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THE SHORTER, THE WHITER

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## Carolina not going green, just spending it

Yes, the University needs more bashing for its lack of environmental efforts. However, I do not bash from the tree-hugger approach. No, this is an approach all political ideologies can appreciate — the cash-hugger approach. There are numerous money drains in the University, and no drain is sucking your money away harder than the void in sustainability on campus.

UNC would like to have you believe it supports the environment. There are numerous things the campus is doing in order to move in a greener direction. However, at this point, it is the list of things the campus is not and

### UNIVERSITY COLUMNIST

viably could be doing that should infuriate not just environmentalists but everyone giving UNC money.

Today, green technology and its market make green development a financially sensible option. The long-term savings are immense. Might there be some extra initial capital cost? There can be, although even that gap is closing. And it doesn't take an accountant to tell you that the initial costs are quickly recovered in various savings (e.g. lower heating/cooling costs and electricity requirements).

Consider University-owned vehicles. The most common ones you see are Ford F-150s and other trucks and vans used by Facility Services. These vehicles get single-digit miles per gallon on this stop-and-go campus, and the gas to keep them running isn't cheap.

Now consider an electric alternative, such as the GEM vehicle, which operates much like a Gator. Given the approximate operational costs of a Ford F-150 (cost of gas per gallon divided by mpg) versus one of these GEMs (kilowatt-hour cost to fully charge divided by range in miles), the F-150 is more than 90 percent more expensive to operate than a GEM vehicle. Plus, the GEM's vehicle's cost is lower.

To be fair, the electricity used to charge a GEM vehicle has a carbon tag, too. However, even assuming that all its electricity came from a typical coal-fired power plant, GEMs produce 90 percent less carbon dioxide. It's win-win.

I'm not saying the use of trucks and other vehicles is never justified on campus — just rarely justified. Facility Services and all departments (public safety, University Mail, etc.) should keep some money-guzzlers on hand for when they truly need them. But at this point, a vast majority of the fleet should be phased out by more practical, cost-efficient vehicles. A good start would at least be not leaving vehicles uselessly running, like, say, while directing traffic. That's your money burning away.

The University also needs to address heating and cooling and their costs. How many times have you walked into a building in the winter and sweat up a sea for an hour? Or in the summer, how many times have you felt like you should have brought a parka?

Heating and cooling on this campus defy thermodynamics to an extreme. Check any electric bill in July, and you know even keeping a typical house just comfortable can cost hundreds of dollars. The same overuse of resources is seen with lights and water. Utility-limiting systems are in place here-and-there, but there has yet to be full, effective implementation.

If the University really wants to establish itself as a leader in environmental change, steps like these — and bigger than these — must be taken. It would at least help offset the need for tuition increases and allow money to be allocated to actual needs — not to wasted resources. So imagine if conservatives who feel they are overly taxed would unite with the environmental concerns of liberals. Everyone could enjoy more green both on Earth and in the bank.

Should the University take environmentally sensible steps, the monetary savings will add up, and it will establish itself as a frontrunner for saving students and taxpayers money, too.

### EDITORIAL CARTOON By Alex Lee, lobin@email.unc.edu



## Finally fix Franklin

Council should focus on downtown business, buildings

The Chapel Hill Town Council went on its annual retreat Saturday and discussed the town's goals for the next year.

We're on board with the council's goals, which address issues like parking, downtown revitalization and relocation of the men's homeless shelter.

We only wish that the council had established a more concrete strategy to tackle these issues.

After all, it's not like any of these are new problems.

The decline of downtown has been under way for any number of years depending on who you ask. If you talk to a UNC senior, it's been since freshman year. If you ask a seasoned townie, Franklin Street has been on a downward spiral since the last grocery store closed its doors.

In an effort to clean up Franklin Street's image, the council discussed reducing panhandling and loitering with greater police enforcement, as well as calling for the relocation of the men's shelter.

The council also will focus

on diversifying the commercial base downtown.

We'd just like to see something, anything at this point, fill the perennially empty spaces that plague downtown.

The former homes of the Wicked Burrito and the Gap have been unfilled by long-term renters since those businesses left years ago.

As far as empty storefronts go, we understand there's not much that the council can do in the way of directly forcing building owners to fill spaces.

But simply resigning to this fact does nothing to support the needs of local businesses.

The council traditionally has approached downtown revitalization by proposing more development as a means to reinvigorate business. The council has approved developments such as Greenbridge and Lot 5 under the pretense that new facilities will attract more people to downtown and help all involved.

But this strategy does nothing to address the very real issues that will continue to plague downtown even with

these endeavors, like the poor condition of some of Franklin Street's oldest buildings.

The town should investigate an incentives program that would reward building owners for updating structures, filling storefronts in a timely manner or otherwise contributing to the success of downtown.

Or, at the least, the town needs a penalty system for those owners that refuse to make necessary updates or renovations or that leave buildings without tenants for extensive time periods.

The Rathskeller, for example, has closed twice in the last year, largely because of continuing maintenance issues with the older building.

Safety was also a concern in the Amber Alley, where the restaurant is located.

If the Rat, a longtime Chapel Hill favorite, must close its doors after nearly 60 years because of structural and maintenance issues, then the town needs to take some action before other businesses suffer a similar fate.

## Failed balancing act

State needs to pay back pension fund with interest

The government is suing the government saying that the government owes the government money.

Sounds about as clear as the Student Code.

The N.C. Court of Appeals heard arguments Tuesday from a group of state employees that claim Gov. Mike Easley's 2001 borrowing of \$130 million from the state pension fund to balance the state budget was unconstitutional and that the government must repay that money.

With interest.

Fortunately for a mob of disgruntled state employees, Easley's actions were against the N.C. constitution, and the Court of Appeals should follow the example of the lower court and rule in their favor.

The state constitution weighs in with the following on pension funds: "(They) shall not be applied, diverted, loaned to or used by the state, any state

agency, state officer, public officer or public employee."

That's pretty straightforward. Unfortunately, what Easley did falls in that familiar land of quasi-legality where politicians regularly roam — the gray area.

Easley rather clandestinely intercepted the funds before they ever reached the state pension fund.

Yet that shouldn't make a difference. Just because the money never made it to the pension fund doesn't change the fact that it was supposed to be there.

Even worse, that money would have been in the pension fund earning interest. As any good economics major knows, money today is more valuable than money received in the future because it can be saved and invested.

So as the state pays back the pension money — which, to its credit, it is currently doing in installments — it should also

pay back the interest the money would have earned had it been in the pension fund where it belonged.

Fortunately for retired state employees, they were never in risk of not receiving their pensions. Even after Easley's pilfering, the N.C. pension fund was still ranked No. 2 in the nation for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2005, behind only the land of many pensioners, Florida.

But yet again, that still doesn't justify Easley's actions. If he can't balance the budget, then the state should try spending less money.

The court's forthcoming ruling is important not for the repayment of the money but for the precedent it will set.

The state budget should be balanced on its own without pulling funds from any other source, much less the state employees' pension fund.

## Sobering shortage

Limited hops crop threatens world's beer supply

If someone approaches you at a bar and, in the colloquial words of T-Pain, offers to "buy u a drank," you run the risk of breaking said person's bank if you ask for an ice-cold brewski.

A global shortage of hops, an important ingredient in beer-making, is causing beer prices to increase.

Forget about that whole water drought tomfoolery. This is a far more severe problem at hand that requires immediate action to be taken.

In response to this recent yet disastrous shortage, there should be strictly enforced ground rules for beer consumption to help stop the market forces at work.

First off, if you simply cannot refrain from consuming this precious commodity, you better

finish every beer. Tolerance for the weak will be at an all-time minimum. Go big or go home.

Don't pull one of those, "Gross, it's warm now," lines and waste half a can. We will show you a can of something else if you do ...

Whether you opt to bong it, shotgun it or perform an Olympic-gymnast-worthy keg stand, spilling beer is no longer just a party foul; it is a selfish act against the rest of humanity. Is that what you want to have hanging over your head when you go to sleep at night?

Also, prohibit all play of flip cup. It's just too risky.

Or, to make it easy, be the responsible citizen that you are, and just stick to the hard stuff. Beer pong or Beirut, depend-

ing on your geographic origin, should be played using extreme caution. Instead, why not try a nice game of vodka pong? Sure, you can't play as many games, but at least you'll have more time for drunken hookups.

The bottom line is, if you know you cannot keep the liquid gold down, don't drink it.

You know who you are. It's comparable to watering your lawn when we have 20 days of water left. You just don't do it. Perhaps we should start fining offenders. Everyone knows it only tastes good on the way down, anyway.

We highly encourage readers to spread the word. With you, we can beat this problem and make beer cheap once more. Do it for the kids.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY:

*"It's not just the food. I love the way it feels to be in proximity to the people who work there."*

JOCK LAUTERER, LECTURER, ON YE OLDE WAFFLE SHOPPE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To read the full-length versions  
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Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online.  
VISIT [www.dailytarheel.com/feedback](http://www.dailytarheel.com/feedback)

### The UNC track team is a disgrace in the dining halls

TO THE EDITOR:

Ninety-five is usually considered a fairly high number; \$95 could buy 95 iTunes songs.

According to UNC academic guidelines, grades of 95 indicate mastery of a subject. However, a 95 at a place of dining is not astounding. Rams Head Dining Hall has a grade of 95, and until this past week, I would have attributed it to poor management.

But I can safely say it is not management or even the regular employees. It is students, and not just any students, some of UNC's most respected: the track team.

In the past week, I have witnessed track stars throw food across the dining hall, even throw food across serving lines into the kitchen. Dishes and silverware purposefully left on tables for employees to clean are the norm, and leaving multiple tables pushed together is constant.

I have even witnessed members of the track team pour their beverages onto the floor in order to laugh at people who slip in it. I have never been so ashamed to be associated with a group of people in my life.

The blatant disregard for employees and fellow students is unbelievable. I can only hope their antics are confined to a space where only the general student population has to watch.

UNC students are supposed to be known for their class. So to the UNC track team, please get some. Have some respect for your school and classmates. The people you embarrass are paying for your wardrobe.

Dale Barefoot  
Senior  
Economics

### Media literacy matters for artists and amateurs alike

TO THE EDITOR:

(Sarah) Hodges argues that we need to revamp the definition of "art," ("The line between artist and amateur," Jan. 17), yet she fails to explain why we should even value this dubious and subjective term in the first place.

The real digital divide is not about access to the Internet; it is about who has the tools to create their own media.

What Hodges is disparaging is called "media literacy": the analysis and creation of media (through pictures, video, Web sites, etc.). Just as we wouldn't call someone literate if she couldn't write, the media illiterate are those that cannot express themselves through the creation of media.

Years from now, our society will realize that media literacy is just as important as the "old" literacy, but our education systems are already woefully behind.

Rhetoric like Hodges' only prolongs the moment when this problem will finally dawn on our collective consciousness and become an educational priority.

Whether or not the masses on flickr.com are trying to create art is profoundly unimportant. What matters is that they are taking advantage of new technologies to express themselves in creative ways. Not everyone is so lucky.

Mike Nutt  
Media Technician  
Communication Studies

### SPEAK OUT

#### WRITING GUIDELINES:

- Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

#### SUBMISSION:

- Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- E-mail: to [editdesk@unc.edu](mailto:editdesk@unc.edu)
- Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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### Kvetching board

Kvetch:

v.1 (Yiddish) to complain

No one cares how every topic in class relates to you and your significant other. Congratulations, somehow, someone finds you tolerable enough to date, now stop trying to turn the class into your personal therapy session.

Mr. Referee, don't even think about trying to stop dancing Danny Green from showing his team spirit during House of Pain's "Jump Around." Your job doesn't start until the tipoff so stand back and enjoy the pre-game show.

Kudos to the State fans on Saturday, they stayed for the whole game while getting creamed. Sadly, our alumni had to leave before the end to go do something terribly important.

Mussolini "made the trains run on time" because he executed the conductors of the ones who made him late. So, really, it's not as easy as people think.

Do you not realize that you're the ONLY people talking in the otherwise dead silent top floor of the Union? I came here to study, not hear about your weekend.

Please stop replying to an ignorant person's reply to a listserve e-mail. Here's an idea — take the time to e-mail them directly or learn the meaning of the word hypocrite.

There is no reason to wear Uggs in North Carolina except on the rarest occasion of snow. It's not that cold, and if you're wearing them to be fashionable, you're about three years late.

If you are walking two or three people across on a sidewalk and taking up the WHOLE width of the sidewalk, when someone walks toward you going in the opposite direction, one person in the group needs to step in front or behind the others and let the person past. You're not entitled to the entire sidewalk.

Can someone tell me the point of blue books, other than stirring up controversy and sparking generational warfare in the editorial page?

People, it's called soap, and I swear it doesn't burn. And no, Axe is not an acceptable substitute.

Ty Lawson, is there any chance you could get my friend pregnant? I'm sick of hearing her talk about wanting to have your babies.

Send your one-to-two sentence entries to [editdesk@unc.edu](mailto:editdesk@unc.edu), subject line "kvetch."

### The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,  
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of editorial freedom

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