

BOARD EDITORIALS

ABSOLUTE FAILURE

Save for Matt Calabria's success in stemming some of the bleeding, the BOT screwed over students by raising their fees and tuition costs.

The primary duty of The Daily Tar Heel's Editorial Board is to advocate for the students of this University.

In that spirit of advocacy, we feel compelled to condemn explicitly the Board of Trustees' Thursday decision to raise out-of-state tuition by \$950 and to pass an athletic fee increase of a total of \$150 over two years.

We condemn the BOT's choices in the same manner that our predecessors criticized its January 2004 proposal to increase nonresident tuition by \$1,500.

We condemn the BOT's choices because they undermined the work and progress of committees composed of students, faculty members and administrators and because they again allowed a poisonous tuition philosophy based on market allowance to be their guide.

In approving the athletic fee increase, the BOT disregarded both the Student Fee Audit Committee and the Chancellor's Committee on Student Fees, which deemed such a fee increase inappropriate at this time. The idea for this increase came incredibly late in the game to the committees, which addressed this year's other proposals in a careful, responsible manner. Trustees went over committee members' heads by running headlong into a fee increase instead of approaching it with the appropriate caution.

In approving the fee increase, trustees gave a pathetic amount of consideration to the fact that the hike will be used to bolster two areas — merit-based scholarships and athletics — that don't hold benefits for every student who will pay the extra money.

Though students still won't pay more than \$250 or \$1,000 — the hikes initially offered to the BOT on Thursday — next year's potential \$50 fee increase wouldn't be going to priorities that students and trustees have identified as essential to UNC's health.

Meanwhile, in approving such a drastic nonresident tuition hike, the BOT shortchanged concerns that more prospective students might be turned away by tuition hikes than would be attracted by grants and aid money. Trustees ultimately bypassed

subtle indications in a recent elasticity study that rural area residents, minority students and members of the middle class, particularly those who are non-residents, might be sensitive to tuition hikes.

The only real solace that students can take from this appalling situation is that their representative on the board, Student Body President Matt Calabria, worked to ensure that the potential nonresident increase won't be as large as it might have been.

Many trustees were poised to go along with the \$1,200 out-of-state hike initially presented to them as part of the Tuition Task Force's Option C and supported by Chancellor James Moeser.

But Calabria spearheaded an effort to acquaint his fellow board members with the student perspective, and his work was instrumental in bringing down the proposed amount. He did all he could as only one member, and the only student representative, in a group determined to jack up nonresident tuition.

As much as faculty salaries and teaching assistant stipends matter — and the Editorial Board has kept faculty retention in mind ever since it was identified as a crisis area — the University's highest priorities should be accessibility and affordability.

The University has a constitutionally mandated responsibility to North Carolinians. But it has an unwritten duty to all its students, no matter where they come from or what their background is.

It is right and fair to be concerned about faculty retention and recruitment and TA pay. But it is neither right nor fair for trustees to dance with the devil and to test how far they can stretch out-of-state students' wallets.

Students should know that the keepers of their University have failed them. The UNC-system Board of Governors will examine these flawed proposals in March. Until then, students should examine the choices that have been made and decide how to respond. They should do this both for themselves and for those who look to come to this University in the future.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Of two evils, choose neither."

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON, ENGLISH PREACHER

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Letycia Nunez-Argote, letyica@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

College life might be useless, which isn't such a bad thing

College is a useless place — or at least, it should be. Elementary school was spelling bees and science projects. Middle school was a mash of algebra and making fun of people. High school was a blissful four years of my parents wondering how in the world I was going to get into college. School had a point: college or a job. So I came to college.



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

And here I am on the way out, trying to make sense of what I have accomplished and where in the world this diploma of mine might take me. Most of us are seniors have an annoying tendency to talk about futures — the life on the outside — in tones of great caution and care.

Nobody wants to be the kid without a plan, so we all talk about what we've found to do, or the practical and pertinent things that we've been doing for the past four years. It's all about utility, it seems.

After all, that was the assumption when I finished high school: If I didn't get a job, college was going to direct me toward a career — or something to do after graduation.

And college does do that. Witness the plethora of people engaged in business majors, the journalism school or some pre-med track. It's easy to look at this experience as something useful, a time to gain the skills necessary to be of use somewhere on the outside.

There are so many useful things about college — internships, career fairs, professors willing to recommend students for important jobs in big cities — that it seems strange to argue that college should be a useless place.

After all, don't we earn something when we graduate with a

degree? Don't we owe it to ourselves to get a job and to start contributing to American society? If college is a useless place, what is the point of being here?

The simple answer is that we should be learning to learn, but that's not enough.

I am an English major, which isn't immediately suited to a sharply defined career. I study English because I enjoy the subject.

But I also have a roommate who is a business major, and he seems far more suited to practical purposes in the corporate world.

Yet my roommate doesn't frame what he's doing in terms of the job he's going to have next year. He studies business because he enjoys the material.

In the same unreasonable way that I enjoy Shakespeare, my roommate enjoys financial modeling.

What worries me is the drift toward looking at our education as a means to an end, where college is only a place that prepares us for a productive life.

This isn't to say that all university students are bound to be productive, but when our tuition is discussed relative to other market conditions, it makes me think about how our education is being framed.

College is becoming just another service that we pay for. College, the thinking goes, should be useful because it trains us to be productive in a field. As

such, the end of our education is not education itself, but the job waiting for us at the end of the line.

Education is valued relative to its utility — witness all these justifications arguing that our tuition is comparable to other schools of the same academic rank.

Education is something that one can justify by saying, "My degree from here qualifies me to work and be successful." Education is useful only so far as it can be applied.

But where is the joy in that? If our college experience is just moving us toward the distant land of employment, that would suggest that all this business we're engaged in right now — the General College perspectives, the majors studied because they're cool and interesting, the interest in learning something because of what it is — is in some way less valuable, because it doesn't lead to anything.

Value cannot simply be defined relative to an eventual end, because that cheapens the value of the moment. We should value college for what it is and not for what job it will qualify us for.

College is useless because it's not simply an exercise in learning what is most useful to the external world. College offers an opportunity for introspection that is often lacking outside of our bucolic little world, and this opportunity should not be tossed idly away.

To do something useful is good, I suppose, but to learn about the world and to feel its vibrancy and depth a little more deeply — this is what is most valuable and useless about our university experience.

Contact Timur Hammond at thammond@email.unc.edu.

DECEPTIVE STABILITY

Members of the UNC-system Board of Governors should reject calls for a fixed-tuition arrangement similar to one being used in Illinois.

The UNC-system Board of Governors is exploring a tuition-certainty policy, akin to one developed by the University of Illinois system, that fixes a set tuition sticker for each of a student's years in college.

Such a plan applied to the UNC system might seem like a potential boon for students and parents on the surface — but upon further inspection, it is merely fool's gold.

There is simply too much risk involved, as the UNC system could find itself low on funds and lacking a major mechanism through which it could get revenue quickly.

The BOG should avoid any scheme that ultimately would be harmful to students.

The UI-system policy is fairly simple — and at a glance, it looks like a great idea to help incoming freshmen plan their college careers.

Instead of having to worry about annual increases, all students know what their tuition will be for each of their four years in school. The level of simplicity would be great for students and parents, as they would be able to plan ahead and wouldn't need to fear skyrocketing tuition costs.

These benefits are attractive, but they don't outweigh the massive amount of risk associated with the plan. Although such a policy would guarantee the financial security of individual students, in no way could it ensure that of the UNC system.

The plan offers no savings, and it arguably would lead to a large increase up front, not just a little bit every year for four years.

Also, the plan potentially could cause friction among different graduating classes. For example, in a given year, incoming freshman might enjoy relatively low tuition prices — but rising sophomores still might be smarting from having to pay relatively

large amounts of money. Such a situation might breed resentment between students who don't have to pay much in tuition and those who are charged an arm and a leg in comparison. Plus, there is the question about any disparity that might exist between students who transfer to a university and those who attend it for four years.

Finally, such a system of tuition certainty requires that somebody be prepared to help universities in a financial crisis. Because administrators would have to keep prices stable for three classes, their only option would be to levy a massive hike on incoming freshmen.

Such a plan has its practical limits. That would mean there could be a point when the General Assembly would be required to give the UNC system a large amount of money.

And any observation of N.C. politics as the state continues to emerge from dire financial straits quickly makes it apparent that the system won't be able to count on the legislature for much help in a future financial crisis.

Implementing a string of large tuition hikes isn't the answer when a university is strapped for cash. But keeping an increase in the cards seems like the responsible thing to do. By setting tuition years into the future, the UNC system might be shooting itself in the foot.

Looks can be deceiving — and as the BOG explores the Illinois tuition-certainty policy, it should be wary of false rewards and a myriad of risks.

Given the deluge of recent tuition hikes, it might seem like a great idea to promise students a set tuition arrangement.

But the UNC system should avoid such a plan, because it has the potential to go quickly from boom to bust.

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.

QUOTABLES

"Space is exciting, but we all like to eat."

HEIKE WINTER-SEDEROFF, KENAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE TEAM MEMBER, ON HER GROUP'S RESEARCH ON GROWING PLANTS IN SPACE.

"I can't have a 60-decibel rooster ... but I can operate an 80-decibel leaf blower next to your home at 7 a.m."

SARAH MCINTEE, CHAPEL HILL RESIDENT, ON WHY LEAF BLOWERS SHOULD BE BANNED.

"If she was a man, I'd call her a gentleman."

CECIL HARGETT, N.C. STATE SENATOR, D-ONSLOW, ON STATE SEN. ELLIE KINNAIRD'S ABILITY TO RELAY STRONG CONVICTIONS WITHOUT BEING ABRASIVE.

READERS' FORUM

Stipends for upper-class student officials not needed

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm writing in response to Russ Jones' letter accusing me of trying to cut off access to student government for low-income students.

Leaders in the BSM, YD, Campus Y and hundreds of other student organizations are not being paid with student money and those in student government should not be, either.

Student government officers are almost universally affluent individuals. It's ridiculous to expect the student fee money of someone working two jobs just to be able to afford to go to Carolina to pay the salary of an already wealthy fellow student.

Student government may think that it's on a higher plane than the rest of the student body and that's why its leaders deserve salaries, but it has been highly ineffective in recent years; and the Calabria administration has let down students by advocating tuition increases.

The salaries are supposed to pay students' summer living expenses. But they could easily recoup the money by working 20 hours a week on top of student government work. If someone doesn't care enough about the student body to work 20 hours a week during the summer, then they shouldn't have a high-level position.

If a student government officer was on work-study, I would certainly work toward making their posi-

tion their job for the University.

By eliminating over \$60,000 in wasteful student government spending, I am going to free up money that can go to groups such as GLBTSA, Sangam, ASA, BSM, and many others that deserve the money for what they do.

My platform is about being the best for the student body and not a student government elite. Salaries are good for the elite, not the other 27,000 of us. That's why I want to eliminate them.

Tom Jensen, Candidate Student Body President

SURGE conference will deal with issues relevant to all

TO THE EDITOR:

Students United for a Responsible Global Environment will be holding their annual conference from Feb. 4 to Feb. 6, bringing together more than 100 progressive organizations from around North Carolina. This year's conference will be focusing on creating a network for social change across the local, regional and national spectrum.

I'd like to highlight that Winona LaDuke, director of Honor the Earth and White Earth Land Recovery Project, will be the keynote speaker on Friday night, and Father Roy Bourgeois, co-founder of the School of America's Watch, will be conducting a workshop on Saturday.

There will be numerous speakers and workshops addressing a wide range of issues including renewable energies, the occupation of Iraq, labor solidarity, LGBT rights, sustainable agriculture, the Palestine-Israel relationship and much, much more.

If you have any interest in working toward a progressive America, strategizing for environmental justice, creating social change or were simply disappointed in the outcome of 2004 elections, you should attend this conference.

Registration fees are only \$10 for UNC students, and single-day passes are available for \$5 — meals and great music are included. More information can be found at <http://www.surgenetwork.org>.

I encourage everyone to invest in the future and take the responsibility to become educated about salient issues affecting us all.

Cassie Hoffman Senior Political Science

The Green Energy campaign thanks candidates for help

TO THE EDITOR:

On behalf of the Green Energy campaign, I want to publicly thank all four student body presidential candidates for their support of the renewable energy referendum. The candidates' unanimous support is gratifying to the Renewable Energy Special Projects Committee mem-

bers who have worked hard to make clean energy a reality at UNC.

Two years ago, the renewable energy referendum passed with broad student support when nearly 75 percent of the student electorate favored the initiative.

Since that time, the program has proven itself to be successful. I hope that students will help us keep the momentum going by voting 'yes' for green energy on Feb. 8.

Nathan Patterson Sophomore Biology

CORRECTION

Due to a production error, Tuesday's editorial "Show More Spirit" states that the women's basketball team suffered a "20-win losing streak" to Duke and that the team had snapped a "20-year losing streak." The team broke a 19-game losing streak against No. 1 teams.

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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