

BOARD EDITORIALS

THIS BILL AIN'T RIGHT

An "academic bill of rights" in the N.C. Senate would do far too much to infringe on the ability of UNC-system schools to police themselves.

A bill in the N.C. General Assembly threatens to take educators' ability to decide the content of their courses and to put it in the hands of bureaucrats.

State Sens. Andrew Brock, R-Davie; Robert Pittenger, R-Mecklenburg; and Hugh Webster, R-Alamance, are sponsoring a bill that would require each constituent institution of the UNC system to adopt an "academic bill of rights" to ensure that all viewpoints are represented fairly.

But the legislation would serve to undermine the very diversity and freedom it purports to encourage.

The bill's proponents are tightening their grip on the classroom and suggesting that North Carolina's public university professors must teach certain points of view or doctrines that otherwise might not be included in their curricula.

David Horowitz, a conservative columnist and author of his own "Academic Bill of Rights," explains that its virtues will allow an institution to "recognize scholarship rather than ideology as an appropriate academic enterprise."

But toying with and examining different ideologies is essential to scholarship. Many viewpoints emerge in the scheme of an academic curriculum, and it is natural for one viewpoint to take precedence over another at times.

A professor's decision to present controversial points of view forces students to understand an expert's opinion and to form their own responses to it.

Ideally, students at the university level should be able to separate materials that are presented in class from absolute truth.

And challenging students' views is vital to their development as critical thinkers. It's much more important than providing equal exposure to familiar and opposing views.

In some courses, being able to defend a particular viewpoint is the entire purpose. Communications, philosophy and anthropology are just a few of the

subjects that revolve around developing arguments that are often one-sided.

For example, in the anthropological study of science, accepting the idea that society influences scientific research can be a key element in understanding the entire field. Without at least recognizing and understanding that viewpoint, one couldn't move on to more advanced topics.

The academic bill of rights seeks to create an artificial balance that cannot be obtained. What would happen if such a bill goes into law and violations are claimed?

And if a professor's material is deemed inappropriate, should legislators really be the ones to provide the equalizing viewpoints for that class?

It's outrageous that state senators would try to penalize honest professors and other instructors for allowing undiluted thought and opinion to pervade their classrooms.

Who is to be the judge of such violations? The bill suggests that professors avoid "persistently introducing controversial matter into the classroom or coursework that has no relation to their subject of study and that serves no legitimate pedagogical purpose."

But the thick gray area of "pedagogical purpose" doesn't give us any practical guidelines. Neither does the rest of the bill's vague language.

Such a "bill of rights" would only serve to chill important discourse in favor of stale "balance."

In higher-level courses, advanced discussion of complex topics cannot be done without the inherent scholarly opinion of a professor. Such a learning environment can easily gravitate toward one opinion's taking precedence over another.

The legislation would do nothing but promote a passive learning environment in which teachers are afraid of including all the material they have in mind — and some of that material could be absolutely vital to the learning process.

This academic bill of rights is the wrong answer.

BALANCE OF POWER

Student Congress took its power to approve officers seriously enough, but it shouldn't try to expand its influence in terms of appointments.

Now that Adrian Johnston has been approved as the next student body vice president by Student Congress, there is time to examine the overall process by which student officers are selected.

Congress has the power to approve or reject practically all of the president's appointments, including that of his or her second-in-command. But members should be careful never to confuse that approval power with power over the actual selection of officers.

In general, every member of and group within student government should operate in a spirit of openness, as the University's special system of student self-governance is reliant upon student awareness and participation.

That said, it's completely legitimate for the selection committee that considers applications for student body vice president, secretary and treasurer to work behind closed doors.

There are substantial reasons for this. If the committee members work with the knowledge that their decisions might be dissected and scrutinized, their ability to judge the quality of applicants on their merits — and not according to what others would find most acceptable — might be compromised.

If students outside the committee — especially Congress members in charge of approving or rejecting nominees — knew who applicants were and what was included in their applications, it could mar the process. If Congress members had access to more information than they already receive, they could work to make their own choices for officers. They could reject the president's nominees for various reasons until they get the person they like most.

For example, Seke Ballard, who lost to Student Body President-elect Dearmin by a very small margin in February's runoff election, was an applicant for vice president. If Congress members knew appli-

cants' names, what would keep them from rejecting someone like Johnston in the hopes of being sent someone they might approve of more, like Ballard?

Neither the Student Code nor N.C. law require that the Selection Committee hold open proceedings. Though the Code holds that "each official meeting of the Executive Branch shall be open to the public," and though the committee deals specifically with executive branch officer positions, the panel itself doesn't reasonably fall under this open meetings policy. The group is not wholly contained within the executive branch, as it includes Congress leaders in certain situations and is led by the chief justice of the Student Supreme Court.

Also, the state's Open Meetings Law specifically includes the consideration of "the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of ... (a) prospective public officer or employee" as a legitimate reason to close a session.

Keeping the committee's deliberations under wraps seems as though it could pave the way for potential behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing. But any member of the committee sensing a failure to "review all applications considering the merits of each," as the Code stipulates, has the ability to act.

Congress members have enough power in the appointment process. They can vet whomever the student body president sends them. They can judge a nominee's credentials, qualifications and background. Ultimately, they can send the president one of two clear messages: "Good choice" or "Try again."

Next year's session of Congress certainly will remember the Johnston affair and the criticisms of those students who wanted to open the selection process. But it should make no move to pry into the selection committee's affairs.

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

"If you put the museum's function in the post office, you've got a downtown museum."

AARON NELSON,
CHAPEL HILL BUDGET REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER, ON SUGGESTED BUILDING RELOCATIONS.

"I'll give Sean all the candy bars he wants. I take that back, I'll give him one or two. When we win the national championship, I'll give him all the snacks he wants."

JAWAD WILLIAMS,
MEN'S BASKETBALL PLAYER, ON SEAN MAY'S EMERGENCE AS UNC'S PRIMARY THREAT.

"My speech will be like a lady's dress, long enough to cover all the basics but short enough to keep your interest."

COACH KEN CARTER,
INSPIRATION FOR THE MOVIE "COACH CARTER," ON THE LENGTH OF HIS ADDRESS AT UNC.

READERS' FORUM

Coach: Celebrate Final Four responsibly, UNC students

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for your continued support throughout this basketball season.

Both our men's and women's teams were undefeated at home this year, and you played an exciting part in that success. We appreciate the passion you display for Carolina Basketball.

We wish all of you could attend the Final Four, but I'm pretty sure we will be able to hear you all the way out in St. Louis.

Please remember to cheer and celebrate responsibly. Our players know their actions on and off the court represent the University, and your actions also will be conveyed to a worldwide audience. Regardless of the outcome of the games, let's show everyone what Carolina class is all about.

Roy Williams
Men's Basketball Coach

Listsrv is a primary mode of communication for CAA

TO THE EDITOR:

The Final Four distribution process has to be conducted in a very short time frame — after the men's team won the Wisconsin game, the Carolina Athletic Association was notified at 10 p.m. Sunday that the process would begin at 8 a.m. Monday. CAA did not create this

process, and there was no time to produce a Daily Tar Heel ad, to create and distribute fliers or to paint a cube.

Unfortunately, it has become very difficult for organizations such as CAA and student government to e-mail the entire student body in a timely manner. Although CAA was once able to contact the entire student body, it now has to maintain an e-mail listserv, for which we solicited students at Fall Fest and to which we add students regularly. We use this listserv to send reminders about ticket distribution dates and important updates like Final Four distribution.

CAA Cabinet members received dozens of e-mails and phone calls about how to get tickets, and I responded to every one that I received. However, the vast majority of our cabinet, myself included, will be watching the Final Four games in Chapel Hill.

If you would like the most up-to-date information that we have available on ticket distributions, please remember to sign up for the CAA information listserv at Fall Fest or request that you be added. Also, please check the CAA Web site frequently for updates about our programs and ticket distributions. These are two of the fastest and most efficient ways we have of communicating with the student body.

We hope to continue to improve the organization and our communication with the student body,

and we hope that you will help us reach you by adding your name to the listserv.

Lindsay Strunk
President
Carolina Athletic Association

Rams Head Market should not sell tobacco products

TO THE EDITOR:

I am concerned about the sale of cigarettes and chewing tobacco at the new Rams Head Center, which I learned can be purchased with expense dollars. I highly doubt that many parents want the money they put in their child's expense account to go toward funding an addictive habit that poses a serious threat to their child's health. Moreover, while the University cannot control whether or not students choose to smoke, I do not think it is appropriate for UNC to make obtaining cigarettes more convenient for students living on campus.

Last year, cigarette sales were discontinued in the Student Stores and the Circus Room. This was done for a reason. Just because the Rams Head is a new facility, it is not an exception to this precedent. Numerous colleges and universities throughout the United States have banned the sale of cigarettes on campus, including the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Colorado-Boulder, Lakehead University and many others.

According to the American Cancer Society, college-aged people (ages 18 to 24) have the highest prevalence of smoking. In addition, the annual prevalence of tobacco use among all smokers has remained unchanged since 1990, meaning that other age groups are decreasing tobacco use while use among college students is increasing.

The ACS's Smoke-Free New England Campaign states, "The fact that the national college smoking rate has climbed suggests that universities and colleges act as passive breeding grounds for cancer. Allowing the sale of tobacco products on campus puts colleges in an ethical quandary. This tacit permission, apart from any profit from tobacco sales, makes colleges complicit in harming their students' lives."

Kate McDonald
Freshman
Undecided

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.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Problems arise in that one has to find a balance between what people need from you and what you need for yourself."

JESSYE NORMAN, OPERA SINGER

EDITORIAL CARTOON

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



COMMENTARY

Why must we come by a post-graduation direction?

Scene: the bar, some Thursday night, full of anonymous faces, cheap well drinks and domestic beer specials. Everyone is without a name, but you spot someone from class or a friend of a friend or just somebody dying to make conversation. Without fail comes the question: So, what are you going to do next year?

Ignore for a moment the underlying implication — that what you're going to do somehow defines how successful you are.

Instead, answer with a smile and an admission that you don't really know.

The other person, the empty questioner, smiles and explains that he or she will be working next year. Or if it's not working, it's law school or med school or — heaven forbid — graduate school.

"Gee, that's great," you say as you swivel out of the conversation.

But what is it with our obsession with doing something next year? I don't ask because I'm one of the few who is comfortable graduating without a plan for my life. I ask because I feel like I'm expected to do something. But why is that?

Perhaps it's something of an identity crisis. After all, for the four years of our college lives, we're students.

We might have jobs or serve the community or write for the campus paper — but at the end of the day, we still go to school five days a week for nine months out of the year.

As much as we might moan about the work we have to do or the frustrations of college life, there's something really comforting about being able to meet my mother's friends and to introduce myself as a "student." It's an easy



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

definition of who I am.

Except now graduation looms, and I don't want to be the kid who moves back in with the parents for lack of anything else to do.

Those kids, the ones without something to do, are the faceless ones. They're the people who you meet four years down the line and find it hard to connect with.

I've been doing school for so long that, in a lot of ways, it's sort of become who I am.

The problem is that once I'm no longer doing this school thing, I won't know how I'm going to define my life.

Of course, the answer is to find something else to do.

For some people, it's medical school. Others are getting all set to spend next year nose-deep in law libraries. Still others are going to throw themselves into banking jobs.

What interests me, though, is how we're beginning to identify ourselves by what we're going to be doing next year. There are those who have plans and those who don't.

This isn't to say that there are these two opposite camps that can't bear to spend time with each other.

However, being one of the ones without a plan, I can't help but envy my friends who already have defined themselves by their future arrangements.

They have direction, they have ambition, they have a plan that

is going to take them to a happy, healthy life.

It seems as though I'm going to be left with the scraps while they feast next year.

But is it better to have a plan?

I'm not trying to argue that all the people I know going to medical school, law school, the business world or wherever else people go have the wrong idea.

Still, I do wonder about people who are rushing to do things because they are scared about graduating without something set.

It frightens me to no end to think about what next June will be like with no defined plans. No longer will I be able to introduce myself as a student at my mother's soirees.

I'll have to invent new labels, like "thinker," "delinquent" or "idler and professional waster of time."

At the same time, there's something remarkably liberating about going through this last semester of college without a real plan for the rest of my life. After all, what is this plan?

I would hate to have to define myself by what I do — it seems too reductive to explain the way I see myself.

Sure, it's convenient to identify myself as a teacher, banker or doctor, but a profession should not define who I am.

So here's how I'm going to answer next time someone asks me what I'm going to do:

"Wake up, eat breakfast and take a walk outside. If I'm feeling ambitious, I might read a book. But that's about it, and I'm fine with that."

Are you?

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