

BOARD EDITORIALS

BLACK'S PAST IS BACK

With doubts about his questionable integrity growing each day, N.C. House Speaker Jim Black should resign his position of leadership.

One of the keys to winning in poker is knowing when to hold your cards and when to throw them in and fold.

As more and more of the questionable — that's putting it politely — fundraising activities of N.C. House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, come to light, it is becoming increasingly clear that it's time for him to fold 'em.

Black has been awash in controversy for a while now — from shady, back-room dealings to passing on sketchy campaign checks. Because of these repeated issues, he no longer is worthy of the office of speaker of the General Assembly.

The most recent allegations come from the N.C. Board of Elections. On Friday members accused Black's campaign of accepting contributions more than the legal limit, contributing money with another contributor's name and accepting more than \$27,000 in illegal business contributions.

If these were the first accusations of impropriety to be leveled against our fair speaker, calling for him to surrender his gavel would be premature.

However, the accusations are part of a long line

of behavior that calls into question too much and shakes the public's general faith in the assembly.

The cozy relationship that Black, his staff and the lottery lobby shared, as revealed in the fall, is just another glaring example of activities that have prompted us to give him the all-too-fitting moniker of "Slim Shady."

After all this corruption — or at least the appearance of corruption — it's unclear to what extent the people of North Carolina can have confidence in his leadership of its legislative body.

It has yet to be determined whether Black will be held accountable for his actions before his peers. As of this moment, there have been no formal charges pressed against him.

But even up in our ivory tower, we can see that Tar Heels deserve better than what they're getting from the speaker.

Even if Black is indeed an honorable man, one who is innocent of the charges leveled against him, he still should do the right thing.

For the sake of the speaker's integrity, he must rest his hand and pass the gavel.

YOUNGEST SCHOLARS

UNC has embarked on a quest to improve early grade-school education locally — helping to fulfill its mission to serve all of North Carolina.

Recently the University announced a program through the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute designed to rethink the way young children are educated.

And with all the talk of UNC serving the state and helping to educate all its residents, it seems the University is putting its money where its mouth is.

During the next three years, FPG will work to develop a program called the "First School," designed to create a national framework for educating students ages 3 through 8, according to school officials.

With a budget of \$2 million, officials at the institute hope to make it a local program, pulling students from kindergarten to second grade from Seawell Elementary School here in Chapel Hill.

However, nothing is final.

With a demonstration site and using institute research, officials are hoping to find ways to ensure positive experiences and success for students by involving parents, teachers, practitioners, administrators, the child care community and researchers.

The proposed school — if given the go-ahead from the school district — would be built on

University-owned land next to Seawell and would hold about 500 students, according to The (Raleigh) News & Observer.

And in a state working to educate every student — from the urban Piedmont cities to the far reaches of its rural counties — it's vital to develop new ways to educate all residents.

It sounds cliché — something people always say. But the fact remains that as the largest public university in the state, we must find a way to work from the bottom up. After all, if improving education is the goal, there eventually will have to be some work on the early foundations of learning.

Furthermore, schools in the area continue to feel the weight of sprawl — projections show Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools needing new elementary school space by 2012, according to the N&O.

A project such as this one could help ease some of the crunch.

What information and plans come out of this is not entirely certain. But with a strong education becoming such a valuable cog in North Carolina's engine of economic growth, it's important the University lend a helping hand to our youngest scholars.

JUST A LITTLE SHIFT

After being named the new provost, Bernadette Gray-Little should be sure she remains a friend to students when tuition time rolls around.

Bienvenue, brucha haba'a, merhaba and willkommen — we thought that would be a fitting way to welcome Bernadette Gray-Little, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, to her new post as the executive vice chancellor and provost.

But it's not as if Gray-Little isn't already familiar with the few dozen languages UNC teaches — she's been involved with the University in a variety of positions since 1971, making her an excellent choice for the job — and she should turn out to be a solid choice for students, too.

Her experience includes time spent as a psychology professor and a department chairwoman, so she'll bring a faculty perspective to the job of chief academic officer. That also means she spent years actually talking to students at the University on a daily basis.

Gray-Little's more recent work as senior associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, executive associate provost and now dean of the College of Arts and Sciences shows both that she cares about students and that she has what it takes to balance the needs of several different constituencies — something that is not always evident in South Building.

That record is made even more impressive by the fact that Gray-Little's appointment as provost received the unanimous approval of the chancellor's faculty advisory council.

Such support is important in light of recent problems with faculty retention. And if there's one thing that can help students, it's slowing down the turnover rate of UNC's more distinguished professors.

Though Gray-Little comes to her new job with an unparalleled understanding of the workings of the University, it can't hurt to remind her of the increased responsibilities she's taking on.

She'll be co-chairwoman of the tuition advisory task force, which forms tuition proposals to send to the Board of Trustees — a crucial battleground for students, and one in which she could prove her value to those of us who pay tuition and fees.

We hope Gray-Little's extensive work with administrators, faculty and students serves her well and helps her come to the table with a mind open to the different parties' points of view.

Gray-Little has long been a friend to students, and we hope she'll continue to be one in her more influential role.

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@gmail.com.

READERS' FORUM

DTH staffers do great work, and they all deserve kudos

TO THE EDITOR:

I want to commend The Daily Tar Heel staff for an excellent election-day issue.

While much has been made of recent DTH controversies, I believe that at certain times of excellence our fellow students should be recognized for the hard work that is required to produce such a publication.

At times we — myself included — are quick to judge the DTH staff and writers and slow to praise them.

The Feb. 14 edition was particularly outstanding from the eye-catching, boxing-themed front page to the insightful candidate profiles.

Nothing in news-making is simple, and rarely is there a single side to any issue. The DTH performs admirably in providing both relevant facts and at the same time thought-provoking opinion, often leading to dialogue among campus students, staff and organizations.

In light of recent events, none of us should take for granted the greater freedom that we have, including freedom of the press.

We may not always agree with the DTH — I for one am quite fine with that fact — but we should appreciate the students who work

to make it possible and, from time to time, make us think.

Jon Flaspoeher
Sophomore
Peace, War and Defense

Employee unionization is more complex than stated

TO THE EDITOR:

The Daily Tar Heel editorial board continues to amaze me with its never-ending, anti-worker diatribes.

The editorial board purports to be experts on unionization and asserts that "there's nothing stopping workers from unionizing" in the dining halls.

It is easy for college students who don't have to worry about providing for a family on poverty wages to say such things, but it's another story for the workers themselves.

Besides being patronizing, the editorial is full of inaccuracies.

The editorial board did a great disservice to the campus community in its mischaracterization of what a card-check neutrality process means.

As opposed to a National Labor Relations Board election, which is called after 30 percent of the exact same cards that are used in card check are signed, where it is just those workers who choose to show up whose votes count, in the card-

check process it is 51 percent of all workers who must sign cards for the union to be recognized.

Thus card check is an inherently more democratic process. It is also a more streamlined process.

Whereas an NLRB election can be delayed for months or even years, allowing the employer to use all kinds of intimidating tactics to discourage workers from unionizing, a card-check process is over as soon as 51 percent of employees have signed cards.

This process also avoids the hostility that is created between the employer and employees leading up to an election because the company pledges to stay neutral in the process.

Finally, saying that "there's nothing Aramark could do to prevent it" is just laughable — Aramark has already used various tactics of intimidation, and they will continue to do so until a fair, card-check procedure is accepted.

Sascha Bollag
Senior
Political Science

There is more to women's sports than just basketball

TO THE EDITOR:

Oh, how I hate women's basketball. If only it weren't so bloated of latent symbolism here in Chapel

FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"Students deserve accountability ..."

JAMES ALLRED, STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT-ELECT

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Mason Phillips, mphil@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Test-prep services play logic games with law applicants

L SAT-induced panic makes smart kids do dumb things and dumb kids do even dumber things.

Suddenly everyone miraculously has previously undiagnosed childhood ADHD and needs Ritalin for the test. People buy \$30 "silent timers" on the Internet, spend entire summers studying for this single test and pay more than \$1,000 for Kaplan-trained "professionals" to read off of a script and redraw diagrams on the board.

Yes, we pay preparation services thousands for law-school-admissions-test help — and most graduate school applicants are no different.

The Kaplan bargain price of \$1,249 seemed a small price for my parents to pay for my guaranteed success on the LSAT. But there's a catch. If you're a good candidate for law school, you're a bad candidate for Kaplan.

You will benefit from Kaplan fix: You shrink into the fetal position upon contact with a No. 2 pencil and multiple-choice answer sheet.

You are unable to read clock-hand positions and determine how many minutes you have per question.

You read a paragraph or passage and then three seconds later cannot answer a question about it.

You like to practice saying "You can't handle the truth!" in your bathroom mirror or saw "Legally Blonde" and are contemplating your outfit for your admissions video essay.

If you can read, write, think and take a test without panic, you are wasting \$1,200.

I won't fully unveil the elusive "Five-Step Kaplan Method for Reading Comprehension," but the gist of it is: Read for main ideas, look at topic sentences in paragraphs and answer each question strategically.



GINNY FRANKS
TENDENCY TO START FIRES

If you didn't learn this at some point before senior year in college, I beg you — please do not become an attorney. Work in a field that requires less ... literacy.

There are no secret methods to logic games — Kaplan's is "do it step by step" and "draw diagrams" on its easy practice games. Turns out, Kaplan can't teach you how to determine if the puppet wears a red sweater when the sun is shining in Kentucky, and the biologist lectures on Tuesday, and Mary orders lobster but not Alfredo. Kaplan doesn't sell "secret methods" because there aren't any.

And they don't sell you expertise, either.

Most of the Kaplan teachers are folks walking around on campus with you. The guy in a Hawaiian shirt at a keg party screaming "I am Captain Jack Sparrow!" is the same guy hired by Princeton Review as a professional.

Another Kaplan instructor I know pitied his students for wasting their money because he was preoccupied with his own law-school work.

It's "one-size-fits-all" training and several of your "classes" are just proctored exams.

Kaplan questions are stale and some easy practice exams give a false impression of progress.

According to Internet lore from ex-Kaplan professionals, its "success rate" is based on a more-than-a-decade-old Price Waterhouse study that it's not dying to update. Many folks improve only one or two points — enough that you

can't collect your "money-back guarantee." Sure, you could retake the class for free, but who wants to waste time on a class that didn't work the first time? That's like getting a free haircut from the Hair Butchery after it gave you a mullet.

Thanks, but no thanks.

Kaplan doesn't necessarily sell actual success.

So what does your \$1,200 get you? Some books you could buy cheaper replicas of at Barnes & Noble?

Kaplan really only sells one thing — the company. It's all sales psychology, old test questions and the illusion of success. It's effectively an eight-week-long canned sales talk. I know one when I see it — I did door-to-door sales.

Some folks need only the illusion of success anyway. A little test-taking confidence and some test familiarity surely will improve some panicking seniors' scores.

Applying to law school is expensive enough. You pay \$115 to take the LSAT. Then you pay a service for data assembly \$106 to let you send it transcripts. You pay \$12 every time you apply to a law school to send out the data you just sent in. You pay law schools even more to look at your \$12 transcripts and \$115 LSAT scores. Sure, Kaplan can bring up your score, but you can bring up your own score for less than \$25 with a trip to the nearest bookstore. Save your Kaplan money for law-school loans.

In my post-LSAT clarity, I realize that \$1,200 is real money — valuable funds that could have been better invested in necessities such as rent, food or a sequined bikini and a Coppola to direct my "legally-brunette" admissions video.

Contact Ginny Franks, a senior communication major, at ginny.franks@gmail.com.

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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