

BOARD EDITORIALS

ILLOGICAL PLANS

With state budget talks heating up, UNC-system leaders should fight proposed plans to cut campus budgets and hike tuition by 5 percent.

State legislators, hungry for any source of money they can get their hands on, are once again thinking about picking students' wallets to make up for poor fiscal planning.

N.C. House subcommittees are considering raising tuition throughout the UNC system by 5 percent. To make matters worse, lawmakers also are eyeing additional cuts to the tune of several million dollars.

Any plan that winds its way through the subcommittee process and proceeds to the powerful House Appropriations Committee is almost guaranteed to be enacted — making it vital that students and officials rally to kill off these fundamentally unsound proposals as soon as possible.

The proposed tuition increase flies in the face of an earlier recommendation by the UNC-system Board of Governors to freeze tuition for one year.

BOG members rightfully justified a moratorium on the grounds that the nation's lagging economy and years of high tuition increases had drained students' wallets.

The tuition freeze aimed to provide a much-needed break for students and families unable to cope with ever-escalating tuition bills.

Legislators, showing a fundamental disconnection with the financial plights of their constituents, are preparing to throw the BOG's sound reasoning out of the window.

Furthermore, state-mandated tuition increases have an even more dramatic impact than school-specific increases.

Although campus trustees have shown an alarming willingness to raise tuition yearly, their proposals always allotted additional funding for financial aid — often as much as 35 percent of the overall revenue generated by the increase.

There is no provision requiring legislators to provide additional funding for financial aid, and most

therefore don't even think about it before voting to pass a tuition increase.

Additionally, there's no guarantee that funding from legislative tuition increases goes to support UNC-system schools.

The money from legislative increases goes into the state's general fund — to be used for everything from filling potholes to hiring kindergarten teachers — instead of improving specific campuses within the UNC system.

And forcing administrators to make even more cuts virtually ensures that student services will be curtailed and, in some cases, outright eliminated. After several rounds of making budget cuts, the UNC system can't make any more without firing professors, canceling classes and increasing class sizes.

These threats being discussed by the House subcommittees represent the first real test for Student Body President Matt Tepper, who took office just two weeks ago.

Also, it provides a fundamental challenge for the UNC-system Association of Student Governments. ASG President Jonathan Ducote must prove to students throughout the system that the group is worth its \$165,000 budget by mounting an effective offensive against the House proposal.

Tepper and Ducote need to work together closely to provide a coordinated response to the offensive waged by representatives in the N.C. House by rallying student support, building interest in a letter-writing campaign and cooperating with system officials.

System leaders already have appealed to legislators to abandon plans for further cuts by continuing various tax increases slated to end this summer.

Student leaders should rally behind that banner as the best way to keep legislators' hands in their own pockets.

PUTTING OUT FIRES

A bill in the N.C. House to toughen penalties for using pyrotechnic displays inappropriately is worthless without tough enforcement.

As the old adage goes, people who play with fire are likely to be burned. And several state legislators wisely are taking that philosophy to heart.

The N.C. House is discussing a bill that would increase the penalties for using pyrotechnics unsafely in the state after a Rhode Island nightclub fire killed roughly 100 people.

Under the proposed legislation, people who knowingly use pyrotechnic displays indoors without a permit would be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor instead of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Given the danger posed by pyrotechnics in a club atmosphere where alcohol is prevalent, the bill is a vital step toward safeguarding N.C. residents.

Increasing the penalty and publicizing it will make people think twice before igniting an unsanctioned pyrotechnic display — resulting in a safer atmosphere for everyone concerned.

The necessity for the bill is hit home by the fact that the band Great White played in North Carolina at the Winston-Salem club Ziggy's only two weeks before its pyrotechnic display set the club in Rhode Island on fire.

Ziggy's owner Jay Stephens, who admitted he was wary of using pyrotechnic displays at all, confessed to The Daily Tar Heel that the club never bothered to obtain a permit before the Great White concert, which did use pyrotechnics on the premises.

Such carefree behavior easily could trigger a deadly inferno unless leaders intervene.

Additionally, the proposed bill aims to increase safety in general by toughening the penalty for violating the state's building code.

Drawing from the examples of the Rhode Island fire and a nightclub panic in Chicago that left 20 people dead, legislators aim to stamp out some of the building problems that exacerbated the two inci-

- dents:
 - exceeding the occupancy limit in a public building used for public assembly,
 - locking or blocking access to exit doors in a public building used as a place of public assembly,
 - using plastic foam or any other type of combustible materials as interior finish or trim except as permitted.

Knowingly breaking two of those provisions would result in a Class II misdemeanor, while violating all three would be a Class I misdemeanor.

Although some building owners almost certainly will be displeased with the tougher penalties, the proposed bill is easier for owners to swallow than some responses being considered by local communities.

Chapel Hill officials, for instance, are debating whether to require sprinklers in local businesses — a measure that easily could cost business owners thousands of dollars.

The state proposal doesn't require owners to spend additional money provided that they are obeying the state's building codes. It only increases the penalties for people who violate them.

But the tougher penalties are pointless unless state leaders are willing to back them up with funding for communities to hire additional inspectors — a tough proposition given that the state's budget deficit amounts to 10 figures.

Without that inspection effort, the tougher penalties almost certainly aren't severe enough to scare owners into obeying them — meaning that the odds of the bill preventing a tragedy similar to the incidents in Rhode Island or Chicago are slim to none.

If legislators truly want to look out for the interests of the public, they'll pass this bill and ensure communities have the teeth needed to enforce building codes properly.

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

History of South, Iraq too different to be compared

TO THE EDITOR:

I was deeply offended by Professor Horne's comments in the Friday issue of The Daily Tar Heel, and I find fault in a lot of the things he said. First, the people of Iraq were the ones who wanted their statues destroyed because Saddam Hussein ruled them by force. They do not support the government, and therefore they do not want to remember their "history."

The statue of Silent Sam does not represent slavery, but it represents that spirit of freedom and independence from outside rule. If the people of this area wanted the statue removed, then it would have been gone by now, but that is the fundamental weakness in his argument — the people of Iraq do not want their history, and the people of the South take pride in theirs.

Also, I do not think it was appropriate for a professor to compare North Carolina or any state for that matter with Saddam Hussein's Iraqi government.

The South might have had its faults, but we have learned from them, and what we are today only came about through our experiences in the past. The fact that someone would attack the heritage of the South upsets me because you do not see anyone

from North Carolina attacking the Northern way of life or their history. If you agree that a Civil War statue in North Carolina should be destroyed, then so too should a statue in Massachusetts or New York. I guess we should just forget the Civil War even took place.

It simply is a matter of pride and respect. The South was defeated in 1865, but outsiders are still attacking our history and making us, as a people, feel that we should not take pride in our heritage.

Matthew Keene
Junior
History

Silent Sam represents the choices available in U.S.

TO THE EDITOR:

Perhaps Professor Gerald Horne is unaware of American history in relation to the Iraqi dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Destroying a statue of Hussein is the same as tearing down the Berlin Wall and stomping on the Nazi flag, and not the same as bashing a statue of a Confederate soldier who symbolizes, even in a mild way, democratic principles.

We traditionally banish symbols that are repulsive and hold to those that remind us of our heritage. The Civil War was a conflict which ultimately decided the nation's fate. In the end, the generals who led the

North and South shook hands and went home friends. The nation survived, and we offer some respect to those who took sides.

It seems that in the Iraq war, the leaders ran and vanished before the war even began. Maybe they were killed, but it is clear that they did nothing to defend the country. It is also clear that most Iraqis did nothing to help topple their government, even if it was oppressive. So, in contrast, Silent Sam is a symbolic gesture to American freedoms in which people can choose sides and speak for themselves.

History will prove that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do, and even if the people of Iraq could not do this by themselves, they will remember that a free nation far across the Atlantic came to their aid.

Walter Hoar
Chapel Hill

TO SUBMIT A LETTER: 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.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"The promises of yesterday are the taxes of today."

WILLIAM KING, CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER

Johnston '03



COMMENTARY

'Real world' doesn't exist solely outside college walls

"Wait until you get into the real world," some people whine. Excuse me, I thought I was in the real world. I guess college is some parallel universe that only looks like the real world and we'll find the secret portal and cross over after graduating. Whatever — that's ridiculous. While some students are walking around in some rose-colored world, enjoying the best years of their lives and sunning themselves out on the quad, some of us have already gotten a heavy dose of the "real world," and we're not happy.

If your idea of college life comes from "Animal House" and MTV Spring Break then sure, you'd probably think that everyone was on a four-year vacation from life. People think that if you are in college that automatically means that you have it easy. Since we're on the road to a successful life, we should be carefree, right? What could possibly be so bad about the life of a young adult attending one of the leading public universities in the country?

Have you ever thought about those students who cry at night? What about that girl or guy who doesn't know how she or he is going to make it this time?

Some of us are in this thing all by ourselves. Mommy and Daddy aren't cutting checks every two weeks. Some of us are miles away from home, unable to reach out for the support of our families, friends and familiar surroundings. There are students who are parents, juggling being a mom or a dad with statistics and biology.

We have to work; we need to pay rent, pay the bills, and we must eat. We're in debt because of credit cards and student loans. Some of us have problems with



NAKIA HANSEN
NOWHERE TO UNPACK

relationships, and our social lives are practically nonexistent. Basically, there are students here who are just trying to get by. And they're barely doing it. There's no doubt, we are in the real world.

When people think about college students, I don't think that they picture the frustrated student trekking back and forth between the cashier's office and the financial aid office trying to get his account straight so that he can stay in school another semester. I don't think people see the guy who's trying figure out what he's going to do with his life since it's already April and he has no job and hasn't gotten into graduate school. It's almost like they're invisible. These are definitely not the students that make the pages of the admissions brochures.

Or are they? Contrary to popular belief, these students aren't the ones walking around wearing angst and self-pity on their sleeves. These are athletes, the club officers, the cute guy or girl at the last party, that girl who raises her hand in class all the time and the guy who works in Student Stores.

So what's the point here? There are so many people here at UNC and all around the country that are definitely living in the real world. I want people to recognize that there are bunches of 20-year-olds who feel twice their age. We're tired, and we need a break. But there's no break to look forward to

until retirement. And nowadays, that's not looking so promising either. How are you supposed to feel when the so-called best years of your life suck? What do you do when you're young and already tired of the real world?

Maybe you could go to Counseling and Psychological Services and tell someone about it. Unfortunately, many people aren't taking advantage of CAPS, and I don't blame them.

You can talk until you're blue in the face sometimes and — guess what — nothing has changed. Your life still sucks, except now you're not the only person who knows just how much it does.

Besides, most people talk about how things are going to be all right. Well, most of us know that already. Of course things could be worse, and we're all fortunate in many ways. We are in college, and we expect our four or five years of work and sacrifice to pay off so that one day everything will be OK. But hearing someone tell you that it's going to be all right doesn't make you feel better about the way things are right now.

What do you do then? Well, you pick up your baggage and you keep on moving. There's no use feeling sorry for yourself or having others feel sorry for you. We still have to go to work, class and meetings and keep our commitments. We still have to pay rent, figure out what we'll do with our lives and take care of ourselves.

But every now and then, it's OK to set down those bags and break down, let out that frustration and then get back up, keep on moving. It doesn't get any more real than that.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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