

BOARD EDITORIALS

MEDIocre PROGRESS

The October Report highlights an administration that is performing in the fair-to-poor bracket, but there's still time to pull through in the end.

The Dearmin administration just released the annual October Report, and to be frank, it's not very impressive.

The October Report is supposed to be an accountability tool in which the executive branch explains all of its accomplishments and failures — or in the case of Student Body President Seth "What, Me Worry?" Dearmin, all of the pattering in circles that is the hallmark of his administration.

To be fair, Dearmin did have a lot to do with the super-precinct bill during the summer that would have enabled all students to vote at more convenient locations on Election Day. It wasn't his fault, either, that it fell flat at the final hurdle of the Orange County Board of Elections. So five points for doing something important, Dearmin.

Also, Dearmin's administration has taken a relatively active role in the tuition proposal of the Tuition Task Force — mainly by advocating for a predictable tuition scheme. We hope they will continue to push for it as the proposal begins to encounter scrutiny, but with the caveat that "predictable" tuition increases do not compromise affordability.

Unfortunately, many of the other planks on Dearmin's platform have been neglected and left to others to accomplish.

Wireless Internet on Franklin Street hasn't happened yet. And as of the beginning of last month, Dearmin was not aware of the collaboration among various public bodies working on realizing that goal.

The farmers' market that is taking place at Rams Head this week was another accomplishment that was done largely by others. Carolina Dining Services was the major spearhead of that operation, and executive branch involvement is relatively recent, though it has provided a good deal of manpower in that time, by all accounts.

Condoms in vending machines is another way that the Dearmin campaign promised to help students

last spring. But that was taken care of without the administration's involvement.

The above examples aren't mentioned in the October Report. Of course, Dearmin shouldn't take credit for others' actions — and he doesn't in the report — but those were points on his platform that he felt were important to daily student life, and he should address and report on the issues even if his administration did not get involved directly in successes — and explain the lack of involvement in the stalled wireless initiative.

And what about some of the oddball promises such as replacing Burger King with Wendy's? Or getting more cardio machines in the Student Recreation Center? Either they happened quietly and Wendy's doesn't mind having a Burger King sign in Lenoir, or they haven't happened at all.

Sure, these are kind of nit-picky points, but they were campaign promises and still are on Dearmin's old campaign Web site at www.unc.edu/dearmin. It's a simple address, and it makes it easy to check up on the progress of the figurehead of the student body and the advocate before administrators and the outside world.

But Dearmin is showing some improvement overall. He's recently started holding office hours at 1 p.m. Wednesdays in the Pit. He also took some students to the N.C. State Fair. Though relatively minor in the grand scheme of things, they do increase his face time around campus — something he needs sorely.

But Dearmin just hasn't cut a presidential path yet. We hope he'll get the hang of being accessible and high-profile by the time he has to play ball with the Board of Trustees on tuition — as it is he's been largely a placeholder since the beginning of the semester. When tuition comes up later this year — and it will be a point of contention, make no bones about that — don't count him out yet, but don't stop praying either.

NOT TO BE TRUSTED

The Board of Governors might mean well with a new proposal to ensure tuition predictability, but administrators are likely to abuse the process.

Working its way through the UNC-system Board of Governors' budget and finance committee is a plan that likely will turn the maximum tuition increase into the standard increase, and the BOG should not approve a measure that would invite continually increasing tuition and fees. The guidelines in question would set tuition and fee increases for the 2006-07 academic year based on the tuition rates of "peer institutions" — always an ominous sign these days.

There is little question that stability in the tuition-setting process would help the participants in the UNC system. Administrators would have a better idea of what their budgets would be for the coming years and could plan accordingly with regards to hiring new faculty and staff. Students would benefit, too — being able to reasonably predict what your tuition will be between your freshman and senior years would be great. Students and their families could plan more effectively for their future needs. In short, predictability would allow students, families and administrators to budget more precisely.

That is a philosophy we endorse and would like to see happen in the future. But it should not come at the cost of limiting our ability to fight tuition hikes.

It should be expected that if the BOG were to set a maximum amount for yearly tuition increases, that maximum would become the standard increase — especially given the grasping nature of our own university's Board of Trustees. Why ask for less than what has already been dubbed as acceptable?

Under the proposed guidelines, the maximum tuition increase and fee hike for UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University would be \$451. We do not believe that the UNC-CH Board of Trustees and administration can be trusted to consider \$451 to be the maximum in a range. The trustees will see it as how much they can raise tuition and not face opposition. And the last thing that students need is for a predictable tuition policy to be abused into a policy

that guarantees the exploitation of students' wallets.

If the guidelines are approved and then become a permanent part of the system, they will guarantee constant "minimum" increases. Administrators would know how far they could go with the BOG.

Meanwhile, students will be hindered in their ability to fight tuition increases because the administration always could say that it was following the guidelines of the BOG. After all, if the increase was unreasonable, it wouldn't be within the acceptable range.

Basically, it would make the whole tuition process structurally inclined towards increases, handicapping any efforts to fight against unnecessary hikes. We cannot endorse a system that makes tuition increases the default setting and not something to be considered and fought each time.

We understand that tuition might have to go up year to year, but we also think it should be a competitive process that requires constant explanation and accountability — things which will not be as necessary under the new system.

At the same time, though, we would like to see stability at some point. We reject the idea that we have to choose between fighting for low tuition and tuition stability.

We believe there is a third way, where we could have stability and predictability and UNC-system schools could get needed resources without facing the constant increases that make education prohibitive. We encourage leaders from all campuses, the BOG and the N.C. General Assembly to come together and find that solution.

In the meantime, the BOG should not approve guidelines or any plan that encourages tuition increases. The current process might not be predictable or stable, but it does offer students the best way to fight against tuition increases. The ability to plan better is not worth guaranteed yearly tuition increases.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions solely of 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. Address concerns to Public Editor Elliott Dube at dube@emmail.unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

DTH was too quick to point fingers in election snafu

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to The Daily Tar Heel editorial board's stance on the elections process of the past week, I will be the first to acknowledge the pitfalls of the process and the embarrassment that it has caused students and the University.

I will not, however, accept the claims of hypocrisy that so easily cast doubt on the integrity of the Black Student Movement and myself as a leader.

Let's get all of the facts regarding the alleged "backing down from a principled stance" on the table.

As I hoped was conveyed in a phone interview with the DTH's University Editor, I was quite surprised by the news of our endorsed candidate's "victory" in the District 2 election.

However, we did not plan to further contest the decision made by the Student Supreme Court not because of the victory of our candidate — as the editorial suggests — but because it was made explicitly clear during Sunday's hearing that the Supreme Court could not and would not go against the Student Code by way of nullifying the disputed seat.

It is also pertinent to know that the Board of Elections knew the election results in question before

Sunday's hearing and chose not to disclose the close nature of the race to the public even though it could have had a direct influence on the court's decision-making.

For the BOE to state that a write-in candidate won the District 2 election by one vote and that they could not recall the results — as they stated in court — or that they felt that the results weren't pertinent to the case — as they stated after releasing the results — is a ridiculous assertion.

I would like these facts to be properly acknowledged by the DTH and that the editorial board paint a full and accurate picture of BSM's stance and why we came to our decision not to pursue further legal action.

Julius West — BSM vice president and member of Student Congress — will be introducing legislation in the coming weeks to clear up conflicting sections of the code and to establish a clear procedure for notifying the student body of elections and major decisions made by the BOE.

The BSM remains committed to the principle of fair and transparent elections on this campus and will continue to work toward this goal on behalf of all students.

Brandon Hodges
President
Black Student Movement

Paper's criticism of Farley was unfair and ill-conceived

TO THE EDITOR:

As a personal friend and professional colleague of Luke Farley, I would like to counter some of the false and negative publicity that has been launched against our Student Congress speaker.

You also blame Luke for a lack of public knowledge about the additional seat. If the BOE is "charged exclusively with running elections," as you put it, would not that responsibility include publicity efforts?

I've heard a lot lately about The Daily Tar Heel's devotion to transparent government. Question for you, DTH: You claim in your editorial that Luke informed you about the additional seat.

If this is true, and you knew of this information, why did you not bother to run a full story, instead of blaming Luke for not publicizing it more?

Anyone can see this is a political ruse. Opponents of Luke will do whatever it takes — including unnecessarily dividing this campus along political lines — to gain power. Luke has done an excellent job. Your moral high horse is lame, and so was your editorial.

Kris Wampler
Representative
Student Congress

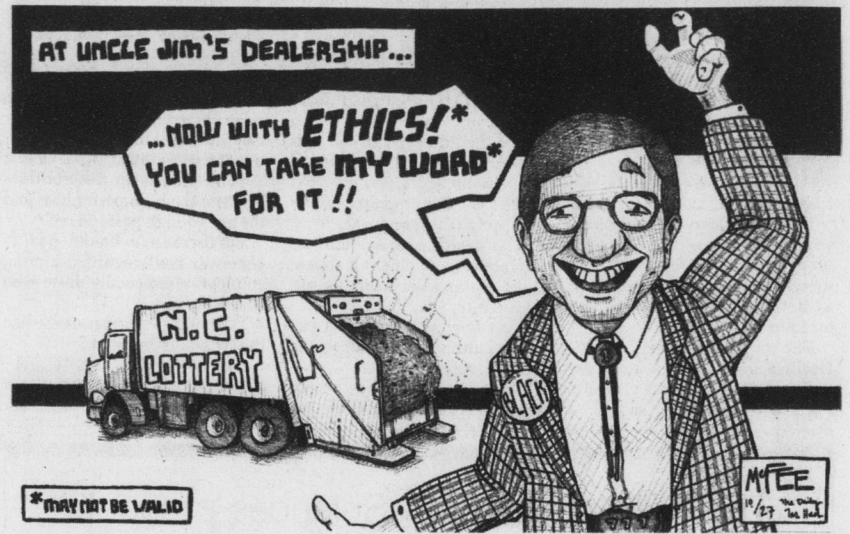
FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"There's really no mold of our average student. We are diverse in almost every way — except that we've got 75 percent girls."

CHARLES NOLAN, PRINCIPAL OF MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL, ON THE DIVERSITY OF HIS STUDENTS

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Philip McFee, pip@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Meet Jim Black, the most powerful man in N.C. politics

It's hard for me to fathom a man such as N.C. House Speaker Jim Black.

It's just hard to imagine one person on the state level with that much political pull and power.

But Black has gathered a handful of strong Democrats during the past few years and basically run away with the N.C. General Assembly.

Moderates have no choice but to support him in exchange for a few pieces of legislation, and the staunch Republicans are banished to the back of the chamber where their grumbles can't be heard.

I expect U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole or Rep. David Price to have tons of worker bees at their beck and call — to be unreachable, too busy to comment.

But even they have become more human to me than Jim Black. I rode an elevator with Liddy Dole in New York. I'm sure she thought I was a supporter there for the 2004 Republican Convention. And I remember talking with David Price during the 2002 midterm election outside his hotel suite while a congratulatory party raged inside.

But back to Black. I've met him a handful of times and he's perfectly nice, don't get me wrong. Few people have as tight a grasp on N.C. politics as this man. He's seemingly invincible.

I was in the House chamber when Black was elected speaker for the fourth time. It was clear as soon as you walked in the door that he was going to win. He had shared his seat with Richard Morgan during the 2003-04 session, but Black ensured that he would serve as sole speaker during the current session.

The vote to elect Black as speaker came and went quickly. And newly appointed Speaker Pro Tem Richard Morgan and cooperative Republicans quickly were resigned to second place. But not



EMMA BURGIN
IT'S A GLAMOROUS LIFE

without a barely audible objection from the 14 Republicans who had been placed in the back.

See, it's a well-known fact that, in the House chamber, the closer to the front you sit, the more "in" you are. So Richard Morgan was honored with seat No. 1. And 14 of Morgan's fellow Republicans were seen as the least agreeable.

While most agreed that the creation of the speaker pro tem position was a new step in North Carolina's coalition government (which peaked with the unprecedented co-speakership), others accused Morgan's Republicans of sleeping with the enemy.

"My debate was silenced," said Rep. John Rhodes, R-Mecklenburg, after Black was elected sole speaker in January. "What you basically have is a third party emerging. Let's call them 'Republicans'."

So, Black is powerful. And he and Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight (and don't forget Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland) use that power to control both sides of N.C. politics.

Well, sometimes it means good things. Other times, the Democratic leadership seems terribly misguided.

During the legislative debate about tuition autonomy for UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University, Black offered that UNC-Charlotte (which is in his home district of Mecklenburg County) be included in the mix. Unfortunately for him, Charlotte's chancellor declared the school didn't want to make its tuition

decisions without the UNC-system Board of Governors' approval.

The tuition autonomy decision failed — thankfully. But then came the lottery fiasco.

Black let Scientific Games Corp. write some of the provisions of the lottery bill that was passed by the legislature, particularly parts that dealt with selecting vendors. It's a bit of conflict of interest, considering the corporation could benefit from some of the provisions its helped write.

And if you haven't heard by now, Jim Black is under federal investigation. No one's sure if it has to do with the shady lottery deal, but many are guessing that's what it is.

The lottery — it's a tough question, whether I'm for it or against it. I guess I'll tell you what I said earlier this week: "I'm against it in principle, but for it in practice."

Our schools need help. And Gov. Mike Easley's intentions are good in funneling the lottery revenue to help educate the future leaders of North Carolina. But there's no excuse for the way the lottery was passed.

Pundits say his political career isn't in danger, and I hope, for the state's sake, that the FBI doesn't find anything against Black. Experts say it's simply a public relations glitch. He'll probably snag another term as speaker, and things will pretty much return to normal in Raleigh.

But I hope this investigation encourages Black and those close to him to proceed with caution, no matter how powerful they become. Keep things out in the open, and trust the people they're elected to represent.

I will allow my legislators to make mistakes, but I won't allow them never to admit to them.

Contact Emma Burgin, a senior dramatic arts major, at emmiline@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.

The Daily Tar Heel

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