

Board Editorials Rating Student Congress

Members of the 84th session of Student Congress have done a commendable job improving the organization's reputation, but much remains to be done.

Student Congress underwent a much-needed metamorphosis this semester.

Members of the 84th session of Student Congress rejuvenated the group's image by being more active than their predecessors and by focusing on student concerns.

It's a dramatic improvement compared to past sessions of Congress spent debating futile resolutions to lift the economic sanctions against Iraq instead of issues where the members actually could exercise some influence over the outcome.

Members of the 84th Congress have taken care to pick their battles based on issues more relevant to students' everyday lives.

For instance, Congress created a Textbook Pricing Committee to explore ways to expand the value of students' dollars.

Committee Chairwoman Jennifer Orr has led a determined push for faculty members to contact Student Stores with a list of the books they plan to use in the upcoming semester. Knowing which books will be in demand for spring semester allows Student Stores to purchase those books at a higher price during the buy-back period. In return, there will be more used books available for students to buy in January.

The committee is on the verge of meeting its goal of 75 percent of faculty members turning in their reading lists for next semester. Rather than rest on its laurels, however, the committee will begin targeting individual professors via letters and telephone calls, former Speaker of Congress Tony Larson said in an interview.

Larson said the textbook committee exemplifies the changing spirit of Student Congress from a somewhat-passive to a more active organization.

Past sessions of Congress have served as little more than second fiddle to the student body president. Congress members followed the executive branch's lead on campus issues, such as passing a resolution against tuition hikes before an important tuition vote.

Larson said this session of Congress, however, actively is seeking out student issues that the executive branch is not handling already. This wise move is fundamental to causing a permanent change in students' perception of Congress and in rebuilding the organization. By standing on their own issues, Congress members will increase the visibility of the body - eventually leading to higher voter turnout and to increased competition for seats.

Congress members, however, are not just focusing their rebuilding efforts on the student body. Larson said members also are working to improve

their image with University administrators through meetings and cooperative efforts.

Larson, echoing Student Body President Jen Daum's philosophy toward governance, said this push is based on the belief that students generally can achieve more by working alongside administrators than by organizing protests in the Pit.

Although working hand in hand with officials carries many benefits, there is always the danger of becoming too willing to compromise on issues vital to the student body. Congress members must combat that attitude by making a special effort to remember that their constituents don't always see eye-to-eye with administrators.

Overall, members of Student Congress, particularly Larson, have done a commendable job raising the organization from its grave of irrelevancy to increasing prominence.

But members of the 84th session of Congress are still facing that persistent boogeyman as their predecessors - student interest. Congress long has been plagued by low voter turnout and general apathy from the student body. Although Larson and members of the 84th session have come up with long-term solutions to boost interest, more efforts need to be made in the short term.

Their key outreach effort this semester, a Fall Forum, fell flat on its face - largely because the event was held the same night as a UNC basketball game. About 40 people attended the event, including numerous Congress members, student government officials and other campus figures. Although those in attendance should be commended for their dedication, it's vital to reach out to more students by carefully scheduling interest meetings.

Additionally, Congress has a vast problem with legitimacy. In February's election, 15 candidates won a seat in Congress in the February election after receiving 10 votes or fewer. When a single suite can elect a representative, it turns the idea that Congress members can represent their constituencies into a bad joke. This problem is further highlighted by the body's failure to ensure that members are in contact with their constituencies.

Members are trying to solve the problem by making it easier for students to determine their districts. Although this is a step in the right direction, voter turnout and student interest likely will remain low until members of the Congress prove they can strongly defend student needs and address student concerns.

For this semester, Student Congress earns a B+



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FORMER SPEAKER
OF STUDENT
CONGRESS

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Reader Feedback Contributes To DTH Learning Experience

Well, looks like we've reached the end of the road, both literally and figuratively. Finals are rapidly approaching, and we've all got more to do, with classes and the approaching holidays, than any of us would care to mention.

In the spirit of the end of the semester, I'd like to end by tying up some loose ends and recap my experiences this semester as a columnist. Bobby Knight, head basketball coach at Texas Tech, once said, "All of us learn to write in the second grade. Most of us go on to greater things."

He couldn't be further from the truth. This column certainly has been an exceptional learning experience in more ways than this space can afford me to describe.

First, I was gifted with some truly brilliant readers. The readers who replied to my various columns and rantings throughout the semester were as varied and diverse as University admissions purports. Undergraduate and graduate students, even professors, from a variety of disciplines with exquisitely diverse opinions graced my e-mail inbox throughout the semester. This does not take into account the e-mails I received from residents in Chapel Hill and alumni from literally all over the world who keep up through The Daily Tar Heel online. If my column had one ultimate purpose this semester, it was to get people thinking. Whether that thinking ended up being productive and generated thoughtful internal debate I will never know. But whatever I had to say, readers did not hesitate to e-mail or call to let me know what they thought.

And I must say we certainly have a campus that can both creatively compliment and insult with equal vigor. I've been accused of being too liberal, too conservative, brilliant and moronic by my readers. You've described what you think I do to sheep in my free time, and how you think my columns are written in crayon on construction paper. Those certainly gave me the best laughs.

It was a bit shocking at first to get feedback describing to which bodily function my columns were roughly equivalent. Regardless, I am eternally grateful for the feedback. At the very least it let me know people out there were reading and cared enough to respond.

Many, in fact, questioned where I got the title for my column - "The Raging Bull." To be honest, it's a shameless and unabashed rip-off (or homage depending on your point of view) to the film by the same name. The movie is two parts Greek tragedy and two parts "Rocky" without Sylvester Stallone's incomprehensible rambles. Plus, I felt the film's title accurately reflected what this column would do - present viewpoints in an unabashed manner that many might find rather striking.

This presentation manner, however, would not have been possible without the presence of many of the right people in the right places on the DTH staff. I think the other columnists would agree that Lucas Fenske, our editor, was genuinely concerned with letting each of us have our own voice and view not be stifled by editorial restraint.

With that freedom for all the columnists came great responsibility. I felt, week in and week out, that since we were trusted to write about whatever we wished our columns should at least be a reflection of our respective thoughts and opinions at the time. Fenske, along with the rest of the hard-working DTH staff, certainly has my possible highest praise.

Jack Kerouac, who gets my vote for greatest writer of the 20th century, once said of his writing, "The fact was I had the vision ... I think everyone has ... what we lack is the method."

This semester has been another step toward finding that method. For everyone I neglected to mention who provided guidance and advice along the way, from Lake Tahoe to right here in Chapel Hill, thank you. And please, above all else, keep thinking.

Reach Joseph Rauch at rauch@email.unc.edu.



JOSEPH RAUCH
THE RAGING BULL

Feeding the Hungry

The Freshman Focus Council's efforts to donate leftover meals to the homeless is a worthwhile demonstration of UNC students' commitment to public service.

Hoping to get rid of those last few meals on your meal plan?

Well, here's a chance to put them to good use.

On Tuesday, the Freshmen Focus Council, a subgroup of the executive branch of student government, is organizing a meal drive to benefit the Inter-Faith Council Soup Kitchen. The meal drive is a part of the FFC's Freshman Day of Service.

Beginning at 11 a.m., students with block meal plans wanting to participate in the program can get a meal from Outta Here, the takeout dining facility in Mainstreet Lenoir, and drop it off at a location at the back of Lenoir Dining Hall.

All boxed meals collected will be delivered to the IFC. FFC leaders said they hope to collect at least 150 meals through the drive.

Tuesday's drive will be the first organized effort by a campus group to donate meals to those in need.

FFC members say they hope to expand the food drive in the future if this week's plan is successful.

The council deserves a pat on the back for organizing Tuesday's drive, which will help to encourage more involvement within Chapel Hill and Carrboro by University students by tapping into a well-established community group.

The IFC soup kitchen serves meals three times a day, 365 days each year to needy individuals from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. Last year, the kitchen served about 76,000 meals.

The FFC's meal drive, if successful, will help to boost the efforts of the IFC - and it provides a creative solution for students hoping to use any leftover meals that they might have on their meal plan.

Students should line up on Tuesday to donate a spare meal or two to the meal drive and rest assured that the contributions are going for a good cause.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, which were reached after open debate. The board consists of eight board members, the assistant editorial page editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2002-03 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Restricting Occupancy Creates Many Unanswered Questions

TO THE EDITOR:

Often when I read or hear an ambiguous and obfuscated pronouncement from a group of politicians, I wonder if they are incapable of clarity or if they simply do not wish to say exactly what they mean. A recent case in point is the Chapel Hill Town Council. See if you answer the following questions:

- Exactly what constitutes "more than four unrelated persons?"
- Could I move in with a family of four (for example, husband, wife and two children)? Here, although there would be more than four people in the unit, I would be unrelated to only four of them and each of them would be living with only one person to whom they were unrelated.
- Could two sets of quadruplets from different families share an apartment? Although this would mean eight occupants, each person would be living with only four persons to whom he was unrelated.
- What, exactly, does "related" mean? Recently I met a group of my cousins. Although they were all either siblings or first cousins of one another they are all my second cousins thrice removed. Would the Town Council deem them to be related to me?
- If the Town Council really meant no more than four UNC students, why did they not just say so?

Living Wages Best Answer to High-Priced Homes in County

TO THE EDITOR:

The Nov. 26 "Priced Out of a Home" editorial is a great example of fuzzy thinking. Why should Orange County be ashamed to have the highest priced homes in the Triangle? By definition, one of the six counties has to. Chapel Hill and Orange County have the added advantage of smart local leaders who have put the brakes on growth. The last thing these leaders need to do is destroy more open space to build cheap homes for the poor. Gasp! - read on.

People seem to forget that the goal of progress and development is to eliminate poverty, not institutionalize it. We do not need a commitment to "economic diversity" because we do not need poor people.

If we needed poor people, we would not be always trying to make them better off. Instead, we need a stronger commitment to paying local workers enough to live in Chapel Hill. If we are not rich enough to afford to pay our janitors, landscapers, trash collectors and even public school teachers a living wage, perhaps our quality of life isn't as high as we think.

Civic and University leaders should leave Orange County open space alone, stop the growth of employment to match the existing limits to housing and then strive to ensure all of the workers we employ can actually afford to live here.

J.T. MacQueen
Class of 1962

Ron Sutherland
Chapel Hill

The Daily Tar Heel

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