

BOARD EDITORIALS

OVERSIGHT NEEDED

Students should vote against a referendum that would allow student government to approve inflationary fee increases without consultation.

Students and their money should not be easily parted. But a new referendum to be voted on by the student body might do just that.

Every student who attends classes at UNC must pay a slew of bills, among them the student activity fee.

Once collected, the money from that fee is distributed to several University-recognized organizations, funding groups such as WXYC-FM, UNC's student-run radio station; Student Television; and the Carolina Union Activities Board. Student Congress also appropriates a large chunk of the money to student groups that request funding.

The referendum that will go before the student body next week will, if passed, allow officials to approve inflationary fee increases for student government without consulting the entire student body.

In this manner, student government officials hope to ensure that the value of their chunk of the student activity fee stays the same from year to year.

Although we respect the principle being applied, making this increase referendum-free is not a necessary course of action to undertake at this time.

Student Congress controls the amount of funds the majority of student organizations receive.

The student body rarely has voted to increase the student activity fee. The last adjustment was approved in spring 2003, but before that, the fee had not been increased significantly since 1984.

There are times in government when bureaucracy is needed, and this is one such case. Allowing student officials to adjust the student government fee without approval runs the risk of allowing frivolous spending without the accountability that comes from requiring students' approval for more money.

Instead, student fees should be reviewed when increases are needed, just as they are now.

The current process works and has proved time and again that it is necessary to review each funding request put forth by individuals. It should remain the duty of student government to initiate the legislation

needed to raise funds for student organizations. That way, groups must prove there is a need before they ask for any increases.

Adjusting any student fee for inflation without consulting students essentially assumes that student groups will provide the same quality of services as they do now. Should the referendum pass, student government will continue to receive money even if its overall contribution to the University's atmosphere declines.

If more money is needed for student government to operate and function, officials should appeal to the student body via a referendum for more funds. It's important that the case must be made to students, because it is students who must pay for the increase.

Adjusting student fees without student approval wouldn't just mean skipping a formality. The referendum that approved the 2003 increase passed with just 53.1 percent of the vote. The Daily Tar Heel editorial board endorsed that specific adjustment, but that's because we trusted the specific organizations that would manage those funds at that specific time; we can't simply conjecture that the leaders of tomorrow will be just as good as those of today.

The current process for raising student fees protects students and encourages officials to pursue other avenues of funding the fees.

If officials circumvent student opinion to increase fees, they will relieve the administration of its duty of finding other sources — this is troublesome, because that check in the system is needed.

Every effort should be made by both student leaders and University officials to prevent students from paying more than they need to.

Passing the cost of a raise on to students should only happen when all other avenues have been exhausted.

An approval-free fee increase will only harm this process.

A LONG ROAD AHEAD

New CAA President Lindsay Strunk must work with students and campus administrators to revitalize her flagging organization.

To say Lindsay Strunk has several major projects ahead of her as the Carolina Athletic Association's new president would be a serious understatement.

Former President Will Keith's recent resignation has come at an intense time for CAA members, but they shouldn't let the incidents overwhelm them in their work for students.

It's not like this bunch isn't used to dealing with pressure. Breakdowns in communication marked Keith's short tenure as CAA president.

His quick decision to invite rock band Sister Hazel to perform at Homecoming hit a particularly sour note, as it angered many in the University community and ultimately became burdened with financial problems from flawed planning.

The CAA did manage to secure R&B singer John Legend as a replacement. But the group's initial poor planning, combined with the lack of communication among CAA members, student government and the student body, put an important campus event at risk of failure.

These flaws in planning could have been avoided easily if everyone had been on the same page. Thus, the CAA and other student officials should work diligently to improve communication in the future. Student Congress formed a committee earlier this semester to examine these problems and discuss solutions, and CAA officials should take these proceedings seriously.

Fortunately, signs are promising that the situation will improve, as Strunk has supported increased communication in the past.

"I think it will really tie together the fact that the CAA and Student Congress work for the student body," Strunk told The Daily Tar Heel as CAA vice president in September. "It will be a positive step for both groups as a whole."

Strunk also faces the task of accommodating graduate students. These students pay fees at the University, but many of them have families they are unable to sit with at sporting events.

Speaking of tickets, CAA officials should keep in mind that, if nothing else, most students expect ticket distributions for sporting events to be fair and efficient. Unfortunately, this year's football game against N.C. State was botched, leaving hundreds of students out in the cold — the CAA should work with athletics officials to ensure that such a scenario doesn't occur again.

Clint Gwaltney, assistant athletics director for the Smith Center and ticket operations, explained the thought process behind distribution decisions for The Daily Tar Heel in 2003. "We take it on a game-by-game situation," Gwaltney said. "If we deem it necessary (to hold a pre-game distribution), we can decide at that point and time, but at this point I don't foresee it happening."

If a huge rivalry game doesn't merit distributing tickets ahead of time, it's hard to imagine what would. To prevent this problem in the future, CAA officials should keep their eyes open through all the other activities they might find themselves engaged in.

And of course, there's Homecoming, which starts its events this week. Early concert foibles aside, things look to be on track for the week of celebration.

The CAA has gone through a great deal in the last few months. The change in leadership puts an enormous amount of pressure on those involved, but they are nonetheless bound to their duty to students.

Those assuming new duties should choose to view recent events as an opportunity to start the year afresh. There's a lot to do, and we can only hope the CAA is up to the task.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Accuracy to a newspaper is what virtue is to a lady, but a newspaper can always print a retraction."

ADLAI STEVENSON, STATESMAN AND WIT

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Evann Strathern, evann@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Making mistakes doesn't invalidate writer's opinions

Friends, forgive me, for I have sinned. This is the first time I've ever made a confession of this sort.

In Matthew 7:1-2, Jesus tells us, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."

I've been doing a lot of judging these days, and I have been judged in return.

I've written nine columns this semester, and eight of them have been highly critical of someone or something.

In writing this way, I've alienated friends and created enemies, but I can live with that.

The problem is that I've also spurned the opportunity to highlight the things I do respect or to note the actions I do applaud, and for that, I take some pause.

Often, even when I'm critical, I make a point to include suggestions on how to improve things. But I mostly put these suggestions at the end of my columns, after the point where many people stop reading.

Because of this, those who are angry at or frustrated with what I've written do not hear what I have to say. That does little good.

On more than one occasion, I have overstated my position. I like certainty and bold statements, and because I write that way, I leave little room for nuance and detail.

I'll be the first to admit that in my column, the little things sometimes get overlooked.

From time to time, I have put style ahead of substance and have reached for the quick joke or clever turn of phrase when something less creative would have held more truth.



MATT COMPTON
POTENTIAL CROSSWORD SPACE ... WASTED

Twice, my editors have felt it necessary to run a clarification on something I've said.

I have, at least once, printed something that was not true. That is a mistake I wish I hadn't made.

Today, my editors printed a full-fledged correction on a point I made in the first sentence of my column a week ago.

At that time, I wrote that Richard Bean was a College Republican staffing his organization's table in the Pit when Kevin Sellers lit his American flag on fire. Actually, Bean just happened to be passing through.

Small mistake? Sure. But I regret the error.

I've made people angry, and that leaves them closed to what I have to say.

Every week, I get feedback from readers, and people who think that I'm an idiot write at least half of it. I would not call my fan mail a healthy exchange of ideas.

The paper has made a point to print at least three letters to the editor in response to columns I have written, in which people note that they've felt personally attacked by something I have said.

Some people have told me that they have never known another columnist who has made people feel this way.

At this point, I trust that I have angered no one. I'd ask that you

kindly keep reading, because I have yet to reach what I've written this column to say.

Despite my mistakes, I stand by every position I have taken in my stint with The Daily Tar Heel. I'll apologize for errors, not opinions.

I maintain that there is a difference between criticism and negativity. I see a distinction between questioning a course of action and directing a personal attack.

When I criticize an organization, malign a mode of thinking or call into question the actions of a public official, there is nothing personal about it.

Just as I admit to my mistakes, I expect others to do the same. And when they don't, I am going to call them to account.

I write the way I do because I think I'm right.

I write the way I do because I want to see things change.

I write the way I do because what I have to say needs someone to say it.

And I don't expect to launch my opinions into the void. I know that when I say the things I do, people are going to disagree — in fact, I am counting on it.

I expect those I target to criticize me in return. I want to hear the other point of view. That's the reason I write like this: I am trying to spark debate.

Boiled down, that's my job. I'm an opinion columnist, and that means I should express strong opinions so others will share their thoughts as well.

In 1861, the editor of the Chicago Times told his readers that "It is a newspaper's duty to print the news and raise hell."

I'll let others report the news, and I'll keep raising hell.

Contact Matt Compton
at mattcomp@gmail.com.

READERS' FORUM

Compton resorted to cheap personal attacks in column

TO THE EDITOR:

The Daily Tar Heel recently ran a column by Matt Compton which inaccurately portrayed both College Republicans and me ("College Republicans become bit players in their own farce," Oct. 13).

While I respect the fact that Compton has the right to express whatever opinions he may have, I do not respect the inaccuracies which negatively reflect upon me.

It was my intention, when the flag burning incident occurred, that my name was to stay out of the headlines because I didn't want this to be about me at all. This should have remained solely about Kevin Sellers and the fact that he burned what turned out to be my property, an American flag.

My only association to the event was that it was my flag that was burned. However, if you read Compton's column, it seems I had more to do with it.

First of all, Compton wrote that I was staffing the table when the incident occurred. This was not true — in fact, I was not even standing near the table. I was walking out of Lenoir and stopped along the edge of the Pit to talk with a friend of mine.

From there I turned to see the flag grabbed and pulled down. After that, I walked to the table to find the edge of my flag burned. Compton also wrote that I "watched

a man go to jail." Even figuratively speaking, this was inaccurate, as I did not watch him even get taken away.

Second, Compton talks about Sellers being charged with a felony. He focused on the fact that, if convicted, Sellers would lose the right to vote. This, of course, went in line with his criticism of College Republicans and I not caring about people voting.

Thus, it made sense for him to focus on this fact.

However, what was left out was the fact that Sellers admitted that his intention was to be arrested for this felony in order to make a political statement. It was not up to me, nor to College Republicans.

In fact, I was never even contacted on his behalf. We had planned to allow him to do community service as a way to avoid his felony, but of course this was left out by Compton.

Further, by implication, Compton tries to portray me and College Republicans as having the "victim" mentality. He says, "They play at martyrdom because that, more than anything, helps them achieve their goals."

This is unfair because we not only tried to help Sellers by being willing to get him community service instead of a felony, but we also were going to try and help him get back on his feet by trying to set him up with a job.

We did not politicize this issue — it was Compton who decided to

make us seem like "martyrs" with his column.

Next, Compton goes into our efforts as Republicans to suppress the votes of others. He states, "For the CRs, apparently the goal of seeing every student vote in this election is not important."

What he failed to mention was that CRs not only registered people the entire time leading up to the deadline but also registered people from different parties.

Billy Constangy, in charge of voter registration for College Republicans, never even heard from VoteCarolina. However, Compton was under the impression that since we didn't have non-partisan VoteCarolina tables set up, we somehow didn't care if people voted. In fact, he said, "They don't want to drown it out."

Apparently, Compton views me as part of some mass conspiracy to keep people from voting. He lumps me into the group that "walked around with a siege mentality, hurling invective at anyone who disagrees with their message, pricking at every imagined slight, tilting against windmills and bogeymen more often than not."

He goes on to include me in the group whose attacks "aren't misguided — they're calculated."

Apparently, Compton got all of this about me from the simple fact that I bought a drink from Lenoir, walked outside to find my flag burned, and tried to talk calmly

about the situation.

But after all, that was to be expected, because Compton's final words were: "I'm biased as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore."

For what reason Compton decided to make an issue out of me having my flag burned, I cannot say.

What I do know is that it was unfair to characterize me in a false light.

I wish my name had never been released, but since that did happen, I can only set the record straight now.

Richard L. Bean
Junior
Journalism

The length rule was waived.

Republican Party has chosen candidates for Nov. 2 races

TO THE EDITOR:

The UNC College Republicans would like everyone to know whom the N.C. Republican Party has endorsed for this election.

Although judges on the local level have been in nonpartisan races for the past few years, this is the first election that those running for the N.C. Supreme Court and the N.C. Court of Appeals are running nonpartisan as well.

There are two elections for the Supreme Court in which Judge John Tyson and Paul Newby have been endorsed by the party.

In addition, there are also

three seats up for election to the N.C. Court of Appeals in which Bill Parker, Judge Alice C. Stubbs and Barbara Jackson have been endorsed.

Please take the time to vote early this week, as this is a crucial election. If you have any questions, please feel free to come by our table in the pit at any time this week.

Billy Constangy
Junior
Political Science

CORRECTIONS

In his Oct. 13 column "College Republicans become bit players in their own farce," Matt Compton stated that Richard Bean was manning the CR table when Bean's flat was burned. Though he did staff the table later, at the time of the event, Bean just happened to be passing through.

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 2409, 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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