

BOARD EDITORIALS

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Gov. Mike Easley showed his support for students by sending a letter decrying tuition increases to the UNC-system Board of Governors.

Since the University's Board of Trustees adopted a controversial tuition philosophy and approved two new increases, the proposed campus-based hikes together have resembled a locomotive going full speed ahead and impossible to stop.

But Gov. Mike Easley tried to put on the brakes by sending a letter Friday to the UNC-system Board of Governors asking them to vote against substantial increases. By making his stance on tuition known to the UNC-system's decision-makers, the governor effectively has sounded the horn for the continued accessibility and affordability of higher education in North Carolina.

Easley's action is meaningful. As North Carolina's executive head, he has a check over decisions made by the N.C. General Assembly, which in turn has

power over BOG proposals. Toward the end of the last legislative session, he asserted himself by threatening to use his recently acquired veto power unless lawmakers modified their budget plans. The governor is a force to be reckoned with.

BOG members have expressed their concerns about the specifics of Easley's plan to include more funding for the UNC system in lieu of tuition hikes. In particular, they want to know where additional money will come from if they choose not to pursue substantial increases in the cost of education.

It remains to be seen where Easley will find the extra cash needed to support UNC-system enrollment growth and faculty and staff pay increases. But he is acting in the interests of college students across the state by stating his opposition to increasing the financial weight on their shoulders.

A BELATED EFFORT

Student Congress is contemplating a resolution that would touch on the relevant issue of tuition — but it would be at least two weeks late.

Every year, Student Congress appropriates money from student fees for itself to cover basic operating costs.

These include office and administrative equipment and other basic supplies to keep the legislative branch of student government running smoothly.

However, Student Congress seems to lack one essential tool that one would usually find in this laundry list: a calendar.

On Tuesday night, following the UNC-system Board of Governors' decision to delay a vote on tuition increases, Student Congress voted to table a resolution criticizing the proposed hike.

However, the resolution was introduced just last week, two weeks after the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees made its decisive vote.

By waiting so long to lend their collective voice to the debate, members of Student Congress both squandered an opportunity to make a powerful statement to the University community and let down their constituents by failing to represent their opinions on this issue in a timely and, thus, relevant manner.

Student Congress, once considered the focal point of campus politics, has lost a tremendous amount of prestige and influence in recent years.

Many students view the body as nothing more than a glorified piggy bank responsible for distributing student fees.

This remains a central function of the campus legislative body. But Student Congress has a proud — though now defunct — tradition of being a powerful megaphone for the student body to voice its prevailing opinions and sentiments.

Previous Student Congress resolutions addressed issues that have had no direct bearing on the UNC-CH campus.

This tuition resolution represented a refreshing return to relevance, which is why it is even more disappointing that the sheer lack of timeliness will prevent it from playing a substantive role in the tuition debate.

The BOG has jurisdiction over the entire UNC system and will pay little attention to the opinion of one student legislative body on one campus, even if it is the system's flagship institution.

By addressing the tuition issue while its future was still being crafted on the UNC-CH campus, Student Congress would have had the opportunity to have a real impact.

The next time the University community confronts such a significant issue, students should demand that their elected representatives do their job and stay abreast of current events.

If Student Congress hopes to regain the esteem and respect it recently has let slip away, such sloppy lapses in planning and awareness cannot occur again.

SHINING ADDITION

The Union has been reopened, and the building's renovations and additions will attract new students and bring current ones together.

The Frank Porter Graham Student Union, appropriately referred to as a gift from the students to the students, was unwrapped officially Tuesday.

The full-scale renovation had the old Union building closed for more than a year, but it was definitely worth the wait.

With an aesthetic quality that captures every eye, the new renovations in the Union add a splash of life to University life.

Equipped with multiple flat screen computers that function as e-mail stations, a large television set and sound system, colorful furniture and an aquarium that was a gift from the 2001 senior class, the new and improved Union is definitely a sight for sore eyes.

Art galleries run parallel on both sides of the building reinforcing the artistic nature of the campus, and the introduction of Alpine Bagel replaces the once-renowned Union Station.

The neatly divided Union now will serve dual purposes: a prime spot for students who need a quiet place to study and the rowdy center of activity that it

once was. But not one of the new amenities compares to the beauty of the new and improved Great Hall.

Equipped with an extended stage, spotless hardwood floors and accommodations for as many as 775 people, this has become instantly the most sought after venue on campus.

Anyone, Tar Heel or not, will be able to feel the pride storming the walls of the entire building.

Having a building of such appeal adds to the prestige of the campus.

As UNC strives to become a leading university, the renovations make the Union comparable to student unions on other major university campuses.

Upon entering the Union, prospective students definitely will be impressed with the intricate architectural designs and laid-back atmosphere of the building.

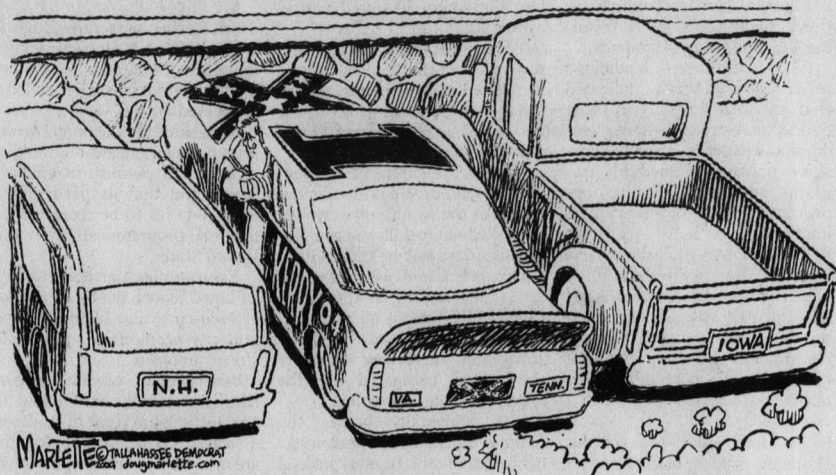
While the Union will attract the interest of high schools students who long to become UNC students, it also produces a strong sense of cohesion among current students.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"What is defeat? Nothing but education, nothing but the first step to something better."

WENDELL PHILLIPS, ABOLITIONIST ORATOR

EDITORIAL CARTOON



KERRY PAKKS NASCAH IN HAHVAHDYAHD

COMMENTARY

Freedom of speech applies especially in the classroom

The Chapel Hill Thought Police are at it again. Just when you thought the struggle for academic freedom actually might be over, liberal professors and teaching assistants have struck again by brutalizing conservative students in a manner reminiscent of the McCarthy era.

This time, it's the case of a professor who denounced a conservative student whose values conflicted with a professor's opinion regarding a class discussion on the effects of homosexuality on heterosexual masculinity.

The student just participated in discussion by stating that his personal Christian beliefs taught that homosexuality was a sin and was personally disgusting.

The English professor, Elyse Crystall, recently sent out an e-mail to her entire class lambasting the aforesaid conservative student, labeling him a privileged "white, heterosexual, Christian male, one who vehemently denied his privilege last week insisting that he earned all he has, (who) can feel entitled to make violent, heterosexist comments and not feel marked or threatened or vulnerable."

Crystall could not be reached for comment.

Fortunately, we all know what happens when you assume — the professor failed to acknowledge that the student operates a business he founded and pays for his own expenses. Instead of privileged, I think you could say that the student is hardworking. Maybe even "Nickel and Dimed" by personal budget constraints caused by the tuition increases.

I am sure she would label me within the same category, despite the fact that like many N.C. residents, my parents became victims



BRENTLEY TANNER
MADE WITH PRIDE IN THE U.S.A.

of NAFTA, which I like to call "SHAFFTA," and now are forced to work in hog farms to make ends meet.

If anything, it's some of the pampered faculty who are privileged. Those who, or their kids who, spend their summers backpacking in Europe "to find themselves" while people such as the student in Crystall's class and myself work to pay the bills.

Moreover, the professor went into a tirade about how she will not tolerate heterosexist comments in her class. Likening the student's comments to hate speech, she vowed to prevent any further "violence." However, all she is preventing is the student's freedom of speech right guaranteed under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the United States' leading group in the fight for civil liberties, supports the right of free speech in the classroom.

"The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects speech no matter how offensive its content. Speech codes adopted by government-financed state colleges and universities amount to government censorship, in violation of the Constitution."

The group's Web site continues, "The ACLU believes that all campuses should adhere to First Amendment principles because

academic freedom is a bedrock of education in a free society."

Basically, the non-discrimination policy of the University can never trump the U.S. Constitution, especially regarding class discussions.

Freedom of speech is a right entitled to all individuals, regardless of the difference in opinion. For example, there are individuals who are participating on both sides of a KKK rally in Raleigh on Feb. 21.

Granted, the views of such extremists are ridiculous without a doubt, but they are still able to voice their opinion. Hate speech, on the other hand, is speech meant to incite a riot or cause direct harm unto others.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire that freedom of speech is protected so long as it isn't targeted towards a specific individual with the intent to cause injury, both physically and to one's property. This same right is extended to individuals who traipse out on Franklin Street and burn the U.S. flag.

While it pisses me off to see such stupidity, they have that right — one protected by our brave men and women in uniform fighting overseas — because of the First Amendment.

That's the same amendment that guarantees the rights of people who say, "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

If you are a student who feels that your freedom of speech has been stifled, contact the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education to seek action toward protecting academic freedom.

Contact Brentley Tanner at gtanner@email.unc.edu.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of seven board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

SBP election has featured an anti-conservative bias

TO THE EDITOR:

This year's student body president election, like several years prior, evidences an institutional discrimination against conservative candidates.

Which institutions are the culprits? Campaign regulations against negative campaigning and the major news outlet on campus, which will remain unnamed.

First, a prohibition on negative campaigning limits political debate. Many candidates are constantly introducing new initiatives — some valuable, some wasteful — that need to be evaluated critically. Yet, how can one candidate truly analyze and state her position on another's initiatives if she can't be critical of them?

A student body president's platform includes not only what needs to be done, but also what shouldn't be done. It's no surprise that conservative candidates tend to be the ones who want to limit costly initiatives. Yet this very often reasonable position is hard to express when negative campaigning is disallowed.

Is there a conspiracy going on here? I'll let you decide.

As for the unnamed news outlet on campus, it is obviously liberally biased (read their section on Laura Thomas in their endorsement of candidate Matt Compton), so conservative candidates not only can't

express their views as liberals can, but their supporters have a hard time getting out their message in the face of the spin the unnamed outlet places on them. So it's a double whammy, score two for left-wing conspiracy theory.

Solution? Affirmative electoral action for conservative candidates, give them more money, more space in the unnamed news outlet (hey, this is how we handle every other discrimination problem). Just kidding there.

No, just re-write the campaign regulations, allow the meaningful pursuit of truth in politics and let the unnamed news outlet keep on discriminating as they see fit (just put every article under the opinion section), just don't discriminate at the level of campus law.

Josh Branscomb
Senior
Computer Science

Editor's note: The endorsement to which Mr. Branscomb refers was published on the editorial page, which is wholly dedicated to opinion.

Journalists misrepresented professor in their articles

TO THE EDITOR:

As undergraduate teaching assistants for American Studies 94: "The Role of the University in American Life" in the fall of 2003, we are frustrated by recent columns by Bob Burtman of The

Independent Weekly and Dan Coleman of The Chapel Hill Herald that misrepresent the goals of the course and the integrity of Professor Jonathan Howes.

Invitations issued to distinguished individuals who would be our guest lecturers each Monday were always extended with the knowledge that plenary sessions were open to the public.

However, the discussion-based Wednesday seminars were most effective for learning when they were conducted in some degree of mutual confidence.

This confidentiality created an environment supportive of the students' academic freedom, as it allowed them to discuss and question course material and current events openly without being "on the record."

This was especially important in light of the course content. Such academic freedom and liberty are at the heart of any public university in the United States — especially at a campus where our motto, "Lux Libertas," tells us to exercise this freedom in pursuit of truth. We stand convinced that these academic freedoms form the backbone of institutional honor and integrity.

In the Wednesday discussion section of the course that Howes led, he engaged students in an important dialogue about the events of the greater community in a style that made the coursework meaningful.

We are frustrated by Coleman's

Feb. 6 piece that describes Professor Howes' style as elitist. We describe Howes as anything but.

Howes asks his students to attend meetings of the Chapel Hill Town Council and other events where they can learn more about planning and negotiations between University and town representatives. Class discussion sections then provide students with the opportunity to discuss these events in the context of better understanding the role of universities in the United States.

In the classroom, Howes only encourages honest and frank debate.

Unfortunately, Coleman's assertion that anything but a "real debate" occurred in these classes misrepresents the experiences of students and teaching assistants like us.

The intent of these discussions and this course is consistent with the intent of any public university — to teach students to think for themselves and to think with a conscience and regard for others, especially those with whom they disagree.

Howes is also an environmentalist in practice, as was evidenced by another course on campus sustainability that we have taken under him.

Coleman's statements alleging that Howes was insensitive to environmental concerns as mayor of Chapel Hill are not in line with the

experience we had in this course, in which Howes again challenged us to think outside the box about solutions for a sustainable environment and methods of collaboration between conflicting interests.

Howes embodies the mission of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which includes not only teaching and research but also a strong commitment to public service.

He leads by a humble example of his unselfish dedication to the town of Chapel Hill, the state of North Carolina and the national arena.

Andrew Pike
Senior
Economics

Rebecca Williford
Senior
Political Science

The length rule was waived.

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 them to editdesk@unc.edu.

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