

BOARD EDITORIALS

A SPUTTERING START

Seth Dearmin's first few months as student body president have been marred by a lack of both creativity and engagement in local affairs.

When Seth Dearmin was sworn in as president of the student body last April, he had a lot to prove.

Sure, Dearmin had won one of the most contentious SBP races in recent memory. And after the Matt Calabria/Lily West fiasco of 2004, it was just nice to have a president who hadn't been accused of gross campaign violations.

But it wasn't nice to have an SBP who was elected — as this board believed he was — because he was the most acceptable candidate in a weak field.

Unfortunately, Dearmin has done very little in the last few months to change our mind.

To be sure, he's had a few successes, but they've been overshadowed by a vague platform, dull ideas and a general apathy toward Chapel Hill's public life.

That's not to say Dearmin isn't an affable fellow who obviously has students' best interests at heart. He is; you'd love to have a beer with him. And some of his best initiatives will greatly benefit the student body.

But kindness and leadership don't necessarily go hand in hand. And as a leader, Dearmin still has a lot to learn.

The good ...

By far, Dearmin's best work thus far came in the state legislature, where his efforts eventually will make it easier for local students to vote.

He worked closely with Orange County Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, a former Carrboro mayor, on the so-called "superprecinct bill" — legislation that will allow Chapel Hill and Carrboro residents to vote outside their precincts on Election Day at centralized polling sites.

On a practical level, that means students will get to vote at Morehead Planetarium on Election Day. As things stand now, many will have to travel off-campus, likely to a place they've never visited before, just to cast a ballot.

It'd be easy just to say that if voting were really important to students, they'd do it. But Dearmin — and Kinnaird, for that matter — deserve accolades for understanding that any idea that can get students involved is a good one.

Another good idea is Dearmin's plan to use blog feeds to create a campuswide calendar of events. The idea could fall flat on its face, though, so Dearmin should keep it high on his priority list. If it works well, it will be a valuable resource for students looking to get involved on campus — and for the leaders looking to recruit them.

The bad ...

Beyond those successes, there isn't much to say

about the good Dearmin's done. And to a large extent, that's a fault that goes back to his platform — which is filled with platitudes instead of solid ideas.

Take Dearmin's efforts to bring the campus community together. He wasn't able to articulate any tangible ideas, besides the online calendar, for doing so. And his platform includes standard "ideas" like ensuring more Greek spots on student government and working with the Out of State Student Association.

That'd be OK if he'd spun up some better material recently, but he hasn't, and his lack of creativity is upsetting. How is it that a group of people who dressed up in armadillo suits last year generated more buzz in one week than Dearmin has all year?

Another issue that concerns us is Dearmin's attitude toward the proposal, shot down in the General Assembly this summer, to give UNC-Chapel Hill autonomy in its tuition-setting process. Essentially, it boils down to this: I trust the trustees.

To be fair, that's a diplomatic stance to take. And last year's SBP, Matt Calabria, proved that forming good relationships with the Board of Trustees can get things done.

But Dearmin hasn't yet shown that he'll be an effective student trustee, which is arguably his most important job. Again, it boils down to creativity; we're not sure if he has enough to get his way with some of the most powerful people in the state.

And the ugly

Paramount among Dearmin's shortcomings, though, is his almost complete lack of interest in local affairs.

By his own admission, he's been anything but a fixture at meetings of the Chapel Hill Town Council and the Carrboro Board of Aldermen.

His ideas for getting students involved in this fall's municipal elections center on voter drives and a campus election forum — initiatives largely spearheaded by other groups, including Young Democrats, College Republicans, VoteCarolina and even the DTH.

And when asked whether he's met with all the Town Council candidates, Dearmin responded that he hasn't yet met with Aaron Shah.

Not a big deal — except that Shah dropped out of the race on Aug. 5.

As this board opined Tuesday, this fall's elections will affect the future of the University, Chapel Hill and Carrboro for generations, so it's crucial that students get involved. But how can they be expected to do so if their leader shows no more than a passing interest in politics beyond Franklin Street?

They can't. But thankfully, there's a lot of school year left. Let's hope Dearmin uses it wisely.

GIVE THEM A BREAK

UNC has done a good job accommodating the displaced students from Cobb Residence Hall, but they deserve a discount — and our kindness.

As the Cobb Residence Hall construction slowly proceeds, the displaced students of Cobb begrudgingly settle into on-campus apartments just beyond the Smith Center. And while it's not at fault for the renovation delays, the University should make every effort to ease the burden that has beset the relocated residents — and compensate the students who paid for Cobb but were instead given Baity Hill.

These students deserve at least a reduced housing bill for the semester. After all, they are not getting what they paid for — and what they had looked forward to when they signed up to live in Cobb during housing recontracting. If any other business, public or private, did that, it would be forced to provide a discount to its customers; so should UNC.

In addition, the Baity Hill apartment community is a longer walk to North Campus than the other South Campus communities. While the University should be applauded for installing a P2P route near Baity Hill for nighttime and evening access, residents still must walk home from the bus stop in an area of campus that's dark and isolated. A P2P stop that takes students even closer to the apartments would make Baity Hill a more convenient and safer place to live.

Beyond late-night travel, residents of Baity Hill

should have a bus route more tailored to their remote living accommodations, one that makes getting to class a more feasible mission. A frequent shuttle for Baity Hill residents to campus would ease the stress of living so far from most classes.

But it's not just the University brass who should get involved. The entire campus community can help out.

Students: Know someone who lives down there? Give them a ride home from the party you're at or the concert you attended.

Faculty: Did a handful of students struggle into class a few minutes late Tuesday? Cut them a break, at least for a little while; they might have walked from the edge of campus to get there.

Staff: You all are the backbone of the University. Be as kind to sleepy students as they should be to you.

Baity Hill offers spacious apartments, but six students can't fit into two bedrooms without feeling a little overcrowded. Even the Internet has become a luxury, as there are too few places for much-needed connections.

So let's keep Baity Hill's residents in mind. Let's put safety at a premium. And let's show the southernmost part of campus our Southern hospitality.

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 four board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the DTH editor. The 2005-06 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Fraternity members back their sorority counterparts

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to express my extreme disappointment and disgust with Jillian Bandes' column "Words of wisdom from the mouth of a Greek expatriate" (DTH, Aug. 30).

As a leader within the Greek community and as a fraternity man with many friends in the Panhellenic system, I ultimately feel sorry for Jillian Bandes and the tactics she has employed.

The fraternities and sororities on this campus are not without their faults, and we have worked consistently over the years to combat stereotypes and create change within the system. Despite the misconceptions by some, we welcome criticism and speak with candor about the problems facing fraternities and sororities whenever possible.

Jillian Bandes' column avoids facts or figures and instead recycles overplayed stereotypes about sorority women in an editorial-like rant. In the end, she only makes herself seem shallow and self-loathing in her attempt to sabotage Panhellenic recruitment.

The sororities of this University deserve nothing but admiration for the time and money they

invest in the community and the values they instill in their members. Fraternities and sororities offer an experience unique from other campus organizations, and this is a fact that one disgruntled former member cannot attempt to tear down.

Tom Merrihew
President
Interfraternity Council

It was wrong for columnist to perpetrate stereotypes

TO THE EDITOR:

I was dismayed in reading Jillian Bandes' column in Tuesday's paper. Though I am not a member of a Greek organization, I found that Bandes displayed immaturity, intolerance and a general lack of respect for an entire segment of the Carolina community.

While I fully support the right to free speech, I find it shocking that such hateful criticism delivered with such an air of absolute certainty is acceptable for print.

Certainly we all have been taught that it is wrong to stereotype and use blanket terms to describe large and diverse groups; Bandes either missed that message or felt that such a principle does not apply to sororities.

It should not be acceptable to

use such hurtful, generalized statements about any organization or group on this campus. The bottom line is life is too short to waste valuable space in a noteworthy newspaper on sniveling, amateurish tantrums.

B. Carrington Skinner
Junior
Psychology, History

Sororities play a vital role in the campus community

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Jillian Bandes' Tuesday column.

It's funny how we've all been taught not to judge others until you've walked a mile in their shoes. I figured that you, Jill, of all people should know this.

You took one step into Greek life, not a mile. Yes, you had a bad rush experience, but generalizing sorority life at Carolina and further purporting the negative stereotypes that we as Greeks have fought so hard to dispel is simply ridiculous.

Your column presented sorority rush in light that makes us sound shallow, unintelligent, self-absorbed and materialistic.

Yes, we like to look nice, and we may come off as a little high-maintenance, but we're girls, and that's

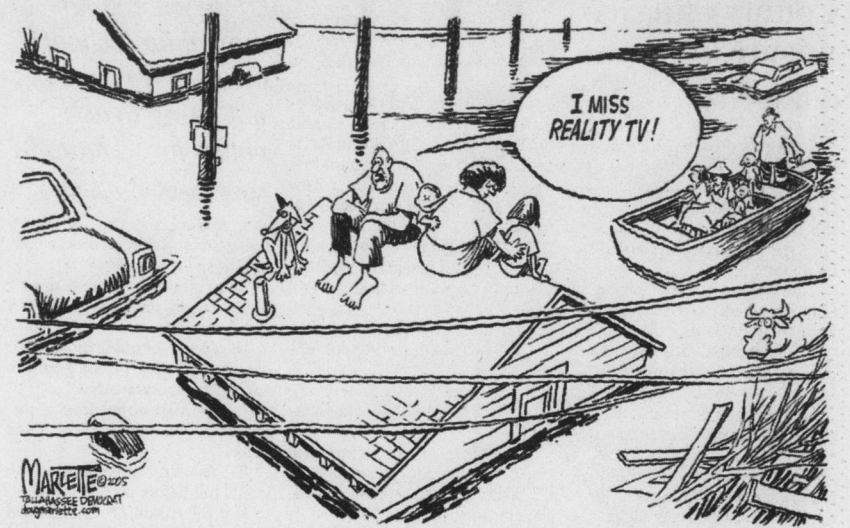
FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"I think it's a little silly right now that not one person on the (Chapel Hill Town) Council is under 35."

JASON BAKER, UNC STUDENT AND COUNCIL CANDIDATE

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Doug Marlette, Tribune Media Services



COMMENTARY

Don't allow town residents to dominate town politics

Having attended UNC for three years now, I'd say one of the more interesting aspects of my experience has been students' willingness to leave town politics entirely to local residents — despite the major differences that exist between the two groups.

Take, for example, a story by Meghan Davis that ran in The Daily Tar Heel on Tuesday after it was reported in other media during the DTH's summer break.

That article was about a new Wal-Mart that might get built in northern Chatham County, not too far from UNC's campus down U.S. 15-501.

Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County officials are following the issue closely because of the effects the big-box retailer could have on this side of the border. Think traffic and environmental issues, in addition to the negative vibe that seems to follow Wal-Mart wherever it goes.

But though Wal-Mart has had some image issues lately, a new location would nonetheless be convenient for students.

I would certainly appreciate a shortened trip to the store, and I doubt that I'm alone. Students consume cheap goods. It's a fact. But Wal-Mart faces substantial opposition from activists in Chatham County and the surrounding area.

Many of those residents are attached to their small-town quality of life, and I'm fine with that. They vote that way, and their local officials know their preferences.

There also are probably a few hippies among the Wal-Mart opponents — the type who like to make a ruckus about the evils of corporate America. They might have gotten hair cuts and taken an occasional shower, but their



JEFF KIM
NO LONGER A VILLAGE

elected officials haven't forgotten who they are, either.

Local politicians also know many college students would rather do business with a villainous conglomerate than pay the quaint high prices of local mom-and-pop stores.

But how much difference does student opinion actually make right now?

Not much in Chatham County — which has received plenty of advice from Chapel Hill and Carrboro even though it has final jurisdiction over its development, including any Wal-Marts.

And if Chapel Hill Town Council members and the Carrboro Aldermen are quaking in their boots, it's not because of the 329 student-aged voters who participated in 2003's municipal elections.

To be sure, student leaders have made valiant efforts to get their peers out to the polls, and I believe their work is increasingly effective and worthwhile.

Thousands of students showed up to vote last year. And though the presidential election had a lot to do with that, the impressive turnout numbers and new voter registrations are hard to ignore.

But students must take an interest in local affairs in order to vote effectively.

A party-line vote isn't going to work in Democrat-dominated Chapel Hill, so get to know the candidates and the issues.

Some of those issues are among students' common interests. After

all, most of the issues Chapel Hill and Carrboro deal with hit closer to home than a Wal-Mart in Chatham County.

Local residents, for example, have a fit whenever they see University construction plans that include a substantial number of new parking spaces.

Don't care? The lack of on-campus parking should become particularly noticeable for off-campus students on Labor Day. The University is holding classes, but the town isn't running any off-campus buses. Only the U and Reverse U will run.

That's one of the day-to-day type issues that get overlooked when students don't vote.

I should probably also note now — while I'm on my high horse — that I didn't vote in 2003.

I was confused about the voting location and wasted a walk to the Morehead Planetarium, where early voting was conducted, but where Election Day voting was not.

Thankfully, an election reform law passed by the state legislature this summer should help students like me find their way to the polls — though not this year.

The so-called "superprecinct bill" allows anyone living in Chapel Hill or Carrboro to vote outside their precinct on Election Day in places like Morehead Planetarium and other selected polling sites, but the county Board of Elections doesn't have the infrastructure to pull that off until next year's May primaries.

So find your precinct now and make some plans to get to the polls in November. The effort is worth your while.

Contact Jeff Kim,
a senior economics major,
at jongdae@email.unc.edu.

Speak Out

We welcome letters to the editor and aim to publish as many as possible. In writing, please follow these simple guidelines: Keep letters under 300 words. Type them. Date them. Sign them; make sure they're signed by no more than two people. If you're a student, include your year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff: Give us your department and phone number. The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Bring letters to our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union, e-mail them to editdesk@unc.edu, or send them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515. All letters also will appear in our blogs section.

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years of editorial freedom

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(Editor's note: The DTH will run more letters on this topic in Thursday's and Friday's papers.)