

BOARD EDITORIALS

THE BALANCING ACT

Even though more groups requested funds this year, Student Congress' Finance Committee could have avoided overextending its resources.

Sometimes, you just can't make everyone happy. Student Congress' Finance Committee has come face to face with that fact, as it looks to alter at least some of its initial allocation choices to end up with a balanced budget.

The committee has time to fix the error — until the weekend of Feb. 18, to be exact, which is when the full Congress meets for its annual budget deliberations and decides how much student government funding certain campus groups will receive. But it's unfortunate that the problem came about in the first place, and it could have been prevented with more foresight on the part of committee members.

In the past, Congress has defended its funding decisions by pointing out the relative ease of the process through which campus groups can get funds and emphasizing organized requests.

Now, it almost seems as if too many groups are clamoring for money — to the point at which the committee might have to alter its treatment of requests, especially when it deals with the first wave of them. Committee members should have taken the

relatively large number of groups that were on the finance schedule as more of a warning that budgetary problems might occur. Last year, 70 groups attended the Finance Committee's weekend-long meeting. Ninety-four showed up this year, meaning that the committee had good reason to be stingier with allocations from the get-go.

But the budgetary overextension has sent the committee back to the drawing board. It means a lot more work for members and more confusion for groups waiting to know for sure how much money they will receive from student government.

The committee doesn't get the respect it deserves when it does right — which is most of the time — because a lot of fanfare usually doesn't accompany a balanced budget. Still, when a mistake is made, word about it must get out so that campus groups can get the heads-up.

Finding portions of requests to slice and dice is a thankless task for Congress members to assume.

With any luck, the committee won't leave any group too far out in the cold.

NO SMOKING SECTION

State lawmakers should approve measures to curb cigarette smoking, seeing as how it continues to be hazardous to North Carolina's health.

State lawmakers have a unique opportunity before them, with a flurry of anti-smoking proposals coming under their consideration.

Most notable among these is a bill to raise the tax on a pack of cigarettes from 5 cents to \$1.20.

In a state that has been traditionally dependent on tobacco as a primary commodity, there are several factors at play that should help North Carolina kick the habit.

The N.C. Senate should be commended for passing a ban on smoking in its chamber.

And the General Assembly should continue to support prohibitive measures by passing both the cigarette tax hike and a measure that would ban smoking in N.C. restaurants.

The Charlotte Observer's editorial board noted that restaurants with smoking sections effectively require their employees to work while being exposed constantly to second-hand smoke.

The public health benefits of a cigarette tax hike are obvious. A 2001 study led by John Tauras, an economics professor at the University of Illinois-Chicago, showed that the results "clearly indicate that

increases in the real price of cigarettes (which can be achieved through excise taxation) will decrease the number of adolescents who start smoking."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 25 percent of N.C. high school students smoke cigarettes — a figure that legislators should feel obligated to fight.

Now is the time to pass such a tax increase, because the conditions are right to ensure that the state can deal with most of the repercussions.

Politicians from North Carolina rightfully pushed for the federal tobacco buyout as a means of moving further away from the industry. The state has become less competitive in this area, and it's already in the process of moving beyond tobacco.

Furthermore, the current 5-cent tax on cigarettes is the second-lowest of its kind in the country. Although that by itself isn't a good reason to increase the burden on adult smokers, it shows that North Carolina would not be acting unfairly toward them.

These measures would do a great deal to help improve public health in this state. Legislators should rush to approve them.

BACK TO HIS ROOTS

UNC will benefit from the leadership of former Sen. John Edwards, who is set to head a center to examine and fight poverty in the state.

One of North Carolina's native sons is coming back to the University in an effort to serve his state further.

Former U.S. senator and vice presidential candidate John Edwards recently announced his intention to return to UNC, where he received his law degree in 1977, to establish the Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity.

Not only is this a fantastic opportunity for UNC to bring a talented political thinker and mesmerizing speaker to campus, but it's also a chance for the University to address North Carolina's poverty-related problems.

Edwards' presence as the center's director will lend gravitas to this new endeavor. If nothing else, given his experiences in the courtroom, in the U.S. Capitol and on the campaign trail, he should prove to be a great guest lecturer who will be an excellent resource for students.

It would be easy to get caught up in the very political nature of Edwards' life during the last seven years. In representing his state in Washington, D.C., he has led a distinctly partisan political existence.

But the center will be a nonpartisan institute, bringing together public policy experts and faculty members from relevant fields. These people will explore topics ranging from wages to economic justice to education in low-income areas.

Its major emphasis will be to look for real solutions to poverty, regardless of where they fall in the liberal-conservative dichotomy.

In itself, the foundation of the center is an affirmation of the University's primary goal: serving the people of North Carolina.

Being a predominantly rural state that has been affected drastically by the decline of various industries, North Carolina can use all the help it can get in the fight against poverty.

Having John Edwards at the helm is a boon that will enrich not only the center but also to the University's academic environment.

Welcome back, senator.

Although your political career likely hasn't reached its conclusion, we're glad that you're willing to spend some time and effort giving back to UNC and to the state that bred you.

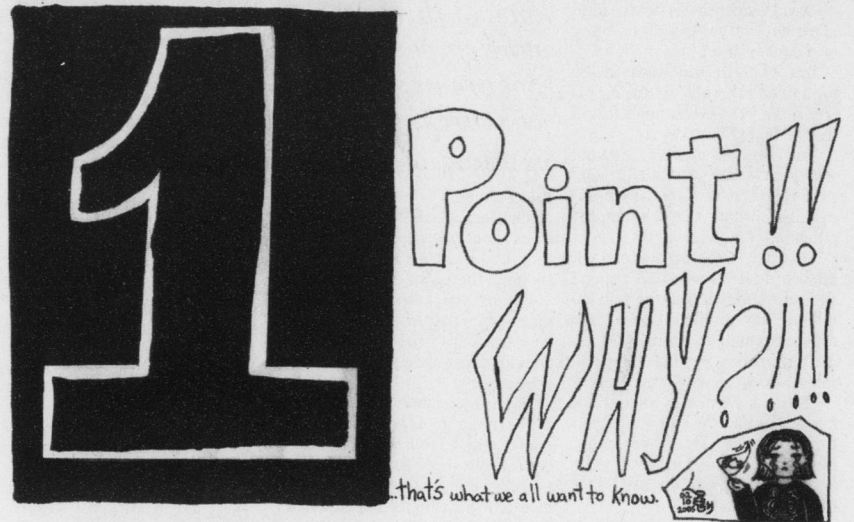
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Money is always there but the pockets change."

GERTRUDE STEIN, WRITER AND FEMINIST

EDITORIAL CARTOON

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



COMMENTARY

Stop fronting, y'all, because it's not even about the game

Last Saturday's Duke distribution felt a little bit like freshman year.

Everyone was sort of awkward in the cold morning air, but we were all smiles because we were finally going to get the tickets for which we seniors had waited four years.

There was the kid who used to live in my building and would always nod to me as he was walking out the door, and then that guy who decided that it would be a good idea to jump out of a second-story window with a sprained ankle so that he could avoid the cops.

There was a whole host of people I had forgotten about, and from the looks on their faces, they'd forgotten about me, too. I couldn't walk 10 feet without meeting someone whom I knew — or, more properly, had met once and promptly forgotten until confronted with an awkward conversation consisting of a 10-word summary of the past four years with a short epilogue describing that great beast called Next Year.

And of course, the Game was on every other tongue. Sage sports-minded seniors prognosticated our chances against Duke, going on to predict a deep run into the NCAA tournament.

On the other hand, there were people out there in the cold who had not a clue about Carolina basketball. Sure, they knew that there was a game — but as one recent letter to The Daily Tar Heel pointed out, "There will be seniors at the game who can't explain what McCants' dynasty symbol means."

But that letter, I think, misses the point. While basketball is being played, the basketball isn't really the thing that makes the game what it is. Sports Illustrated picked this match-up as the sec-



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

ond-best rivalry ever, but I still don't think that it's the actual basketball that makes this game important.

Step back for a moment and think about how strange it is to get all riled up about basketball.

In the first place, if one didn't know the rules of the game, basketball would seem like a pretty strange sport — almost on par with cricket, in my mind. Consider dribbling — what a strange way to move a ball around a court of arbitrary size, with rims that just happen to be at 10 feet.

Add in all sorts of rules about three seconds, traveling, moving screens and blocking fouls, and basketball begins to seem a little, well, strange.

Granted, it's nowhere near as bizarre as baseball or football — and cricket just eludes me entirely — but basketball, with all the rules that have cropped up during the years, can seem like a strange event.

There is plenty to love, mind you. I can think of few things better than sitting in row U of the upper level of the Dean Dome and screaming hackneyed heckles at the opposing player lined up at the charity stripe. Or yelling loudly because we happen to be on defense. Or whatever.

Which brings me back to this event. Carolina basketball is something of a sacred cow. It's a beautiful, exciting, engaging, moving and mesmerizing thing,

but it's hardly about the basketball at all.

If it was, the only people who would be going to the games would be those who truly understood the game, those who knew the nuances of the 2-3 matchup zone and those who could rattle off the field-goal percentages of all our ACC opponents.

And to watch the Duke distribution last Saturday was to realize that it's not just about basketball. The game has grown into one of those things that one does.

A friend remarked that her parents had asked her every spring if she had gone to a Carolina game yet, and that the March 6 Duke game would be her first — and last.

For my own part, I have been to a couple of games, and I have a passing understanding of what happens on the court. All the same, the game is not really a basketball game.

Rather, it is one of those strange affirmations of the Carolina experience, as if one's presence in the Dean Dome on March 6 somehow would guarantee that college has been worth it.

That seems ridiculous — that this basketball game somehow justifies one's academic experience — but how else is one supposed to account for the fact that hundreds of seniors who had never once been to line check dragged their way down to the Dean Dome early Saturday?

It's not about the game. Basketball, for better or for worse, is not what makes this University what it is.

So props to the fools who don't know about dynasty: Y'all other folks are just missing the point.

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

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 seven 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

"Sometimes, I do feel a bit like the executioner."

STEVE FARMER,
DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE
ADMISSIONS, ON HAVING TO TURN DOWN
THE MAJORITY OF UNC APPLICANTS.

"Now we're basically operating on a shoestring and a prayer, and that's really not a good way to be."

GAYLE WILSON,
DIRECTOR OF ORANGE COUNTY'S SOLID-
WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT, ON
LANDFILL-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT
OFFICIALS ARE FACING.

"Matt Calabria saved all of you \$200 last week against the Board of Trustees, so you can all get out your wallet."

ERIKA STALLINGS,
CAMPUS Y DATE AUCTION EMCEE, ON
AUDIENCE MEMBERS' ABILITY TO PUT UP
LARGE BIDS FOR POTENTIAL DATES.

READERS' FORUM

Students should be aware of cigarette health hazards

TO THE EDITOR:

Lately, I have felt that I cannot walk to class or down Franklin Street without getting behind a cloud of cigarette smoke.

My perception might be inaccurate, but it seems to me that the prevalence of smoking has increased during my four years at UNC.

I am not objecting to an individual's right to choose to smoke.

However, I hope to present some facts about smoking among college students that might prevent at least one person from lighting up.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and illness in the United States, with cigarettes killing over 400,000 people annually, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Though smoking prevalence has decreased in other population segments, young adults tend to ignore the long-term consequences of poor health habits.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that smoking prevalence increased to 29 percent of the 18- to 24-year-old population in 2002.

Researchers at Harvard University's School of Public Health found that the rate of college students smoking rose from 22 percent in 1993 to 28 percent in 1997.

Other studies have shown that most college smokers are social smokers and believe that they will stop smoking sometime after graduation.

The problem is that social smokers often mistakenly believe their habits do not place them at increased risk for disease. The American Cancer Society states that there is no safe level of smoking and links cigarettes to one out of every five deaths.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared second-hand smoke a Group A carcinogen, meaning that more than 60 chemical compounds in second-hand smoke are associated with cancer.

Smoking does have health consequences, for smokers and non-smokers alike.

My hope is that we will recognize these consequences and reverse current trends to better our University environment and to save our own lives before it is too late.

Laura Odell
Senior
Nursing

DTH Editorial Board should apologize for Duke-bashing

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to express my shock at your Wednesday editorial. "Best shade of blue" and the content below clearly do not match.

Although I have never enjoyed the style and demeanor of the

Cameron Craziest, I recognize that they are excited fans — immature and annoying, yes, but such words can easily describe Carolina students as well.

While I wish that fans at any sporting venue would show a visiting team more respect, it doesn't happen much anywhere — including the Dean Dome of late.

Beyond that, however, is my utter dismay and disgust with the general language, imagery and lack of respect the piece carries.

Duke University is a fine institution of learning, and while I love to hate its basketball team, I respect its academic achievements.

What The Daily Tar Heel's editorial board published, however, is a clear message that the student newspaper has no such respect.

What really irritates me is that, under the guise of calling out Duke as a hoity-toity bunch of jerks, you have shown yourself to be just that.

You have truly done our newspaper — and its credentials — a disservice.

You have let me down as a student, and I am sure the faculty, as well as Coach Williams, can share that disappointment.

I have previously trusted the editorial board to be a fair-minded, judicious and otherwise unbiased board, expressing views that would identify controversies and give direction for the benefit of the student population.

No more. Perhaps, had one of

the writers on your staff written the piece in a personal column, this situation would be slightly different.

Instead, the board, and by extension the entire DTH staff, must suffer the consequences — libelous consequences at that.

In any event, I sincerely hope that an apology is quickly offered.

Not only should such an apology be addressed to this campus, but also the institution you sought to defame.

At the very least, the DTH staff should apologize to Duke University, Coach Mike Krzyzewski, J.J. Redick, Shelden Williams and, most importantly, Shavlik Randolph.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I hope you do the right thing.

Ian O'Neill
Sophomore
History

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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