

BOARD EDITORIALS

BEST BUY, FOR NOW

The Princeton Review picked UNC as the best value among colleges and universities, but tuition hikes might do away with this honor.

According to the Princeton Review, UNC is the best bargain among the nation's institutions of higher learning. How long we remain deserving of this distinction remains to be seen.

While many of the Tar Heel faithful might prefer to rest atop The Associated Press basketball rankings, it is noteworthy to retain our spot on the publication's annual list of "America's Best Value Colleges."

It's a fine title for any college or university to assume, one that recognizes the academic quality that accompanies UNC-CH's relatively low costs. Everyone appreciates a bargain.

But how long can the University claim the latter honor if it continues down its current path?

The Princeton Review's methodology uses academic and financial aid ratings. It also factors in a "tuition GPA," which subtracts average student gift aid from the sum of tuition, fee and room and board costs.

The publication's Web site identifies its basic goal: to publicize universities that enroll students who enjoy their experience and aren't worrying about being forced "to mortgage their futures because their

school is charging them way too much."

This year, UNC-CH fit the bill and is looking down on such competition as Amherst College, Rice University and the University of Texas-Austin.

But this might not be the case for long.

Once Princeton Review compiles data from this academic year, it's altogether possible that the University no longer will be afforded a view from the very top.

Tuition increases of \$300 and \$1,600 for in-state and out-of-state students, respectively, inevitably will make UNC's reign at the No. 1 spot difficult — if not impossible — to maintain.

None of the widespread concern about the potentially negative effects of these increases could have affected Princeton Review's data for last year.

But it doesn't take a prophet to guess that, by this time next year, UNC students could be less satisfied and the University's bargain might not be the best.

For now, the price is right.

But if UNC is No. 1 next year, it more likely will be on the soccer field or basketball court than in the pages of the Princeton Review.

DONATIONS NEEDED

Members of the community should consider giving money or items to families whose homes were damaged severely in a fire Monday.

One day, a family might live in relative security, with a place to call home waiting for it once work and school obligations are met. The next day, that same family could be left picking up the pieces.

This possibility became reality in Carrboro on Monday, when a fire ravaged a building at Brighton Square Apartments. Carrboro Fire Marshal Stan Foushee deemed two of the building's six units irreparable.

One prominent member of the University community who has been affected directly by the fire is Frances Ferris, UNC student body secretary. She and her fiancé lived in one of the apartments that was damaged by the flames.

In comparison with some of her neighbors, Ferris is fortunate. She had renter's insurance that will cover the cost of repairs. Other people who lived in the building aren't nearly as lucky: In addition to losing their homes, they now have to contend with the massive financial burden of accounting for damages.

Ferris and her neighbors are organizing a drive to raise funds for the building's residents whose lives

have been turned upside down.

Those interested in donating money or children's items should contact Ferris at 956-9545 or ferris@email.unc.edu.

If they have even a dollar or two to spare, members of the University and town communities should strongly consider making a contribution. Some victims of Monday's fire now have next to nothing, so every little bit of aid, no matter how small, would help.

Giving away that money might mean one less bag of chips or cup of coffee or magazine or CD purchased in the future. But measured against a family's need to overcome crippling repair costs, these amenities are meaningless.

Students, faculty members and local residents alike have the ability to make a difference in fire victims' lives.

This is not the time to adopt an "it doesn't involve me, so why should I care?" mind-set. Instead, it would be appropriate for people to count their blessings and look out for fellow members of their community.

TRUE TEACHER LOST

Jeffrey Obler, a political science professor who died Saturday, was known for never losing sight of the exploratory nature of learning.

If you were a student in a political science class taught by Professor Jeffrey Obler, you were never quite sure he could see you.

On the first day of all his classes, squinting from behind his characteristic magnifying eyeglasses, Obler apologized in advance for calling students by the wrong name or ignoring a raised hand. Poor eyesight made it difficult for him to discern faces.

But if a student's argument piqued his interest during debate and discussion, Obler instantly would focus all his attention on the person speaking. He sometimes pointed and seemed to determine the student's exact location with an apparent sixth sense.

In addition, Obler had an uncanny ability to electrify a classroom with a mixture of his own passion for the material and a rare, natural rapport with undergraduate students. His passing represents a true loss for the Department of Political Science and the University as a whole.

There was a reason Obler's classes filled up on the first day of registration. There was a reason that, for political science undergraduates, securing a spot in

his small section of Political Science 86 before senior year was a reason to call their parents.

This expert in political philosophy left all pretenses of hierarchy or seniority at the classroom door — an unusual ability for someone with an intellect as powerful and diverse as Obler's.

In many ways, he considered himself a student in his own class. Those lucky enough to study with him before he stopped teaching earlier this year likely will remember thinking that their professor was on the same path as they were, working toward the same goal as the rest of the class.

He just happened to be slightly more informed on the subject matter.

Whether viewed as a colleague, instructor or both, Obler exemplified the student-professor who still was learning eagerly after years of study.

The long line for his help during office hours no longer will form on the second floor of Hamilton Hall, but members of the UNC community can still learn from Jeffrey Obler by approaching whatever they do with care, passion and jest.

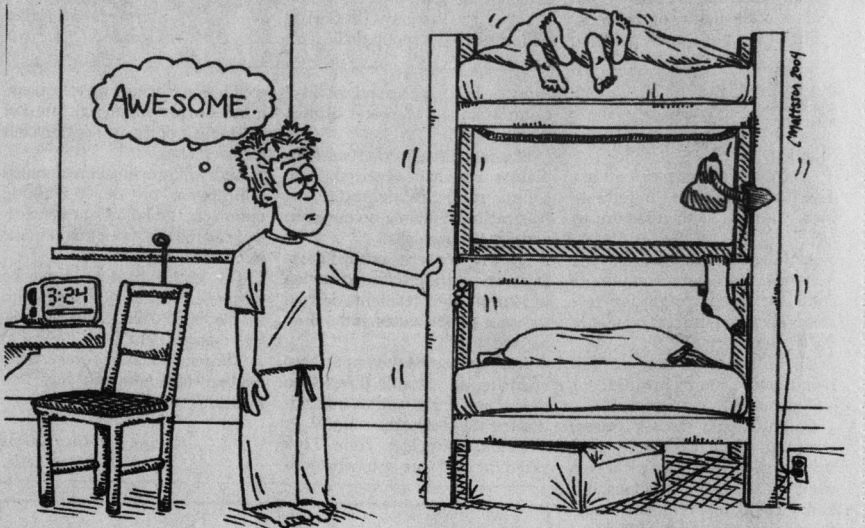
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Charity should begin at home, but should not stay there."

PHILLIPS BROOKS, MINISTER AND POET

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Chris Mattsson, mattsson@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Carrboro's progressivism has outpaced that of Chapel Hill

While reading last week's news coverage about the same-sex marriage bill on the Chapel Hill Town Council's agenda, I stumbled across a new word I can add to my vocabulary.

Council member Mark Kleinschmidt, the bill's author, told a reporter that state legislators might just write off the bill as another gonzo item pushed for by those Chapel Hill "wackadoos."

What in bleedin' hell is a "wackadoo?" Is it some exotic animal caged for its own protection from the wily rightist predators in the wild? Well, since our town is not only "liberal" but a "zoo" as well, I can see how the moniker fits.

Like all liberals, us local folks love to hug dogwoods, slash Hummers' tires, wallow in white guilt and drop roses in gun barrels as we simultaneously slaughter scores of nascent babies.

That's a stretch, but I've been accused of as much — I can reason why. I believe that permanent damage to our environment is not an acceptable cost for short-term, finite financial gain. I'm all for promoting the diversity of both thought and people. I support people's personal rights and freedoms, but not if their success necessitates another's failure.

There is no one I respect more than the brave women and men in our military, but my blood boils if they're ordered to fight for the cause of oil merchants, corporations and arms dealers instead of freedom and justice. Oh yeah, what a woman does with her body is her own damn business.

So I've been branded for life with the L-word and, I suppose, smeared by the innuendo that follows. If that's what I am, cool.

Too bad that I've never felt that the vibe of our supposedly liberal



NICK EBERLEIN
THE VILLAGE MEGALOMANIAC

town meshed with how I feel.

True, the Town Council's made some great strides lately — getting rid of voyeuristic red light cameras, instituting protective zoning for the town's oldest black and working-class neighborhood, speaking out for equal marriage rights for all, buying open space — but much of it feels like damage control. And a lot of people hate it.

The first letter to the editor printed in The Chapel Hill News after Kleinschmidt introduced his bill stated that legalizing same-sex marriage would pave the way for sanctioned bestiality, polygamy and statutory rape.

Kleinschmidt also told me that some residents told him he lost their vote for playing a hand in the red light cameras' repeal. Ouch.

A healthy contingent of residents opposed efforts to regulate Northside's affordability because it would curtail the neighborhood's mansions. Never mind that its once-segregated black residents were only a generation freed from oppression. Never mind that it's basically the only place in town our hard-working municipal employees can afford to buy a house. Forget about people's property and taxes, escalating to values beyond normal inflationary levels due to forces beyond their control. Protection came after more than a decade's worth of residents' pleas. I pray it didn't come too late.

It seems that once our leaders

exercise good sense, a glut of folks come out of the woodwork ready to impugn their actions. This slows local progression, and it's scary.

I walk through Carrboro and see a town where the ethnic mix actually reflects America. Unlike Chapel Hill, gentrification hasn't bleached it as lily-white as my arse.

Kick back sometime at the picnic area in front of Weaver Street Market, which, by the way, is a community-owned cooperative.

Carrboro has turned its downtown, albeit small, into a vibrant spot without the thought of luring uppity, exclusive boutiques to the area so their elite, bedroom-community folks on the fringes might mix with the commoners. That only happens in Chapel Hill.

Cat's Cradle followed the starving artists across the tracks once one-sided economics forced them from here, and now we can no longer claim to be the musical and cultural mecca of the Piedmont.

I guess that's why our leaders follow in Carrboro's footsteps when grappling with issues such as domestic partner benefits, the environment and affordable housing. Chapel Hill's neighbor has managed to remain an inclusive town to its residents and workers and to be a welcoming community to a multicultural demographic.

The culture found in Carrboro, a culture I love, is fast becoming an old wife's tale in Chapel Hill.

Chapel Hill must once again become the avant-garde, "liberal" town it's reputed to be. Remaining one step behind could easily mean that we'll be one step too late. Let us not follow Carrboro's awesome lead, but let us be real wackadoos and blaze our own social trail.

Contact Nick Eberlein at slimkid@email.unc.edu.

QUOTABLES

"We've heard a lot lately about Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. But, personally, I wonder if Steve would have eaten the apple."

MAB SEGREST, CONNECTICUT COLLEGE PROFESSOR, ON GAY MARRIAGE, AT THE SECOND ANNUAL N.C. UNITY CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY.

"It's like when you're 15, and you fell in love with that blond girl. You do everything and work so hard and then lose them to the football player."

JOE RIDDLE, FAYETTEVILLE DEVELOPER, ON THE IMPENDING CLOSING OF THE GAP.

"I don't see how they could make a financial argument for tearing it down. If they do, I'll probably flip my lid."

CHARLIE ANDERSON, CHAIRMAN OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT'S RENEWABLE ENERGY SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE, ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES' DISCUSSION OF DEMOLISHING MORRISON RESIDENCE HALL.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Grades will better reflect officials' performances

The problem of grade inflation comes up with great frequency in the realm of higher education, and the topic has reared its ugly head numerous times on our particular campus.

But few people realize that the problem has surfaced on the editorial page of The Daily Tar Heel.

I bring it to the forefront of dialogue in light of this year's edition of the DTH editorial board's annual report cards for elected officials.

With the end of the year and the inauguration of new officers set for Tuesday, it is time to assess the performance of the individuals elected by their peers to represent the student body.

The final term grades will be published Monday for the student body president, senior class president and vice president, Graduate and Professional Student Federation president, Carolina Athletic Association president, Residence Hall Association president and Student Congress.

As such, it is important to stress the manner in which the editorial board does out grades and the reason we choose to grade certain student government officials.

These officers and representatives from the leadership of



NATHAN DENNY
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

Student Congress have been selected for grading because they were elected by the student body.

That show of electoral faith demands a thorough graded critique of those officers' performances.

So the conspicuous absence of the judicial branch and Student Attorney General Jonathan Slain should not be taken as a slight to the students who work to uphold the University's Honor Code.

The editorial board soon will consider and produce an editorial dedicated entirely to that branch. But for the time being, we're sticking to our elected officials.

The editorial board will meet with and interview each elected officer and several representatives from Congress before discussing and deciding upon the grades.

As I pointed out at the beginning of the semester, it is important to recognize that the editorial board behind this set of report

cards is largely a new one.

Only four members of this semester's editorial board were members of the board when midterm grades were determined and published. And one of them was DTH Editor Elyse Ashburn, who participates in discussion but does not vote.

So only three voting members return from the fall semester, with four new editorial writers and entirely new leadership.

Since this is the case, report card grades might look a bit different this semester.

It was obvious that last semester's grades were — for lack of a better term — generous.

Of the six grades given, the lowest was a B.

And while it would be a shame to understate the talent and dedication of this year's slate of elected officials, such an impressive showing suggests that, perhaps, student leaders need to be watched with a more critical eye.

In response to that kindly display, the editorial page staff will be publishing a grade scale that thoroughly explains and attempts to justify the grades we give out.

For example, a "C" grade is not a glaring indictment of an individual's personal failings and does

not suggest any ill feelings on the part of the editorial board.

It merely suggests that the individual did an average job. Nothing spectacular; nothing that would do permanent damage to the position or the student body.

In an effort to reflect the University's grading policies, an "A" will be reserved for only the most outstanding performances.

So when report cards run Monday, don't be surprised if your favorite student official's grade has dropped since last semester.

Grade inflation has no place on the editorial page.

Contact Nathan Denny, editorial page editor, at ndenny@email.unc.edu.

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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