

Candidates debate state of stipends

Stances vary on need, funding sources

BY KATHERINE EVANS

STAFF WRITER

Stipends for student officials and stable funding for student government have been sources of contention among leaders this year, and the debate will continue during this year's student election.

A referendum to compensate the speaker and speaker pro tempore of Student Congress was defeated in October, bringing the issue to the forefront of the election this year.

The Student Code stipulates that seven student leaders from the executive and judicial branches be allotted monthly stipends ranging from \$125 to \$300.

Student Body President candidate Tom Jensen said the issue of stipends is one of his platform's top priorities. He has proposed to cut \$60,000 from student government spending, including all stipend money. He said the money would be put back into the Student Activities budget.

"It is outrageous to ask 27,000 students to pay for the stipends of seven people," Jensen said. "Student government needs to act within their means."

Congress Speaker Charlie Anderson, who supported the referendum to allow stipends for top leaders of Congress, said students who know how much work student government entails can appreciate the need for stipends.

"Stipends make offices accessible to the larger part of the student body," Anderson said. "It is a minor offset to the costs that you're giving up." He added that the actual stipend works out to be "hardly minimum wage."

Both Anderson and candidate Leigha Blackwell downplayed the actual amount that stipends tax individual students. Blackwell said each student pays a little more than \$2.00 to support stipends.

Other candidates said they think stipends for leaders are necessary to ensure that students from varying socio-economic backgrounds are not excluded from participating in student government.

"A Carolina Covenant student would not be able to quit their job and do this job if it were not for stipends," said candidate Seke Ballard.

Seth Dearmin, who also is running for student body president, said that although stipends are valuable for leveling the playing field among candidates for high-ranking offices, students who do not need the stipend money should have the opportunity to decline compensation.

Last spring, a referendum that called for a percentage of student

fees to be allocated to the executive and judicial branches of student government to promote a more stable source of funding was defeated by 164 votes.

The current system requires that each branch of student government present a budget to Congress, creating varying funds from administration to administration.

Last year's push for permanent funding, which was spearheaded by former Student Body President Matt Tepper and former Student Attorney General Jonathan Slain, slid out of discussions when Matt Calabria stepped into his term as student body president.

While Calabria did acknowledge the benefits of a guaranteed source of funding — stability, easier planning — he said changing the system would prove risky.

"(Permanent funding) is based on an assumption that every administration will do things the same way," Calabria said.

Tepper promoted a switch to stable funding, which would enable an office to retain guaranteed baseline funding. The problem with presenting a budget to Congress each year, he said, is that one administration dictates the amount of money the others receive.

"Stable funding is so that one administration would not handicap the next," Tepper said.

Slain also supported permanent funding and said it is imperative for the judicial branch.

"Any funding that goes to the honor system should be discretionary because the University could not function without it," Slain said.

Dearmin, who served as an executive assistant to Tepper, said he would take another look at permanent funding. Dearmin said consistent funding would "save a lot of headache."

Jensen, whose campaign slogan is "More for your Money," said he is opposed to a fixed source of funding because he thinks the student body should have the ability to decide if the money is necessary.

"Student government is not doing enough to get more money," Jensen said.

Ballard said he favors the current system, which he thinks promotes accountability and a system of checks and balances.

While Blackwell said the current funding system works well, she said that if the judicial branch wanted more money, she would not be opposed to looking into a change.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Workers voice grievances

Emphasize need for fair treatment

BY LINDSAY MICHEL

ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

A group of UNC workers and their supporters gathered Friday afternoon on Manning Drive with one goal in mind: to make their voices heard.

Amid a din of passing buses and cars, the group — organized by the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150 — spoke out in a unified effort to provoke changes in the working conditions at UNC Hospitals.

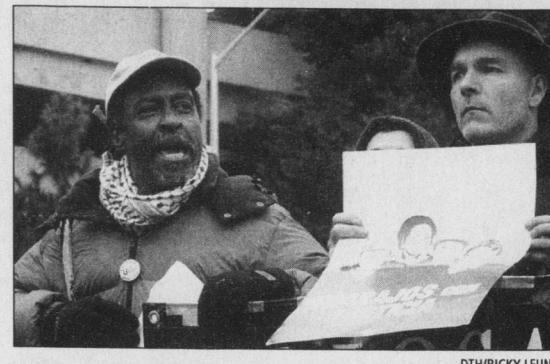
"We have a lot of problems inside in the hospitals," said UNC Hospitals housekeeper Monica Orosco. "We want to change everything here for the workers."

These problems, said Orosco and fellow housekeeper Mauricio Rosales, include unreasonable expectations by managers, unfair treatment and the absence of a Spanish version of the hospitals' grievance policy.

"In many occasions, they don't have the real information in Spanish," Rosales said as a translator spoke for him in English.

Rosales said his working conditions worsened after he was harassed by his supervisor Dec. 17.

According to his written statement, a supervisor forcefully confiscated Rosales' bag as he was leaving work. Aside from other personal belongings, the bag contained union materials. Rosales said he was the target for retaliations because he spoke out against



Ajamu Dillahunt (left) and David Brannigan (right) show their support at a press conference on UNC Hospitals workers' rights on Friday.

poor working conditions during a December public hearing.

"We just want to end this situation," Rosales said. "We just want justice."

Rosales met with UNC Hospitals Vice President Mel Hurston to discuss the incident later that day. But Rosales and union organizer Steve Bader said it did not spark any efforts to rectify the situation.

Hurston was unable to comment on this specific case because of privacy policies. "We investigated the incident, and based upon the investigations, we took the appropriate actions," he said.

Hurston said he and his colleagues take circumstances of worker dissatisfaction seriously and review all reported grievances.

"We at the UNC Hospitals place a great deal of emphasis on employee satisfaction," he said. "In order for us to have an environment

where patients and visitors want to come for treatment, we must strive for employee satisfaction."

Other community organizations also were in attendance at Friday's demonstration. Representatives from the African American/Latino Alliance, the Association for Latino Workers of North Carolina and the North Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Project expressed their solidarity.

Ajamu Dillahunt of the African American/Latino Alliance reminded attendees of Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitment to workers' rights.

"Dr. King said that all work has dignity, and certainly, the hospital workers at UNC have that dignity," he said. "We'd like some freedom and dignity for our UNC workers."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Mich. to eye affirmative action ban

BY HILARY HELLENS

STAFF WRITER

An effort to ban affirmative action in universities and government offices across Michigan took a step forward this month, when a statewide group filed petitions to put the measure before the state's voters.

The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative has started a two-year campaign to put a referendum on the 2006 ballot. If passed, the measure would amend the state's constitution and prohibit the use of racial and gender preferences in college admissions.

Jennifer Gratz, the initiative's executive director, was one of the plaintiffs in lawsuits filed against the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor over its affirmative action policies.

Gratz filed the lawsuit against UM in 1997, when she said she was denied admission in favor of minority candidates with similar qualifications.

In the case, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor upheld the decision that race can be one of the factors considered for admission.

"Frankly, I read Justice O'Connor's decision, and it made no sense to me," said Tim O'Brien, campaign manager for the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative. "It was a fundamental violation of the entire concept of equality before the law."

This is the group's second attempt to put the measure on the ballot. It

wanted a statewide vote in 2004, but an Ingham County Circuit Court judge ruled its petition invalid.

The judge said the campaign's petition did not clearly state that it would change the Michigan constitution's anti-discrimination and equal protection provisions.

Despite the two-year setback, the initiative has garnered 508,202 signatures so far, even though state law requires only 317,000. The group is waiting for the signatures to be validated.

O'Brien said the biggest challenge in the new campaign will be facing the public after the first ruling by the Ingham County court.

"We knew that (the) ruling was wrong," he said. "The public perception was one of our biggest problems, that there was something wrong with our form of petition."

The new petition already has received some backlash from one university official.

"I believe that this proposal, despite its name, does not further the cause of civil rights in Michigan," said Mary Sue Coleman, UM president, in a prepared statement. "It is about closing the door to higher education for many of our citizens."

But O'Brien said he is confident the signatures will be validated and is ready to kick off the official campaign.

Steve Farmer, UNC director of admissions, said that while the

outcome in Michigan will have no immediate effect on UNC's policies, his office always takes a look at challenges to admissions practices.

"I think there is always room for improvement," he said.

UNC considers race, along with academic records, socio-economic status and extracurricular activities, during the admissions process.

O'Brien said he is confident about the road ahead. "People who are getting an advantage are not going to be happy about giving it up. Perhaps even in a decade or so, it will be in the archives, an idea of the past."

Contact the State & National Editor at stndesk@unc.edu.

Correction

■ Due to a reporting error, a Jan. 21 photo caption states that Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity Inc. co-organized a Martin Luther King Jr. vigil Thursday. It did not.

To report corrections, contact Managing Editor Chris Coletta at coletta@unc.edu.

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POLICE LOG

FROM STAFF REPORTS

■ A Carolina Dining Services employee was arrested at 8:40 p.m. Friday for possessing a crack rock, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, Regina Tara Bynum, 42, of 208 Prince St. in Carrboro, was arrested on the corner of Fowler and Broad streets and charged with possession of a schedule II drug, a felony.

She was released on a written promise to appear today in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

■ A student at Chapel Hill High School was arrested at 6:30 p.m. Friday and charged with felony kidnapping, misdemeanor assault and battery, and misdemeanor larceny, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, Mario La-Chad Burgess, 17, of 205 N.C. 54 West, was arrested at the police station and served with warrants sworn out earlier that day.

Burgess was released on a written promise to appear today in Orange County District Superior Court in Hillsborough.

■ A 19-year-old was arrested at 8:50 p.m. Friday and charged with possession with intent to sell and distribute cocaine and attempting to sell and distribute other schedule II drugs, both felonies, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, Frederick Demetris Edwards, of 103 Lystra Road, was arrested at the corner of Sunset Drive and Rosemary Street with a gram of crack cocaine in his possession.

He was taken to Orange County Jail to be held on a \$15,000 secured bond. He will appear today in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

■ A Carrboro man was arrested at 4:15 p.m. Friday for attempting to smuggle malt liquor and fried chicken from a local grocery store, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

Reports state that Lewis Johnny Jacobs Jr., 50, also known as "Angel Dust," was arrested for leaving the Harris Teeter at 1800 Airport Road without paying for the items.

He was charged with misdemeanor larceny in connection with the theft, which totaled \$6.98 in stolen items, and also was served with an outstanding warrant for felony larceny, reports state.

Jacobs was released on a written promise to appear at the first opportunity today in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

■ A Chapel Hill man was issued a citation at 10:33 a.m. Friday for attempting to filch meat from the Food Lion at 1129 Weaver Dairy Road, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, William "Polar Bear" Taylor, 38, concealed a chuck roast and a rib eye steak by putting them under his shirt.

The meat, which totalled \$18.11, was recovered by police, reports state.

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