

BOARD EDITORIALS

FRIVOLOUS EXPENSES

Although the ASG's trip to Washington, D.C., was ambitious, it first should have looked to improve its operations within North Carolina.

The UNC-system Association of Student Governments has frustrated many people, including its critics and those who strive to support it.

The group's trip to Washington, D.C., hasn't done much to change this.

On the surface, the trip — which has allowed delegates to relay students' interests regarding the Higher Education Act to officials in the nation's capital — seems to have been a completely worthwhile endeavor. And in some ways, it surely has been.

But after taking note of the ASG's limited funds, the lobbying progress it has yet to make and the time constraints revolving around the participation of student body presidents with set terms, one still has to question the group's priorities.

Going to Washington and getting in touch with N.C. political representatives and higher education officials is certainly a better use of student money than some of the conferences and retreats that the ASG has held in the past.

But is it the best use of those funds?
Probably not.

Instead of paying for large-scale trips such as this one, perhaps the ASG should be finding more ways to use its money to consolidate the voting power of students across the UNC system.

It certainly should be honing its lobbying methods in Raleigh.

Before representatives for students in the UNC system can hope to be effective in terms of national policymaking, they must show themselves to be more capable of making political waves in this state.

They haven't done that yet — so although there is good reason for delegates to lobby federal officials, the ASG should narrow its scope.

The group has a limited amount of manpower and resources at its disposal. Although there's little

doubt that delegates have gained plenty of helpful knowledge during the trip to Washington, the organization's focus could be diverted toward even more appropriate initiatives.

That's the burden that naturally would accompany the status of the primary group representing students at all 16 UNC-system schools.

The group recently has been accused of doing too little of substance with the \$1 that it gets from each student every year.

UNC-Chapel Hill Student Body President Matt Calabria and Jen Bushman, president of the school's Graduate and Professional Student Federation — both of who have served as ASG delegates — have questioned the organization's ability to serve UNC-CH directly as a lobbying machine.

Now, in terms of its level of activity, the group appears to be leaning toward the other extreme — it's coming close to biting off more than it can chew.

The ASG doesn't necessarily have to take baby steps, but it should solidify any influence it can garner on the state level before it attempts to make headway on a national scale.

Some critics have argued that UNC-CH students should cut their financial ties to the organization. That would be a bad idea.

In due time, and with the right guidance, the organization could become a legitimate political force. The ASG has so much unmet potential that students of this University would be remiss to pull out at this point.

But this trip to the nation's capital is another head-scratching use of its funding, which already has inspired a fair amount of debate.

Considering that the ASG certainly hasn't mastered its lobbying efforts within North Carolina, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to spend thousands of dollars going after the much bigger fish in Washington.

A STANCE FOR EQUITY

Chapel Hill's principled attempt in the General Assembly to protect the interests of its gay and lesbian residents is a strong sign of commitment.

Part of Chapel Hill's progressive appeal is its history of support for same-sex couples. But that support has been challenged by the N.C. General Assembly through the introduction of a bill that would void Chapel Hill's bestowment of rights on gay and lesbian couples.

Local lawmakers are taking admirable steps to rebuke the challenge.

Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, has been prompted by the Chapel Hill Town Council to oppose the proposed constitutional recognition of the state's Defense of Marriage Act statute, up for review in the General Assembly.

The act would write the state's sole recognition of heterosexual couples into the N.C. Constitution, rendering same-sex marriages performed in other states legally unacceptable here.

Through Kinnaird, the town plans to promote a legislative request to challenge the act and encourage the state to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states and to ensure that rights for such couples are maintained in North Carolina.

This is an important move to reaffirm solidarity between this town and its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Carrboro has extended health benefits to same-sex couples since 1994, with Chapel Hill following suit the following year.

On Jan. 1, Orange County began giving health benefits to domestic partners in addition to providing them to spouses of its employees — a move which places this area "at the forefront of most civil rights movements," Town Council member Mark Kleinschmidt told The Daily Tar Heel in December.

Last year, Chapel Hill fought similar efforts to constitutionally bar recognition of same-sex unions performed in other states. But its efforts were shot

down immediately by state legislators.

The fact that the town is tackling the issue again says a lot about its dedication to local LGBT residents. The proponents of this legislative countermeasure surely understand that its chances of getting through the General Assembly are slim.

But they are persisting based on principle, and that's admirable.

Passage of an amendment would be a sign of the state "going back in time," Kleinschmidt said.

It would also have detrimental effects on the economic welfare of this community, something council members have not failed to recognize. By extending benefits to homosexual partners, not only do town officials stand up for an important social ideal, but they encourage LGBT individuals to enter the town's political and economic spheres.

Chapel Hill is home to four of the six openly gay officials that North Carolinians have ever elected. Undoubtedly, gay men and lesbians take note of the fact that they will not face as much discrimination here as they might in other towns.

If talented, intelligent same-sex couples choose to live here instead of other places in the state, this community gains a comparative advantage.

Perhaps this community has served as a model for acceptance of gay men and lesbians in other areas of the state — just look at the tolerance an historically conservative populace displayed in electing Julia Boseman as a state senator last November.

Maintaining an open attitude is essential not only to providing for this area's success, but also to promoting such openness elsewhere.

"Once you cross that hurdle, you can win anywhere," said Carrboro Mayor Mike Nelson, one of four openly gay mayors in the South.

"Clearly, we've made it over that hurdle."

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

"You know, it was the sorority girls who added the dirtiest jokes to 'Hot Nuts.'"

PRINCE TAYLOR,

LOCAL MUSICIAN, ON THE RECEPTIVENESS OF AUDIENCES TO DOUG CLARK AND THE HOT NUTS' SIGNATURE SONG.

"It was like an Alfred Hitchcock movie. It was spooky. You could hear them where they flew into the glass."

DENISE WILKINSON,

WORKER IN COLUMBIA, S.C., ON BIRDS DRINK OFF OF HOLLY BERRIES FLYING INTO THE GLASS OF HER OFFICE WINDOW.

"Me and my vagina are on a better talking level. We've grown together."

ALLISON GARREN,

SENIOR, ON DIRECTING "THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES."

READERS' FORUM

Dubose is wrong in arguing that ASG funding is a waste

TO THE EDITOR:

I love Derwin Dubose, but his rhetoric in Wednesday's column left something to be desired.

First, he complained about the money that the Association of Student Governments spends on travel and phone bills, and then he called their spending priorities "the biggest waste of student money imaginable."

He has to understand that the ASG wouldn't be effective if it was only made up of students at one school in the system. That means representatives from each of the 16 campuses have to travel all across the state to meet with each other and do research to do their jobs. When you ask students to make that kind of commitment, you need to do it with a promise that they won't bankrupt themselves in the process.

That's why cell phones are just as necessary to the welfare of the organization. The ASG doesn't have an office phone with long distance on every campus, and business needs to be conducted in peak calling hours. A call from Boone to Raleigh costs money, and again, it isn't right to ask an individual to pay for that.

Say what you want about stipends, argue what you will with retreats. Travel and phone bills are vital to the effectiveness of the organization, and as such, they pass the litmus test that we should use to evaluate cost-benefit.

That rant aside, he accuses the officers of the ASG of stealing \$3 from him, then demands a refund. Again, that's a bit silly.

The fee went through all the normal channels and was approved the UNC-system Board of Governors. Students were given the opportunity to put forward opinions on the fee at every step along the way. No one's getting robbed.

You can't fix the ASG by throwing up your hands in frustration. You don't produce change when you refuse to go to meetings. No one is scared by a threat to walk out. History is made by those who show up. If you have a problem with the ASG, then try to fix it.

Matt Compton
Senior
History

Highway cell-phone use is more a danger than a right

TO THE EDITOR:

I am compelled to respond to your editorial advocating the use of cell phones by teenagers while driving.

As a friend of someone recently injured, very seriously, in a head-on automobile crash caused by a teenager exercising her right to use a cell phone while driving, I have lost any sympathy I might once have had for your arguments.

The victim of this example of drivers' rights will be in a wheelchair for six to 12 months, is unlikely to fully recover physically,

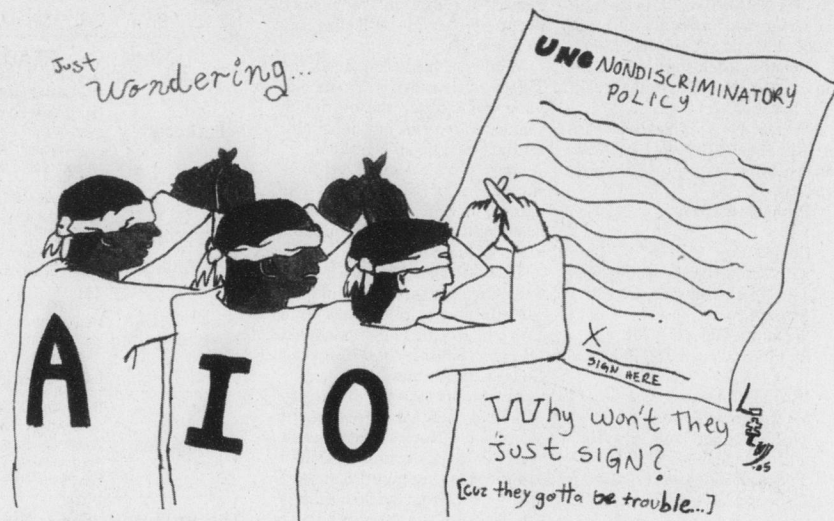
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"The waste of plenty is the resource of scarcity."

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK, ENGLISH AUTHOR AND SATIRIST

EDITORIAL CARTOON

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



COMMENTARY

Is it unity or the handling of plurality that makes us great?

I was driving down to Charlotte last weekend, and a billboard alongside Interstate 85 caught my eye.

Set off as it was, miles away from anything else, it was difficult to miss. The top line read "What Makes Us Great" in big red letters. Beneath it was "Unity" in a cleaner and simpler style. Tacked on to the bottom was the maxim: "Pass It On."

There were pictures on the margins of the board, but I can't remember them clearly. My impression, though, is that the people in the picture were smiling and proud to be just like all of the other people beside them. This, it seems, is unity.

The "us," of course, is America, or Americans, or any group at all that is not "them." Because that is what "us" suggests — any group of people that is not "them."

The "them," of course, are important only to the extent that they might be greater than "us." But what is "great"? Is it our military capacity, or our ability to exert our will in far-flung areas of the globe? "Great" seems such a peculiar term, because it can mean anything that one desires. The term is further complicated by the fact that we — and not them — are made great.

The implication is that we are not necessarily great. Instead, something "makes us great," although it's still not clear what "great" is. The only thing that's really for sure is that "great" is something better than what we happen to be right now.

Which brings us back to unity, the thing that "makes us great." What exactly is unity? Is it a unity of opinion? Is it a unity of purpose? Is it a unity of dreams? Perhaps it's simply a unity of people coming together to form a



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

more perfect union — or rather, a greater union.

Yet the question remains: How are we to create this unity and to make ourselves great? In some ways, it seems a flippant question to ask.

By and large, we're comfortable where we are — going to class, hanging out with friends, watching basketball games and doing the things that go along with the college life. Questions of unity and greatness can wait until after graduation.

Until then, it's far more enjoyable to flip the television on and to watch the game, thank you very much. The world outside can wait.

But should it? Unity, to my mind, is not a matter of being the same as everyone else, and our strength — as a University, as a town, as a state and as a country — should not depend on people holding the same opinion. But when the world is rendered in terms of "us" and "them," it is very easy for unity to become homogeneity.

After all, you — meaning you and I — are either with us or against us.

Definitions of unity as sameness are growing in our culture. The thinking runs that one, be it a community or a country, can only be unified if dissent and diversity are minimized and marginalized. In other words, the strongest community, and the greatest

"us," is that which conforms most closely to a single mold.

But such a definition misses the mark precisely because it is designed to exclude. There is a motto on bottom of the quarter: "E Pluribus Unum." Out of many, one.

It is the many that should be valued most, and it is the many that precisely make us great. To argue that we are great because we are unified is dangerous, because it implies that we might be great because we are all alike.

That is the problem with any argument that depends on an "us" — there is always an implicit "them" that must be set off as an example of what we are not. If "we" are unified, then "they" are not. Therefore, they are not as great — except that logic is eventually destructive, because it reduces the diversity of a world to a simplistic picture of the world.

Unity is important, but it never should exist at the expense of diversity and plurality. Indeed, I might argue that we are the stronger for being able to embrace seemingly conflicting and paradoxical points.

Rather than define our greatness on the basis of our unity, why not define ourselves precisely through our disunity? As tempting as it might be to embrace simplicity and clarity, such an approach limits the world.

Confronted as we are with a world that is vast and chaotic, it seems self-evident to argue that it is our unity that makes us great.

But to do so overlooks the fact that grappling with a plurality of opinions might strengthen us.

In other words, to make from many, one.

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

Established 1893
111 years of editorial freedom
The Daily Tar Heel
www.dthonline.com

MICHELLE JARBOE
EDITOR, 962-4086
OFFICE HOURS: 1 P.M. - 2 P.M. TUESDAY, THURSDAY

CHRIS COLETTA
MANAGING EDITOR, 962-0750

NIKKI WERKING
DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR, 962-0750

ELLIOTT DUBE
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR, 962-0750

EMILY STEEL
UNIVERSITY EDITOR, 962-0372

RYAN C. TUCK
CITY EDITOR, 962-4209

EMMA BURGIN
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR, 962-4103

DANIEL MALLOY
SPORTS EDITOR, 962-4710

KELLY OCHS
FEATURES EDITOR, 962-4214

BECCA MOORE
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, 962-4214

KATIE SCHWING
COPY EDITOR, 962-4103

LAURA MORTON
PHOTO EDITOR, 962-0750

RANDI DEMAGISTRIS
DESIGN EDITOR, 962-0750

NICOLE NEUMAN
DESIGN EDITOR, 962-0750

MARY JANE KATZ
GRAPHICS EDITOR, 962-0750

FIELDING CAGE
ONLINE EDITOR, 962-0750

U.S. Constitution. To contend that the individual's right to assemble peaceably somehow also means that the government must support the ideas promoted by that individual, or group of individuals, is absolutely ludicrous.

The University is not telling Alpha Iota Omega Christian fraternity that it cannot exist as a group. The University is telling AIO that it will not be supported by student funds, which are designed and used to support student organizations that not only reflect the student body but also allow equal opportunity for membership to all students.

To allow the AIO to be supported by general student funds would be to walk a very slippery slope of the intermingling of government institutions and religious establishment, and it should not be supported.

Levi Turner
Sophomore
Philosophy

Marshall Edgell
Professor
Microbiology

UNC has a major stake in preventing discrimination

TO THE EDITOR:

The line of reasoning used by the letter to the editor entitled "University is infringing on its students' civil liberties" is fundamentally fallacious.

The nondiscrimination policy of the University is not in violation of the First Amendment of the

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.