

BOARD EDITORIALS

FREE PRESS FOR ALL

UNC administrators have historically backed free speech and a free press, but comments by an administrator jeopardize that great tradition.

Last week, the opinion page of The Daily Tar Heel published a cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammad, reflecting on the violence stirred by a series of Danish cartoons that offended many Muslims across the globe.

Here at UNC, we're blessed with a history of supporting an unfettered freedom of the press, even from our campus administration. Chancellor Moeser in particular has done an outstanding job in the past of protecting the autonomy of campus publications, both independent of University control and not.

But then along came Margaret Jablonski. The vice chancellor for student affairs responded to the cartoon in an Associated Press article, saying that The Daily Tar Heel has a long history of journalistic independence, but that University officials hope it would use restraint in relation to a topic that is hurtful and offensive to members of the campus community.

"Many of our national media outlets chose not to publish the original pictures or cartoons, and we believe our student paper should have used the same editorial judgment."

No one is denying Jablonski's right to free speech, nor her need for sensitivity as an administrator for student affairs. But she holds a great deal of authority and comes off as condemning the actions of an autonomous organization.

After years of the administration's backing the DTH's right to freedom of the press, that reeks of hypocrisy.

In 2001, the DTH ran a column by David Horowitz in its Viewpoints section speaking out against slave reparations, causing many to protest at South Building. But Chancellor James Moeser backed the DTH's editorial decision. He even went so far as writing, "Our campus community is not afraid to discuss issues that divide us, and we often look at such opportunities as a chance to broaden our horizons and define — and sometimes redefine — our personal beliefs."

The administration has shown in the past a clear dedication to open debate. After all, we are a uni-

versity dedicated to educating our students, and an education that is nothing but incomplete if we don't receive as much information as possible.

The cartoon has angered many, but it should be noted that public discussion has been the result.

This year Moeser even signed a written agreement to respect and uphold the press' freedom of all publications, not just the independently run DTH.

That same day, the chancellor said, "Even if we had an editorial group that I didn't trust, that I thought were actually poor journalists and making bad judgments — and (in) the most extreme case, abusing their privilege of putting ink on paper — I still think that's not grounds for our stepping in to censor a newspaper."

While Jablonski does not appear to be trying to censor anyone, it's a slippery slope once the administration becomes involved.

It also is unfortunate that an administrator of a university that encourages openness would instead choose to simplify her comments to national rhetoric that draws on unequal comparisons.

There is no way to reconcile the University's stance during the Horowitz affair — or even this year's Jillian Bades incident — with Jablonski's statements now. Because of that, we call on the University to clarify what, if any, position it has on the debate. The University administration owes it to all students to assuage our concerns.

Many students have spoken out against the DTH cartoon. Regardless of the disagreement, students should take notice that a University administrator has publicly condemned an independent publication's decision-making process.

The DTH has spent 113 years defending its editorial freedom, and though it is run by students, we publish a newspaper of a professional caliber. The decision to run the cartoon was not rushed. We — not administrators — must deal with the consequences of our actions, and we are fully prepared to do so.

LET THE PEOPLE PARK

The town of Chapel Hill should pay private businesses to allow the public to use parking lots when those lots would otherwise sit unused.

Nothing feels better than killing two birds with a single, well-placed stone.

And that is exactly what the town of Chapel Hill — or any other municipality — could do with regards to a perennial downtown parking shortage and the evil of predatory towing.

What would solve both problems?

The town simply should throw some money to businesses to convince them to open parking lots to the public when the businesses in question aren't using them.

We've all seen the stark, empty lots of places such as University Baptist Church or University Square when cruising around looking for a place to park our automobiles.

To be quite honest, it's very distressing to see all those unused spaces, beckoning to passing motorists like an oasis to a man dying of thirst. Unfortunately — unlike that oasis — all those prime spots might as well be a hundred miles away for all the good they'll do you.

And what happens if you do park in those spaces? Well, along comes some good ol' boy in a tow truck and he'll take your car home with him until his company can be paid a ransom — often in cash, adding to the suspiciousness.

So here we are, stuck between a rock and a hard place, which should lead any rational person to ask, "What am I doing on this side of the rock?"

Last semester in an interview with the editorial board, Chapel Hill Town Council member Mark Kleinschmidt said there were about 3,000 parking spaces in the downtown area. However, we know not all those spots are open to the public.

Chapel Hill should offer to pay places with prime real estate to allow folks to park there after business hours. It just seems silly to see large parts of University Square's lot roped off simply to keep unwanted people from parking there.

And it's just as bad to be walking down Franklin

Street at 2 a.m. and see some yahoo in a tow truck about to whisk away the only car sitting harmlessly in the parking lot of a church in the center of town.

But as much as Chapel Hill might demonstrate socialist leanings at times, we're not suggesting property rights be thrown out the window.

Instead, Chapel Hill should hand over a couple of copies of Mr. Benjamin Franklin every month or two.

It's a win-win situation.

Downtown restaurateurs and retailers become more accessible — after all, it's hard to find somewhere to park to get take-out from Franklin Street Pizza & Pasta unless you want to tack an extra buck onto your bill by parking in a paid lot for all of five minutes. There's a little extra income for property owners with a good location. And residents can now actually make it downtown and not have to leave by the time the last bus rolls out.

Not only that, but it's got to be cheaper than the town's buying more land and building a parking lot within easy walking distance of the business district.

Really, the only people it would hurt are the tow truck operators that circle around town looking for unsuspecting cars to swoop down on and carry off.

And even if the option of the town's renting public parking from private owners is unpalatable, maybe a deal could be worked out so that businesses could put up parking meters — the town could split the take with them.

More free parking would be great, but more parking in general would be an even greater gift to give residents of the town.

In fact, if you'd like to see more parking, why don't you e-mail Mayor Kevin Foy at kevinfoy@townofchapelhill.org — it's his job to represent and to serve you, which surely includes guaranteeing a reasonable place to park.

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 six 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 Elizabeth Gregory at elizagre@email.unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Allred commits to 'standing up' for all student concerns

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to thank my opponent, Bernard Holloway, for his apology for what was implied during the Young Democrats' endorsement forum a few weeks ago.

Furthermore, I am glad Bernard has made a public pledge to return the debate of this year's student body president campaign to the issues students care about most.

That is particularly important because there are fundamental differences in the platforms of the two candidates.

Bernard's platform is mainly centered on changing the way student government works and changing the way student government advocates for students.

My platform is mostly centered on policy changes that will have an impact on the daily lives of every student on campus.

That includes overhauling student health, enhancing academic advising, improving student parking on campus, providing more field space for athletes and keeping tuition increases predictable and accountable.

My platform might be extensive, but I want to promise every student right now in this public forum that it is 100 percent

achievable.

I know it can be done because my staff and I interviewed more than a hundred students, faculty and administrators before even putting an idea to paper.

In fact, I've already made significant progress on many of the proposed changes.

I promise that if elected, I will be a strong, independent advocate for students, and I will not ask students to solve their own problems.

I will fight unreasonable and disproportionate tuition increases — not just for undergraduate students, but especially for graduate and nonresident students.

And I will be sure that every dime students pay goes toward services they can take advantage of, not for unused conveniences.

I encourage all of you to check out my full platform at my Web site, www.unc.edu/allred.

If you have any questions or would like a clarification about my platform points, please visit me in the Pit or send me an e-mail at jsallred@email.unc.edu.

I'm glad this debate has returned to substantive issues, and I'm looking forward to standing up for students and helping Carolina reach its full potential.

James Allred
Candidate
Student body president

Administration duo chastise DTH for publishing cartoon

TO THE EDITOR:

The Daily Tar Heel has a history of journalistic independence, and with that comes responsibility.

Last week's depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in a student-drawn cartoon was hurtful and offensive to members of our campus community.

The world's journalists have had to decide whether to show cartoon images of Muhammad that originated in Danish newspapers, leading to protests and violence. The majority elected not to.

The New York Times' executive editor, Bill Keller, said publishing the cartoons would be "perceived as a particularly deliberate insult" by Muslims.

We believe the DTH had a civic responsibility to contextualize its reasoning for entering the global debate with a new cartoon.

We support freedom of speech and of the press. We believe a public university is a place to have informed dialogue on difficult and important issues. We also believe our campus should be one that respects all cultures and religions — those we know well and those we are only learning to appreciate more fully.

As Chancellor Moeser said in his 2005 State of the University Address, "The essence of the diver-

FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"You know there will be a man call at 9 a.m. on Valentine's Day who wants one red rose delivered to Timbuktu."

BROOKS LOWERY, CHAPEL HILL FLORIST MANAGER, ON THE VALENTINE'S DAY RUSH

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Philip McFee, pip@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Knowledge is power when creating good governance

James Madison once wrote, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and the people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power, which knowledge gives."

Two hundred years later, those words still ring true. Information is power, and in the interest of empowering the citizenry, governments have a responsibility to work under the light of public review.

Luckily, that review is available in our fair town — provided residents have the gumption to make it happen.

On the federal level, our right to know has been on a steady decline. It's as if Sept. 11, 2001, was some sort of blanket mandate for the government to completely ignore citizens' right to information. The Clinton era's support and enhancement of the Freedom of Information Act has been beaten into a hardly recognizable pulp through executive order, the Patriot Act and other un-American assaults on our freedom of knowledge.

We have, on the local scale, a chance to redeem ourselves. Chapel Hill can't claim to be protecting valuable state secrets or defending us from foreign espionage by keeping us in the dark.

And they haven't been doing an awful job, either. Through enough persistence, enough phone calls and enough patience, you can find out almost anything you want to know about how our town works. That is, as long as you know what you're looking for.

It's time we take the next step. Using the power of the Internet, e-government is the way of the future. Technology such as e-mail, Web sites, blogs, podcasts and RSS feeds allows a level of communication and openness that could only be dreamed of just a few decades ago.



JASON BAKER
FEAR AND LOATHING IN CHAPEL HILL

The Chapel Hill technology committee has been attempting to take a step in the right direction by trying to get the town to allow them to hold meetings through a listserv.

The committee is not trying to supplant regular meetings — just add to them by allowing for communication in an open and freely accessible way that, as an added benefit, is much timelier than waiting for a monthly meeting.

That seems like a reasonable request, at least to me. Many of us in the University community couldn't even imagine having a functioning organization without the assistance of regular listserv communication. And what could be more open than a preserved electronic record of town events delivered to your inbox seconds after action has been taken?

But whether due to typical bureaucratic hang-ups or intentional sidelining, it has taken months for the technology committee's request to make it off Town Manager Cal Horton's desk and onto the council's agenda. The town management has made reluctance its trademark when it comes to using the power of technology to present residents with the most accessible, accountable and engaging government possible.

Everyone benefits when government is made to be more open, more accessible and more available to its residents. I think it's reasonable for the average person to be able to review the town's budget in detail, whether for abuse, slack or just to know what's

going on. I think it's reasonable for the average person to have the same daily updates available to them that the Town Council does. It seems to be no problem to let council candidates in on the same e-mails as sitting members — why should the average resident be any different?

The answer, of course, is that keeping control of information is a way to keep power in the hands of the powerful. I don't think any sane person would claim that Chapel Hill is intentionally locking us out of our right to know.

The town staff has a legal obligation to share with us most information. But is it truly progressive to only take the steps necessary to meet the minimum requirement of the law?

What Chapel Hill needs is a vision, not so much on the elected end, but more so on the managerial end, to make technology an integral part of town operations, and through that, the free distribution of information a top priority in the years to come.

And we as residents have a responsibility, too. We haven't just a right to know what is going on, but an obligation to use this information to better our community.

A town budget that is easily accessible to everyone is no great thing without new eyes to look it over. Residents know best their own streets and neighborhoods. They know where the crosswalks ought to go, they know when the best time for trash pickup is and they know when bus stops are in bad places. The easier it is for those people to engage in their own government, the more likely they will.

The real power of any community is its people. I hope our town lets them go to work.

Contact Jason Baker,
a junior political science major,
at jason@jasonbaker.us.

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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Established 1893
113 years of
editorial freedom

RYAN C. TUCK
EDITOR, 962-4086
RCTUCK@EMAIL.UNC.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: MON., WEDS., FRI. 2-3 P.M.

JOSEPH R. SCHWARTZ
MANAGING EDITOR, 962-0750
JOSEPH_SCHWARTZ@UNC.EDU

BRIAN HUDSON
NEWS EDITOR, 962-0372
UDES@UNC.EDU

REBECCA WILHELM
PROJECTS EDITOR, 962-0750
BECCA07@EMAIL.UNC.EDU

CHRIS CAMERON
OPINION EDITOR, 962-0750
EDITDES@UNC.EDU

BRIANNA BISHOP
CITY EDITOR, 962-4209
CITYDESK@UNC.EDU

KAVITA PILLAI
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR, 962-4103
STNTDESK@UNC.EDU

MARY DUBY
BRIANA GORMAN
SPORTS CO-EDITORS, 962-4710
SPORTS@UNC.EDU

MEGHAN DAVIS
FEATURES EDITOR, 962-4214
FEATURES@UNC.EDU

JIM WALSH
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, 843-4529
ARTSDESK@UNC.EDU

GALEN CLARKE
PHOTO EDITOR, 962-0750
DTHPHOTO@UNC.EDU

LINDSAY NAYLOR
KATIE SCHWING
COPY CO-EDITORS, 962-4103

JEN ALLIET
DANIEL BEDEN
DESIGN CO-EDITORS, 962-0750

FIELDING CAGE
GRAPHICS AND MULTIMEDIA EDITOR,
962-0246

CHRIS JOHNSON
ONLINE EDITOR, 962-0750
ONLINE@UNC.EDU

CHRIS COLETTA
EMILY STEEL
WRITERS' COACHES, 962-0372

ELIZABETH GREGORY
PUBLIC EDITOR, (919) 612-6020
ELIZAGRE@EMAIL.UNC.EDU

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