

Opinion



Board Editorials

Wasting Time

Other campus issues should take precedent over the attempt to universalize a University abbreviation

You would think that University leaders might have higher priorities. But you would be wrong.

Over Winter Break, while students were relaxing, UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser and University officials started a campaign to phase out the "UNC-CH" abbreviation in favor of the more specific "UNC-Chapel Hill," "UNC" or "Carolina."

Apparently, Chancellor Moeser finds the "CH" in "UNC-CH" to be an unpleasant pronunciation and has found this to be a pressing issue to tackle at this time for the University.

As if tuition, parking, overcrowding and construction aren't pressing issues for the chancellor to put on the top of his agenda right now — no, let's change the University's abbreviation.

He is joking, right? Please tell me Chancellor Moeser is not serious about this one.

What is the next campaign going to be — changing the fight song, the mascot, or the alma mater?

University officials had a hard enough time trying to learn how to pronounce Qatar (or "Cutter") as it is.

KATE HARTIG

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

Moeser has already started changing the way he refers to the University in letters and office stationery. I always wondered how the chancellor spends his time.

While most North Carolinians know the UNC-system abbreviations, it is thought that those outside of the state might be confused.

This hasn't been a problem for the past 200 years, so there seems to be little need for the urgency of this action.

There are consistent ways that the University is identified in publications and systemwide — as UNC-CH officially. Regardless, it would be a serious pain and a waste of ink to write "UNC-Chapel Hill"

on every piece of mail.

I know that Moeser wants UNC to be the top public university in the country, but this isn't an important step in that process. There are so many other pressing issues to address on this campus, and it's disconcerting to know that valuable time is actually being spent on campaigns to change the University's abbreviation.

Students are the largest constituency on this campus, and the chancellor and University officials should make sure that their time is being constructively spent addressing concerns and issues that directly affect students.

Even if a universal abbreviation was implemented, it's unlikely that it would catch on. Enforcing such a policy would be even more ridiculous. (I can see it now: Honor Code violations for every offender.)

Seriously, it's time to reprioritize. When trying to change the abbreviation of the University makes the news next to tuition increases, we've got problems.

Arbitrary Compensation

The federal government is not fairly fulfilling its obligation to all terrorism victims

The federal government decided that it has a moral obligation to compensate victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

While few people are against the compensation, some are beginning to question its fairness in light of the government's failure to set up such a fund for the victims of the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City.

As part of a \$15 billion airline bailout package passed in October, the government allocated about \$5 billion specifically for compensation for the victims' survivors. On average, each family of a victim will receive \$1.65 million tax-free, minus payments from existing life-insurance policies.

After the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, the government distributed death and disability payments to federal employees who were victims, but it essentially ignored other victims. Cafeteria workers, janitors

and the families of children who died in the building's childcare facility were given hardly any federal assistance.

While money cannot ease the pain of families affected by terrorism and will not bring back the dead, at least it can show an effort on the part of the government to help the survivors piece together their lives. The federal government's willingness to help the victims of Sept. 11 is commendable. Its failure to do so for the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing is both deplorable and embarrassing.

By compensating one set of victims and not the other, the government seems to prioritize the lives of its citizens. Were the losses felt by the families of Oklahoma City victims not as great as those affected by Sept. 11? Hardly so.

Given the government's long history of financially supporting American victims of

terrorism, there is no excuse for the Oklahoma City bombing to be overlooked. Still, it has happened repeatedly since 1995.

In 2000, Congress passed a law to help compensate American families who lost loved ones to terrorism in foreign nations. Those affected by the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa and the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, were included in the compensation plan. Victims of the Oklahoma City bombing were excluded because the attack was on U.S. soil.

While the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks are certainly deserving of compensation, their suffering on an individual level cannot be any greater than the suffering of those in Oklahoma City in 1995. Congress and Attorney General John Ashcroft should compare the treatment of Oklahoma City victims to that of the victims of Sept. 11 to ensure that the federal government is fully meeting its moral obligation.

Steering Clear Of Parents — Easy Solutions

Are you OK? That's the question that I've been asking everyone I know since I got back to Chapel Hill. Are you OK? I know that I barely survived — but I also know that I'm one of the lucky ones. I was able to escape from captivity after only a week, but I know that some of you weren't nearly as fortunate.

That's right, I'm talking about the torture of spending Winter Break with your family. Just a few short years ago you lived with these people and enjoyed life to the fullest (OK, you really didn't enjoy it at all, but you didn't honestly know that a better life existed).

But now that you've been away, you've had the first glimpse of freedom and it's quite the tasty treat. And yet, for the past three weeks, you've been trapped in a world dominated by people with the same level of appreciation for your lifestyle as untrained circus monkeys. These people seriously expected you to go to bed before midnight?

Do you remember ever going to bed before midnight unless you were severely hungover or had some strange combination of Ebola and the plague?

And let's not mention your eating habits. Depending on your personal situation, I'm quite sure that you were told that either you eat way too much or not nearly enough. You, of course, just sat there smiling, because it's really not polite to yell, "For the love of all things chaste and pure, stop the madness!" to your grandmother over the Christmas dinner.

However, as your friendly neighborhood purveyor of advice, I've come up with a few sure-fire ways to never have to endure another agonizing experience like this again. (Remember that it's only five months until summer — and that lasts for more than three months!) It's never too early to devise your get-away plan.

One approach to take might even seem legitimate in your parent's eyes (a.k.a. they pay for it). Study abroad.

In fact, it's a good idea to get as far away from home as possible (people who study abroad in Canada need to have their brains examined by licensed professionals, because there's a good chance that they're missing.)

Good choices include Australia, Djibouti, Antarctica or somewhere even south of Pluto. Anywhere that will keep your parents at a safe distance. Nothing under 234,212 miles is exactly what you want to do.

Another option that once again doesn't have you spending a cent is going to prison.

While this may not seem completely ideal at first, just think about all of the possibilities, including free food and meeting new people, that you would never have been exposed to otherwise.

Not to mention that you won't have to see your family again until you make parole — and that won't happen for a while.

In fact, depending on your particular method of getting into prison (militant jaywalking), you might bring so much shame to your family that, upon your release, you'll never be invited back to family functions again.

(Side note: Going to prison does have some drawbacks — namely you'll get the title of "ex-con" upon your release, and that makes it slightly more difficult to do normal day-to-day activities such as meeting a spouse, getting a job that doesn't involve going back to prison or eating scones.)

There are a few other methods that are worth mentioning: the witness protection program (it helps to have actually seen a crime), but you could graduate and get a job in (insert city that's far enough away that you can't drive home), or after finals you could throw yourself in front of the Reverse U bus (nothing removes the suffering of three months with your parents better than a high quality coma).

Chances are good that if you're actually reading this column then you made it back safely. I'm really happy for you.

But you should consider yourself lucky or blessed. And make sure that you take full precautions to see that it doesn't happen again.

Remember that exposure to your family in larger doses than 1 1/2 days is hazardous to your health, and the surgeon general would greatly appreciate it if you sent him a hearty check for his troubles. And just to allay any added fears that you may have — if you're able to get away for next Christmas break, remember that Santa can use FedEx.

Travis Raines was recently traumatized after a week of "quality time" with his family. While recovering, he can be reached at traines@unc.edu.



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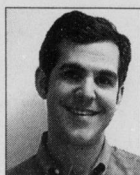
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New DTH Ombudsman Brings Perspective, Open Ear to Readers

The search for an ombudsman has been front-page news recently.

With Michael R. Bloomberg elected mayor of New York City, The New York Observer reported that Bloomberg News was considering hiring an ombudsman to provide its staff and readers with an independent perspective on the news service's coverage of its founder and former leader. "Of all of the things I've heard, it's one of the best," said Bloomberg News Editor in Chief Matthew Winkler in the Observer in reference to the creation of an ombudsman position to monitor potential conflicts.

Mayor Bloomberg still owns 72 percent of Bloomberg, L.P., the privately held parent company for his media empire. Deepening the pool of possible conflicts, financial industry giant (and potential provider of services to New York City) Merrill Lynch owns another 20 percent. According to the Jan. 6 New York Times, the city's Conflict of Interest Board is scheduled to rule shortly on how Bloomberg's holdings — worth more than



MICHAEL FLYNN
OMBUDSMAN

a billion dollars — should now be managed. The board's options range from recommending no changes to requiring a sale of the mayor's equity stake. The Times reported that Bloomberg has agreed to comply with the board's decision.

In contrast, The Daily Tar Heel's search for a new ombudsman for this semester managed to elude any media notice.

Its quest began in November, when my predecessor, Josh Myerov, sent an e-mail to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's graduate listserv announcing that the position would be open in the spring. Myerov, a colleague of mine in the school's master's program, indicated that he was the only person to seek the job last year. Quickly discerning that those are the sort of employment odds that favor even me, I signed up for an interview.

During my visit to the DTH offices, I submitted a résumé that unfortunately revealed my relentlessly advancing age. Queried as to my ability to interact with and understand the viewpoint of under-

graduates, I assured the interviewers of a well-preserved college-age mentality.

I also mentioned a few issues that received regular campus coverage during my days at Vanderbilt in the 1980s. These must have seemed quite familiar to the DTH audience: the impact of a new university leader, overseas investments, campus diversity, school funding for various student groups and speakers, bothersome construction, plus the seemingly timeless concerns of underage drinking, tuition increases and parking.

In fact, the most significant difference between my undergraduate experience and that of today's students may be that nobody listens to college radio all-stars R.E.M. anymore. And the food has dramatically improved. (I don't know what is in the Lenoir tortellini filling either, but those of you who think there was a menu item called "tortellini" in campus cafeterias 20 years ago are mistaken. The equivalent pasta choices were either a tomato soup referred to as ravioli, or "American Chop Suey," a dish that managed to be both indigestible and culturally offensive at once.)

After completing law school in North

Carolina, I returned to my hometown of New York City to begin a legal career. Having saturated myself with life as a lawyer in New York, I moved back to North Carolina to continue practicing in Charlotte. After much contemplation, I decided to return to school in search of new professional challenges.

Given the depressed state of the current media job market, I may find more of those than I anticipated. In addition, moving to journalism will allow me to experience one of the few professions with a lower public esteem rating than lawyers enjoy. My legal background might also provide some guidance in speaking with concerned readers. Who calls a lawyer when they have something nice to say?

Irreverence aside, the job of DTH ombudsman can be an important one, despite lacking the gravity of Bloomberg News' dilemma. The principal reason the DTH is not directly operated by the University, but by a separate entity, is to provide the paper with a degree of independence to cover campus life. Some readers might dispute the effectiveness of this arrangement, and if so, please let me know your thoughts.



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 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. Publication is not guaranteed. 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: editdesk@unc.edu.

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