It was a classic case of pitting the First Amendment vs. the inability of some to accept the earth-shattering thought that the DTH is a newspaper, not a University brochure, and that sometimes there will be words or images within its pages that will incite. It's journalism, folks, not public relations.

Suck it up!
And before campus had a chance to

totally thaw from the record January snowfall, the heat from our student elections coverage began to sizzle.

Claims of bias quickly surfaced, as some said the pro-Erica Smiley attitude of the DTH was smothering and guided by some great Nelsonian agenda.

That was the rhetoric from the bandwagon. Here's the truth: There's a division between our newsroom and our opinions page, and an endorsement of Smiley by the opinions folks doesn't mean there's a DTH-wide agenda to get her into office.

My position as editor allows me to straddle this often-misunderstood fence, as I sit on the editorial board as well as run the newsroom.

But through it all, I consider myself a serious journalist — one who can write a balanced, fair profile of two candidates Monday and write a column supporting one of them Tuesday; one who can support a harshly criticized front-page elections story that others saw as biased when, in actuality, it was a piece that reported the event just how it happened. (The reporter was there; the critics weren't.)

More importantly, I am a journalist who realizes that public perception, while important, is often based on ignorance of how this paper really works and feeds on people who are hellbent on finding wrongs when they simply don't exist.

What's your agenda?

And even once the elections fervor calmed down, criticism still lingered about how much coverage the paper had devoted to the tuition battle and the search and selection of UNC's next chancellor. The DTH produced thousands of inches worth of text on both this year, to the point many said it saturated our pages and turned readers off.

What these people fail to grasp is that both were monumentally significant issues at this University. We were reporting on tuition strategies that tested both the financial and philosophical mission of this University.

We were covering a search and a selection that produced a man who will guide the future and define the landscape of UNC for years to come.

With news like that on our plate, you're damn right that the DTH wrote

a thousand inches on it.

Good newspapers present compelling, influential news from as many angles as possible because the importance and complexity of such stories is worthy of extensive coverage.

When the DTH devotes its front page to the latest style of hairnets in Lenoir Dining Hall or about new soap cakes in Morrison Residence Hall's urinals, then complain.

Shut up, read and learn something! Serving as editor, I have learned much — the most important thing being what type of journalism I believe in.

And it just so happens that those beliefs, as this year has illustrated, sometimes attract a lot of heat.

But I don't mind the sweat if it means producing the type of paper that welcomes experimentation, defies convention, tells it like it is and, yes, pisses people off every now and then.

Mission accomplished.

Editor Rob Nelson is a senior journalism and mass communication and political science major from Mt. Laurel, N.J. Get him at rnelson@email.unc.edu.