

GUARANTEED FUNDING

Student funding must be shared

Having served on Student Congress for two years and the Student Fee Audit Committee since August, I have an intimate familiarity with student fee allocations. Simply put, the request for constitutional funding for the executive and judicial branches is ridiculous.

Any group that has undergone the annual budget process understands how frustrating the frugality of Congress can be. Constitutional funding would exempt the e-branch and j-branch from this process, placing copious amounts of discretionary funds in their hands without the approval of Congress. All other student organizations on campus would suffer because the pool of money they are vying for would be reduced. While all student organizations are required to justify every dollar they spend before receiving money, we already grant

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both branches exceptions due to their vital importance to the University; any additional sacrifice of oversight is unnecessary.

The executive and judicial branches argue that they demonstrate similar need to WXYC and Student Television. However, both WXYC and STV need funding available for immediate repair of expensive broken equipment to keep their station licenses. There is no congruity between this need and the two branches' requests.

Though I might agree with the e-branch's funding need conceptually, they should go through annual budget. I have no doubt they will receive funds if they justify need. However, debate is necessary to ensure that funds are allocated efficiently and properly.

The j-branch request is more indicative of the underlying problems with wresting oversight away from Congress. This year, the judicial branch has a working budget of \$32,605 and also has had the most active and best-run year in recent history. So why are they requesting \$44,102, a 35 percent increase from this year, to come out of your Student Activity Fee?

For starters, many of the things the honor system purchased this year would not have been eligible for funding from Congress. Five hundred highlighters given out to individual students, a giant honor float for Homecoming and \$3,000 for off-campus retreats for training of members of the Honor are examples of expenditures that never would pass through Congress. Because its funding was supplemented by the administration, the honor system had some discretion regarding those funds and felt these were appropriate expenditures.

After sitting in 22 hours of meetings, during which we were forced to cut more than half of groups' requests to allocate money fairly, I cannot sit silently and watch the honor system gut the Student Code with its request and rub it in the face of every other organization. After Finance Weekend, 51 of 72 groups, or 71 percent, have less than \$3,000 allocated for their entire annual budget, equaling the cost of the retreats alone. On-campus workshops could be conducted as easily at no cost to students, saving money for other organizations.

I offered a compromise by putting a referendum on the ballot for 3 percent of the Student Activity Fee for judicial branch, with the understanding that they may return for subsequent appropriations. This would provide \$26,461, well above any operating costs that the system could ever require, thereby ensuring permanent viability. However, the attorney general vehemently opposed this proposal, indicating that his agenda has nothing to do with the survival of the honor system, but rather with ensuring a glut of funds without discussion of yearly need.

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LEADERS DEBATE HOW BRANCHES SHOULD BE FUNDED

What do the Carolina Union Activities Board, the Graduate and Professional Student Federation, Student Television and WXYC have in common?

They all receive a fixed percentage of the Student Activity Fee. Student leaders in the executive and judicial branches of student government are pushing for a referendum to give the two branches a similar, predetermined piece of the pie.

Currently, Student Congress hears funding requests from each branch and decides how money will be allocated. Earlier this month, Student Congress voted down a proposal to alter the way the executive and judicial branches are funded.

Those student leaders who oppose the plan, in which 5 percent and 3 percent of the fee would go toward the judicial and executive branches, respectively, say that it would

take away Student Congress' ability to oversee how students' money is being used and that the branches already are getting the money they need.

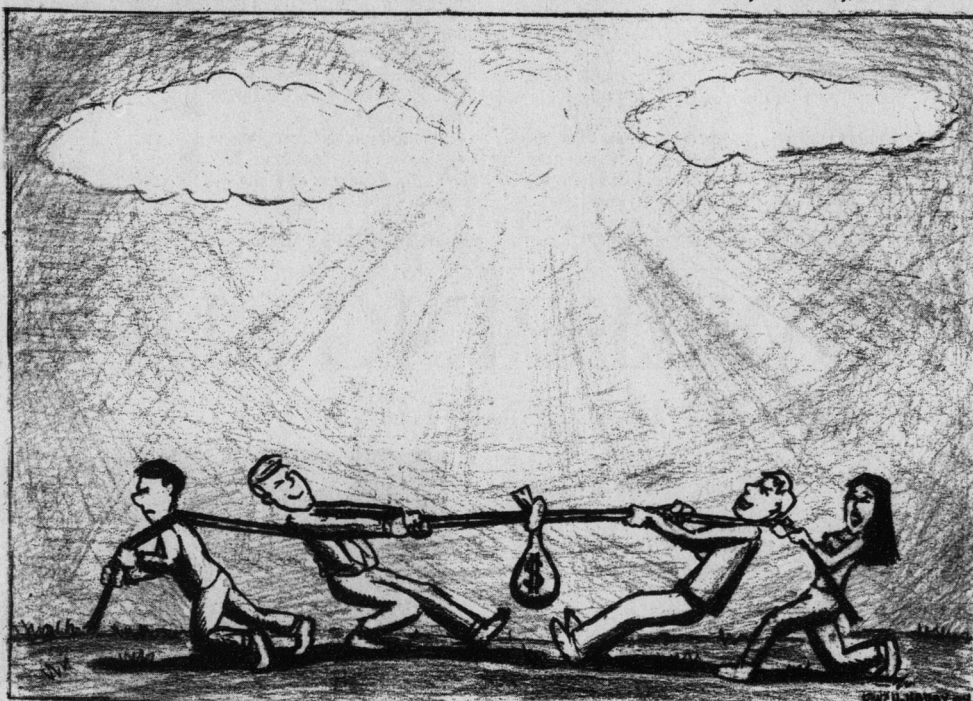
Supporters of a funding shift think differently. They maintain that securing funds for the two branches is necessary to ensure that basic administrative costs are covered each year. If there ever comes a time when the Honor Court is underfunded, they say, it will lose its effectiveness, setting up the possibility of University officials intervening and removing some aspect of student self-governance.

Students have the opportunity to end this tug-of-war between their elected representatives when they vote on the referendum March 2.

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VIEWPOINTS CARTOON

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We can leave mark on UNC honor, integrity

On Tuesday March 2, students at Carolina will have a rare opportunity to leave an important legacy for your system of student self-governance. A referendum will appear on a special election ballot to amend the Student Constitution. The proposed amendment will ensure funding for the judicial and executive branches of one of the most impressive systems of student self-governance in the nation.

The 2003-04 academic year has been identified by Chancellor James Moeser as the "Year of Honor and Integrity." Fortunately, we have an opportunity to fulfill this yearlong theme with a commitment that will prove timeless. Setting aside 5 percent of the Student Activity Fee to fund the judicial branch will provide the monetary support necessary to administer such a system each and every year. The significance of this commitment cannot be underestimated. The student adjudicated honor system is in fact one of our finest traditions, one that must never be compromised. We will never truly own our honor system until we make the long-term commitment to fund it.

Since the turn of the 20th century, students at UNC have elected and appointed an executive branch of government to serve as an advocate for their ideals and concerns. As evidenced by the level of participation and interest in the recent student body president race, these advocates mean a great deal to us. We expect the executive branch to be our champion for the improvement of the quality of student life at UNC. Sometimes we only associate individual office holders with the executive branch. In reality, the executive branch should be viewed as an institution rather than a group of office holders. It is the institution that we, as a student body, have valued tradi-

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tionally as our agent for change.

As a first-year member of the Student Congress, I was surprised to learn that the executive branch, like the judicial branch, begins the annual budgetary cycle with no designated funding. Furthermore, a budget for the executive branch is proposed and adopted prior to the April transition of officers each year. This means that the executive branch has no secure baseline of funding from year to year, and its office holders are subject to the budgetary constraints established by their predecessors.

As student government has grown larger and taken on more duties and responsibilities, this system has grown antiquated and inefficient. Year after year the institution that we have chosen as the voice of the student body is crippled by a budgetary system that does not allow the individuals who operate it to plan proactively.

Next Tuesday, we have a chance to do something that no other student body at UNC has done before. Each and every one of us will have the opportunity to take a unique stand for the code of honor that is ours. We can offer our system of student self-governance the capacity to become more stable and effective than ever before and provide the resources to protect the value of our degrees and fight for our interests on issues such as tuition increases. Give your system of government the long-overdue support that it needs, and protect the self-governance that we are so privileged to have. Vote "yes" on next Tuesday's referendum. Generations of Carolina students will be glad you did.

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Referendum nixes oversight from Congress

We at Carolina pride ourselves on our long tradition of self-governance, and the proposed referendum to fund constitutionally the judicial and executive branches attacks this very foundation.

The proposal circumvents the entire funding system set forth by the Student Code, which states that allotments of Student Activity Fees must be reviewed and approved by Student Congress.

With this step out of the way, Congress has no way to insure that students' money is being spent efficiently and wisely.

The timing of this proposal sends up a few red flags. When first proposed, it was sent to Congress a week before the general elections. If the referendum had been approved — it was overwhelmingly rejected — both branches would have had a week to educate the student body. One week is definitely not enough time to discuss changing the way we fund our organizations.

As a member of Congress, I was able to see the entire proposal with its payouts to the judicial branch for things such as \$3,000 to have "off campus retreats" and \$1,000 for two "self-evaluation meetings" among others. Other students aren't going to have this information, showing that both branches are demonstrating disregard to the student body by withholding information.

This isn't a battle to save the judicial system as Attorney General Jonathan Slain has pointed out. The Honor Court will remain in the hands of the student body if the referendum fails. Neither system will fail if they have to justify expenditures before spending students' money.

Their approach to the student body is unethical, coercing students into signing a petition

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by saying that if you support the honor system, you have to sign this. Putting forth that tomorrow the honor system will disappear due to lack of funding is preposterous.

Furthermore to heighten their campaign of leaving students in the dark regarding the ramifications of the referendum, both branches have begun soliciting online signatures, which is in clear violation of the Student Code.

The code states that referendum signatures must be in writing.

Written signatures are important because person-to-person contact allows students to question the referendum.

There are high ranking members of both branches who are opposed to the referendum. However, you might have noticed they are silent on the matter. Why are they silent?

The proposed 5 percent of the student fee budget, when broken down, is more than 18.5 percent of Congress' budget for organizations. If passed, that's 18.5 percent less money in the hands of students. That's less money for student magazines, less money for the American Red Cross Club to organize blood drives, less money for speakers on minority affairs and less money for the intellectual climate on campus.

Congress has performed its constitutional duty year after year and appropriated the necessary funding to allow each branch to thrive as it does today. This will not change if the proposal is voted down. The only people in a position to lose are you, the students.

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Change enables better funding

These two branches provide a vital service to you, the students, year after year, yet they have not been provided with a budget consistent with their importance to the student body.

This referendum seeks to remedy budget uncertainty via an amendment to the Student Constitution to appropriate 3 percent and 5 percent of student activity fees to the executive branch and the honor system, respectively. This change would provide your student government officers with a sufficient and stable source of funding to begin each fiscal year so that these groups can continue to represent every student at UNC successfully. The amendment is also fiscally responsible, as it will accomplish these goals with no increase in fees.

As UNC students, we are fortunate to have one of only a handful of student-run honor systems in

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STUDENT ATTORNEY GENERAL

MATT TEPPER
STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

the nation. Student self-governance at Carolina dates back more than 125 years, but there has been a recent push to reinvigorate our proud tradition of honor and to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. This great privilege comes with responsibility, and it is our duty as students to fund this essential and unique aspect of student government.

This proposal would also fund the executive branch's basic operating costs, so that it can protect student interests more effectively on important issues such as tuition increases. The budget would fund traditional programs in addition to new services, including a student government office manager. This staff member would be critical on many fronts, including assisting student organizations, maintaining the student government suite in a professional manner and ensuring that student government makes a smooth transition between administrations. This referendum is an investment in student interests, and the long-term benefits of a well-funded e-branch are significant for all UNC students.

There is precedent for constitutionally funding specific student organizations: student television receives a minimum of 5 percent of student fees each year, WXYC receives 4 percent, the Carolina Union Activities Board receives 33 percent of all student fees and the Graduate and Professional Student Federation receives 25 percent of the graduate and professional student portion of the fee. It makes sense that student government should join the list of organizations that need a stable budget to operate effectively and serve the student body.

Student Congress is reluctant to give any one organization a set percentage of the available money each year. However, the honor system and executive branch are different from other student groups that ask Congress for funding. Both organizations have been delegated the responsibility to perform vital University functions by the chancellor. These branches cannot be underfunded and still perform at a level at which all students can be proud.

Now is the best time for this proposal to be voted on by students. Last year, the general student fee was increased by about 70 percent, so this proposal will not take funds from other groups.

You can empower your fellow student leaders to fight for your interests and ensure the continued success of student government. Make these benefits a reality, with no additional cost to students, by voting "yes" March 2nd. To learn more about the referendum, visit <http://www.unc.edu/studgov>.

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