

BOARD EDITORIALS

IMPROVING TURNOUT

VoteCarolina's plans to increase the number of student voters should focus on educating students about and transporting them to precincts.

This summer, Student Body President Matt Calabria announced the creation of VoteCarolina, student government's most recent attempt to encourage voter registration and increase student turnout in the coming election.

Last year, student government — led by former Student Body President Matt Tepper — worked especially hard in its attempts to increase voter registration and participation. The administration was able to register 2,300 students.

But according to Orange County election records, only 329 voters aged 18 to 22 voted in the November municipal elections for Chapel Hill.

Despite the facts that it was an off-year election and that the 18-to-22 demographic historically has shown low turnout at the polls, the number still was strikingly low.

Calabria's administration will have to put forth even more effort if that turnout rate is to increase significantly.

Calabria apparently has realized the huge amount of time and effort that VoteCarolina will require, as it's now a venture that is semi-independent of student government.

Treating it like another platform point would have undermined the importance of such an initiative to the student body and would have been detrimental to its success.

In order for VoteCarolina to gain and maintain potency, it will need to focus on a variety of goals. In the short term, the main objective should be to register more potential voters on campus.

Putting registration forms in the Week of Welcome packets is a good start, but there is much more work to do.

As Election Day approaches, VoteCarolina will need to focus on keeping the election in the minds of newly registered students and getting information about voting policies to them.

Putting up posters around campus and scheduling events educating students about voting intricacies before the election would help to get the word out. Letting students know what they need to do to vote and why they should do so would go a long way toward boosting election participation.

By planning to coordinate the registration and voter education efforts of numerous campus groups, VoteCarolina has moved closer to being able to reach maximum effect.

The organization would do well to explore ways in which it can publicize Morehead Planetarium as a one-stop voting location in the weeks before the election. Students should have a clear understanding of this option before the election arrives.

Another major task for VoteCarolina will be getting student voters on campus to the various precincts, including the Chapel Hill Kehillah near South Campus and the police station off Airport Road, on Election Day.

Fortunately, transportation is clearly on the minds of the organization's leaders.

VoteCarolina should plan for vans to run regularly to and from the precincts. Increasing the ease with which voters can get to the polls should lead to a noticeable improvement in turnout.

Furthermore, the group should be thinking beyond the 2004 election. It should examine what needs to be done to create a single voting precinct for the University's student body. Doing so will represent a step toward making voting an easy job instead of a daunting task.

VoteCarolina has a great deal to accomplish in the coming months. Its ideas are strong — but execution is key.

With hard work, a commitment of resources and innovative thinking, the organization should be able to ensure that the student voice is heard loudly and clearly at the polls this November.

MINIMAL INCREASE

The state legislature's \$32-million appropriation for faculty pay raises and a \$1,000 minimum increase will do for now, but more is needed.

The N.C. General Assembly recently approved an across-the-board pay raise that affects all UNC-system faculty members.

Faculty will receive an additional \$1,000 as part of an effort by N.C. lawmakers to raise most state employees' salaries after years of having to institute pay cuts and allowing for stagnation.

Of the \$32 million set aside for UNC-system faculty members, \$15 million will be used for the new across-the-board pay raise, while the rest has been earmarked for merit-based increases.

A greater amount of the money could have been used for decisions involving merit.

If UNC-CH administrators had more discretion over how to use the additional funds, the University might have increased its ability to compete with other institutions when its highly qualified faculty members are offered higher-paying jobs elsewhere.

But this widespread distribution of money, even though it might seem unfair to those faculty members who are paid the least, is the best result overall for the University.

The across-the-board nature of the raise means that UNC-CH administrators won't have to worry about angering some employees with additional merit-based decisions. By going ahead and structuring this increase, lawmakers arguably have reduced the possibility of infighting among departments.

New merit-based raises wouldn't necessarily go toward employees at the bottom rung of the ladder because faculty retention has been such a high priority for UNC-CH administrators. Tenured faculty members who have been targeted by peer universities simply are harder to replace.

In any case, it has been several years since the last state-funded pay increases. Taking inflation and rising prices into account, stagnant salaries effectively

have represented small pay cuts for many faculty members.

When the numbers are crunched, this blanket pay raise is not unreasonable, especially considering that faculty members' cost of living has gone up every year since the last round of raises.

In the past, raises such as this one have been as high as 4 percent. However, a strain on North Carolina's budget has frustrated legislators during the past few years and has prevented almost all state employees from getting any raises at all.

Any notable increase is a welcome one.

This year's budget shortfall was less severe than expected, resulting in the ability of legislators to appropriate a fairly substantial amount of funds for UNC-system schools.

Of course, the General Assembly could do more, but that is usually the case. If the money is there, more merit-based incentives should come in the future. Legislators should look into the feasibility of raising salaries every year.

All things considered, this one-time package was a welcome gesture. Faculty members deserved pay increases after years of seeing very little extra money coming from the state.

Lawmakers certainly don't have an excess of funds at their disposal, but it was important for them to show that they have not forgotten the thousands of faculty members who have had to make do with less in recent times.

Although this is a one-time pay increase and does not give UNC-CH faculty a significant amount of extra spending power, it does much to stem the bleeding.

The raise signifies that legislators are on the right track, and that they should continue to look for ways to accommodate faculty members and address their financial needs.

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 six board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2004-05 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Readers' Forum should screen against mass letters

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing concerning the Letter to the Editor entitled "John Kerry's pro-abortion politics disgrace the Holy Communion."

While I have several issues with this theme that has spread through the media and talk shows this election year, I would rather focus on the source of this letter.

The author of the letter, Thomas Messe of Groton, Conn. — as well as the one-size-fits-all style of writing — should have rung a few bells among the editorial staff of The Daily Tar Heel and warranted further investigation.

Had it done so, even by using a few easy Google searches, the staff would have found that it falls into a category known as Astroturf.

Such letters are sent en masse to media outlets around the country, often via local third parties, in order to create the misleading appearance of widespread concern or support for the issue; in order words, the effect is a faux grass-roots populism — hence the term "Astroturf."

The technique has been widely and increasingly used by lobbyists, public relations firms, and political organizations.

In this case, Messe's letter has also shown up in papers ranging from Oregon to Florida, as

have several other versions that have revolved around the topic of abortion.

While I am not advocating that the DTH turn a blind eye to national events, trends, and issues, I believe strongly that allowing the letters column to be turned into Space for Rent undermines the journalistic integrity of the paper.

Instead, letters are generally intended for the purpose of open discussion within the community that the paper serves.

Subversion of the voices of members of the community via Astroturf or other such methods have an ill effect on expression and debate; as such, the editorial staff would do well to better monitor the column for such letters in the future.

Groups should think about values, not discrimination

TO THE EDITOR:

So the Alpha Iota Omega fraternity, in the wake of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, is trying to sue the school for the right to discriminate and still receive public funding.

Not discrimination, you say? Well, they certainly don't want Jews. Or women, either.

So Mary, a Jewish woman and mother of Christ, clearly wouldn't be welcome. Or Mary Magdalene. And since Christ can't possibly accept Himself as His only Lord and Savior, he would have to be considered a Jew and wouldn't be welcome either. My, my. What would Jesus say?

Maybe these so-called "Christian" groups ought to spend more time contemplating Christian values and emulating Christ rather than promoting their perceived right to discriminate.

And maybe it's time the Admissions Board started to rethink their nondiscrimination policy so the school will be less likely to be sued.

Signs protect pedestrians by spotlighting safety law

TO THE EDITOR:

Kudos to the town of Carrboro for the demonstrated support of pedestrian safety by installing crosswalk markers that say explicitly, "State Law — Yield to Pedestrian Within Crosswalk."

The signs are in front of Jade Palace on West Main, and in front of the Century Center on Weaver Street and North Greensboro Street.

I urge UNC and the town of

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Bad politicians are sent to Washington by good people who don't vote."

WILLIAM E. SIMON, 63RD SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

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QUAGMIRE

COMMENTARY

Past leaders left legacies that have been difficult to match

For the past two years, the good people of student government have been working on a project — and at the end of last semester, that project came to fruition.

At some point in the University's history, the executive branch started collecting portraits of the student body presidents. But until the politics began their project, that collection had fallen into disarray.

For the first time in a long time, the student government office bears the images of all the men and the three women who have been elected to lead UNC's students. If you're in the Union, you really ought to stop by and take a look at it.

If you're familiar with the University's history, you have a strange feeling standing in that room, staring at those faces. There are some big names on the walls.

Frank Porter Graham — possibly the finest advocate for this University to ever live. Luther Hodges — North Carolina governor and a member of President Kennedy's cabinet. Paul Dickson III — the war veteran elected student body president who led our campus through the Speaker Ban controversy.

One of our finest traditions is student self-governance, and more often than not, student leaders have served us well.

But the last picture on the wall is that of Nic Heinke, student body president from 1999 to 2000. The case containing portraits for Brad Matthews, Justin Young, Jen Daum, Matt Tepper and Matt Calabria sits on the floor in Calabria's office, waiting to be filled with those who will come.

To be honest, I like it better that way. It's lovely how a little unintentional



MATT COMPTON
POTENTIAL CROSSWORD SPACE ... WASTED

tional gesture can make so much sense.

To many, Nic Heinke is a legend on this campus. To me, he was the best student body president of the past ten years.

He was the first such officer required to handle the subject of campus-based tuition increases — and as far as I'm concerned, no one has even come close to dealing with the problem with the same level of ability and far-sightedness.

The story goes something like this: Just after Chancellor Michael Hooker began receiving medical treatment for cancer, interim Chancellor Bill McCoy had an issue on his hands.

U.S. News & World Report — a magazine that ranks universities according to some arbitrary standard — saw fit to drop Carolina from third to fifth in its poll. The higher-ups at South Building decided to throw money at the problem, and McCoy proposed a 66 percent tuition increase.

These days, student body presidents are used to dealing with tuition increases. But here's what made Nic so incredible: he won his fight.

For weeks, he orchestrated a vocal campaign among students against the increases, all while he calmly negotiated with administrators and trustees, trying to work out a compromise.

When the Board of Trustees met to debate the issue, Nic

Heinke showed up to talk, and he brought with him 400 friends and a reasonable position that trustees could respect when it came time to vote.

Tuition went up, but not to the tune of 66 percent.

Because of what Nic did, Carolina established a precedent where a fixed percentage of money coming from campus-based tuition increases would go toward financial aid. By our current standards, that's incredible.

Matthews, Young, Daum and Tepper all have worked hard for this school, and they deserve respect for making that commitment.

All had their share of accomplishments: Matthews and fare-free busing, Young and winning the fight for student night parking, Daum and her skillful handling of the first summer reading flap, Tepper and his idea for one on-campus voting district.

But when it came to engaging students and making effective use of one's position on the Board of Trustees, those four simply do not measure up to a Paul Dickson or a Nic Heinke. We have yet to see what Mr. Calabria will do, but he will get his chance.

It's not an easy thing to be a leader, especially considering the state of the University in this chapter of its history.

I hope he's up to the challenge. But for now, let's leave his picture on the floor for just a while longer.

Because at this point, students can't afford for Calabria to fail.

For more, check out <http://www.tabulas.com/~mattcompton>.

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