

Board Editorials

Fair Wages for Labor

UNC officials need to raise teaching assistant stipends, which are far below average, but they should ask the state legislature for funding before resorting to tuition.

When proposing tuition increases, University leaders often point to the need to boost faculty salaries to help attract the best professors to the campus.

Unfortunately, in the past these plans often overlooked a group vital to the campus and many of its students – teaching assistants.

But a recent plan, pushed through largely because of Branson Page, Graduate and Professional Student Federation president, aims to remedy the problem of poor compensation and deserves the support of members of the University community.

The Teaching Assistant Advisory Task Force released a report Jan. 7 that recommended raising the average TA stipend from \$11,379 to \$14,388 during the next four years.

The increase would move TA salaries at the University from the lowest quartile to the highest quartile among our peer institutions. The average TA stipend at our peers is \$13,272 – almost \$2,000 more than the University's average.

The task force also proposed an alternate increase that would raise the average stipend to \$13,233 with a 3 percent cost-of-living increase per year over four years.

Leaders now face the challenging task of finding money to fund the proposed stipend hikes.

The UNC-CH Tuition Task Force recommended a three-year, \$350 annual tuition increase Dec. 19, with 8 percent of the money raised going toward increasing TA stipends.

But the proposal is unlikely to be approved for the upcoming academic year after the UNC-system Board of Governors imposed a one-year ban on campus-initiated tuition increases at its Friday meeting.

The N.C. General Assembly makes the final decision on tuition increases. Given the state's projected multimillion dollar budget shortfall, lawmakers could look to higher tuition as a way to fund the UNC-system and its campuses.

Should the legislators approve a tuition increase later this year, Graduate and Professional Student Federation leaders and other students could lobby legislators to consider using a portion of any tuition increase to pay for higher stipends.

But if legislators respect the tuition freeze, graduate students should spend the next year working hard to ensure that higher stipends for TAs are included in any future tuition increase proposals.

University leaders also could study the feasibility of soliciting private sources to pay for higher stipends. Businesses, research groups, alumni and other organizations could be solicited to contribute money to pay for graduate students' research or teaching – similar to endowments offered to full-time faculty members.

The endowed positions would help ensure a steady stream of funding for future teaching assistants and could be an effective tool in attracting students interested in doing special research in a field related to the company paying the endowment.

But while the source of the money remains up in the air, the potential benefits of raising TA stipends already are apparent. With graduate school tuition on the rise at campuses nationwide, teaching assistant stipends play an important role in helping universities attract the best and brightest applicants.

Raising stipends offered at the University to levels closer to our peers' will go a long way in helping campus officials meet our goal of the very best education.

A Welcome Surprise

The Chapel Hill Town Council's developed a decent proposal to spend unexpected revenue, but more should be allotted to community programs like Project Homestart.

It's rare to receive good financial news these days.

Thanks to a holiday windfall from a new half-cent local sales tax and unexpected state funds, the town of Chapel Hill finds itself in prime position to address problems facing several local institutions.

The 2002-03 Capital Improvements Program discussed at Monday's Town Council meeting sets the town on the right track for spending the cash that surprisingly fell in its lap.

Town Council members are scheduled to further debate the plan, which will dole out anywhere from \$1.63 million to \$2.6 million, at a planning retreat Friday.

If finalized, the town revenue will go to providing new electric generators to the Town Hall and to the Chapel Hill Police Department. During December's devastating ice storm, both were without power for several days, which left the area frighteningly unprepared to face any immediate town needs.

Among other improvements would be an allotment of about \$7,000 to public art projects, taking steps toward improving the area's already impressive cultural environment.

Also commendable is a component of the plan that would split \$815,000 of the money between the Inter-Faith Council homeless shelter, the Hargraves Community Center and two local fire stations.

This is welcome news for the IFC, a Carrboro-based organization that provides numerous social services for local residents, which already has been hit hard this year.

The IFC's Project Homestart, a transitional housing program, was denied funding by the fed-

eral Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Money from the town, though, will go only to improvements on the IFC Community House, a 24-hour shelter, leaving Project Homestart still in jeopardy of closing within the next few months.

IFC officials have been working with the area's Washington, D.C., representatives and with local foundations to try to stay open through June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

But unless officials can hunt up additional funding or slash benefits, Project Homestart still might be forced to shut down March 31.

This would be disastrous for the local homeless and needy populations who rely on the program while transitioning back into society.

While town and area officials are busy looking for more money, UNC students need to demonstrate their community loyalty by responding to IFC's dire needs. Volunteers are needed desperately to keep all the services going. Members of the University's Campus Y and from N.C. Hillel, as well as other groups, provide important help for the organization. But as always, more volunteers are needed. If you don't have a few hours to spare, then write government officials to make sure community groups such as the IFC receive the funding they need in future years.

As encouraging as the capital improvements funding is in terms of addressing local concerns, signs don't point to Chapel Hill officials finding another \$1 million on their doorstep.

Thus, it will be up to everyone in the local community to ensure that worthwhile community programs such as Project Homestart have the money they need to continue helping the less fortunate.

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



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments. 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.

Discrimination Lies in Not Allowing Students To Choose Their Leaders

TO THE EDITOR:

The Queer Network for Change response to the current InterVarsity controversy highlights the need for further clarity in this matter.

The administration needs to define exactly what is and what is not "wrongful discrimination" in an appropriate manner (i.e. with common sense). Let's recognize that no one questions the rightness of allowing all students to join an organization. The issue is leadership. InterVarsity and other student groups are interest groups. As such they have specific goals in mind.

For InterVarsity, that goal is forming a Christian community at UNC centered in Jesus Christ, a community which in turn welcomes other students by inviting them to know Jesus. For the QNC, also a student interest group, the goal is offering support and advocacy for those pursuing non-heterosexual lifestyles (see their Web page).

It certainly would not make sense for the University to force QNC to allow someone who does not support their beliefs to lead their group. The function of a leader is to help a group envision where it wants to go and then get there.

For the QNC to move forward and for members to feel like they have a purpose, they need a leader who agrees with their position. Likewise, InterVarsity needs leaders who are dedicated to the Christian mission. That is the only way to keep the "interest" (i.e. focus) in student interest groups and thus preserve true diversity.

That brings me to Harper's comment that "exempting one group undermines the purpose of the policy." What is the purpose of the policy? Assumedly, it is equal rights for all students to pursue their interests freely. Only groups that are allowed intentionally to pursue a certain focus can truly offer equal opportunity to all students.

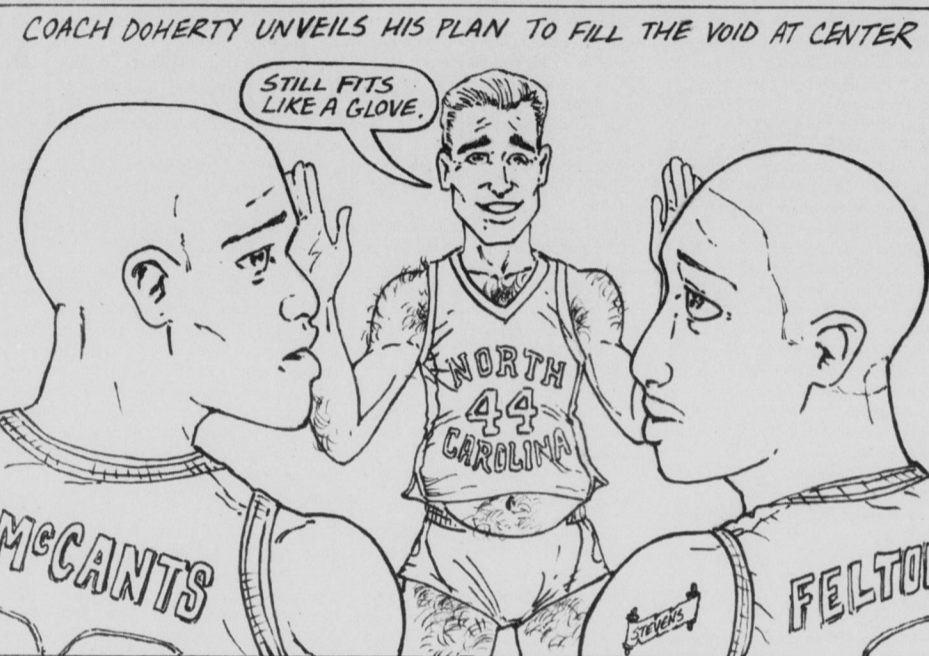
Adam Clark
Senior English

Bush's Stimulus Proposal Addresses Realities of Economic Life in U.S.

TO THE EDITOR:

Ms. Gurvich's latest column "Bush's Stimulus Plan Benefits Rich to Detriment of Others" labels the Bush stimulus package as a "monstrosity" and characterizes the tax cut within it as another "handout to the rich."

To support this contention, there is a



Granville Fire-Starters Illustrates Apathy to University Reputation

Let's backtrack to kindergarten. Primary education teaches us, among other things, from the first day of school to value respect, responsibility and morals. Students share toys, clean up their own messes and respect one another's property.

Skip ahead now to college. Esteemed graduates of secondary education enjoy the privilege of higher learning, learn the responsibilities of an adult and, apparently, set fire to residence halls.

What's wrong with this scenario? It's depressing reality. Granville Towers residents had an extraordinary wake-up call Friday morning. One set of students experienced a 4 a.m. strobe light and screaming alarm. The second group of deep sleepers woke up to fire sirens and sounds of windows shattering. The third set, much to the dismay of safety officials, heard about it the next day.

But regardless of the range in late-night awareness, all residents were in some way affected by the fire. Loss of sleep, waiting in the cold, the stench of smoke, property replacement costs, police and fire officials' time and spent tax dollars are all consequences that had to be faced. And why? Because someone somewhere is an idiot.

The fire was not caused by a lazy per-

son's cigarette ashes. Granville's electrical wiring is not at fault. Not even a drunken microwave popcorn incident is to blame.

It was arson – a technical term for disrespectful stupidity.

Police say they believe the fire was started by a person sitting on fire a couch in the sixth-floor lounge of the West Tower. Now there's a story for a UNC admissions pamphlet.

Aside from felonies, I can't think of anything more senseless than setting a couch on fire for a cheap Thursday-night thrill.

Arson is completely immoral (i.e. the Honor Code thrown out the window), brainless (cavemen were entertained by fire) and simply rude (wake all your friends up at 4 a.m. and see what I mean).

It can't be rationalized. It is unacceptable.

Granville has issued a "substantial reward" for any information regarding the crime and its suspects. But following the instinctive "Whodunnit?" impulse does not appeal to me.

I don't care who the culprit is. My mind dwells on the fact that ridiculous activities, such as destroying private property, happen at all at the University.

What's most upsetting about the entire situation is the overall absence of concern shown on campus over instances such as Granville's fire. The UNC community

should be more concerned because one person with enough media attention can pull down the reputation of the school.

Do you want to proudly tell people that you are affiliated with UNC and have them reply, "Oh yes, I saw on the news about a student setting fire to a residence hall there." I know one instance is not cause for a great deal of worry over the condition of the entire school, but ignoring such problems illustrates the indifference toward the quality of our school.

IF UNC is headed toward Chancellor James Moeser's goal of becoming the top public university in the nation, the dead weight we are dragging behind us lies in the lack of valued education or, at least, the unwillingness to demonstrate it.

Every student should be grateful for the opportunity to live and learn in such a beautiful, enriching and lively campus. We complain about construction, tuition and parking. Although these concerns are valid, they are futile without a sustained educational atmosphere of appreciation.

Granville's fire was dumb, yes.

But it does not have to be pointless. Use it as an example of what can happen when people stop caring. And please send the fool(s) who did it back to a few kindergarten classes. The rest of us have the important business of higher education to get back to.

Reach Stephanie Poole at pooles@email.unc.edu.



STEPHANIE POOLE
IS IGNORANCE BLISS?

makes 21 percent of the nation's adjusted gross income, and the top 10 percent of income receivers makes 46 percent of the national AGI, but that is not an issue of empirical equity in taxation. The philosophical, social and political motivations of progressive taxation and income redistribution are arguable points by reasonable people in a free society, but getting some relevant data out there would seem a good first step in the conversation if we're going to define what's fair by talking about percentages.

Rick Palmer
Consultant
Center for Teaching and Learning

The length rule was waived.

Editorial Cartoon About 'Post Office Kids' Falls Under Protected Speech

TO THE EDITOR:

Graham Denzler spoke on the offended behalfs of those people, young or old, who hang out in front of the post office on Franklin Street. Denzler, if you're reading, I'm glad you spoke up.

Franklin Street is very college-oriented, so true, without a large variety of tastes represented. I am lucky enough to enjoy good independent films, waffle or omelet break-

fasts, pizza and jazz. So there are places on Franklin and Rosemary streets for me to go. Oh yes, and I like books, too.

I guess I am a college jerk, whose college is paid for by scholarships and loans because my parents are middle-working class whose Oldsmobile was bought by my grandmother with life insurance money she received when her husband, my grandfather, died nine years ago and whose rent is paid in part by the same grandmother with the same money, while I work part-time and go to class.

You demand a front-page apology for what? The expression of free speech? No, it was not altogether a nice thing for Stephens to (draw), but you are not very nice either, now are you? I think most people here at college are not so foolish to think that being a "post office kid" is nearly as silly as the cartoon makes it out to be (though I could be wrong there), but that's the point for political and editorial cartoons – to satirize.

It was a well-drawn cartoon, and it was funny, even if it was rude. There's no accounting for taste in humor. I did not realize that kids with mohawks and tattoos were so politically correct. I guess we do learn new things in college all the time.

Philip Weeks
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