



**SARAH HODGES**  
I AM LEGEND, HEAR ME ROAR

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## Paging Dr. uncfan9 to diagnostic medicine

The Internet provides us with a wealth of knowledge. TV listings and dictionary definitions are available at the click of a mouse nowadays. The nature of the Internet, however, makes a lot of the information we glean from it unreliable. People need to stop considering themselves experts because of what they've read online and rethink their blind trust in this resource.

The resources available online far outnumber those that we would find in one of our campus libraries. For every fact on the Internet, however, there are numerous fallacies. In this "information age," we have sacrificed quality for quantity.

But this is only the beginning of **AT-LARGE COLUMNIST** the problem.

We can find reliable information on the Internet if only we are willing to wade through pages and pages of junk. The problem is that many people are not willing to spend the time and effort it takes to track down reliable sources.

How many times have you been told that Wikipedia is not a reliable source of information for your research papers? Yet the Web site is frequently near the top of any list of Google search results.

The site touts itself as "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit." Who doesn't want to share their infinite wisdom with the rest of the world? Of course, when everyone posts their conflicting perceptions, there is bound to be plenty of inaccurate information.

So why do people go to Wikipedia? People frequent the site for a quick and painless explanation in simple language. The Internet has made us lazy.

The fact that anyone can make a professional-looking Web site and pass themselves off as an expert makes finding reliable information on the Internet that much harder.

When you read a letter to the editor in The (Raleigh) News and Observer or Cosmopolitan, you take into account that it is someone's (possibly uneducated or ill-informed) opinion. But as soon as you slap that opinion on a Web site with some hyperlinks and animated gifs, you've got yourself an "expert."

The fact is that many people would rather risk their knowledge with unreliable information than trek to the library. Some people would even risk their health rather than be bothered to make an appointment with their doctor.

Second-year medical students seem to be particularly susceptible to bouts of hypochondria. They see symptoms of the diseases they are studying not only in themselves, but also in friends and family.

Sites for the National Institutes of Health and the Mayo Clinic give people access to the symptoms for every illness imaginable. Suddenly, we've all come down with the med student syndrome among a slew of other things.

WebMD has a nifty "symptom checker" that allows you to click on the body parts bothering you and answer survey questions similar to what your doctor might ask.

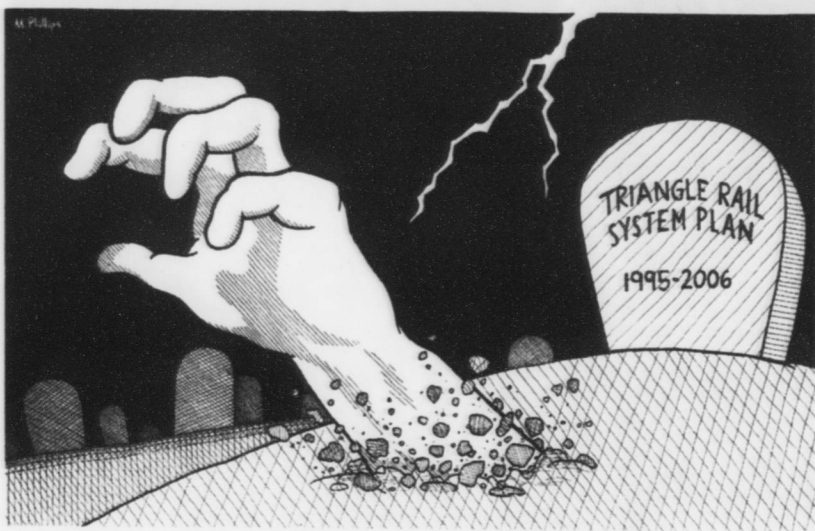
The Web site warns, in a condescending tone, that it "is not a substitute for professional medical advice." Of course, it's easy to forget something like that when your runny nose and cough turn up conditions ranging from a sinus infection to the West Nile virus.

We're surpassing our physician's education and experience for a system that doesn't take into account personal factors beyond age and sex. By the time we get their diagnosis of a common cold, the stress has already taken its toll on us.

The Internet doesn't make us experts. Remember that next time you're editing an entry for Wikipedia. Be bold enough to call your knowledge into question, double-check your facts and save someone else the embarrassment of having to defend the incorrect information you provided them.

And if you're one of those people who frequent Wikipedia, consider heading to the used book store and investing in a good old fashioned Encyclopedia Britannica instead.

### EDITORIAL CARTOON By Mason Phillips, mphil@email.unc.edu



## Hands off

The federal government can't force endowment use

We sure wish our savings accounts earned a 19.2 percent return like UNC's endowment does.

Despite the fact that many universities, particularly private ones, have enormous endowments, the federal government has no right to require universities to spend a certain portion of that money.

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee is seeking information on the way that universities use their endowments. We appreciate its apparent concern for our tuition costs; the thought is nice.

The committee is welcome to investigate to its heart's content why both tuition and the value of endowments have risen. We often wonder that ourselves.

But when it comes to taking action, the Senate needs to leave its hands off university money.

A total of 136 U.S. universities have endowments worth a half-billion or more. UNC's \$2 billion endowment is high among public universities but looks miniscule next to Harvard

University's \$34 billion.

In the past, Congress has discussed requiring universities to spend at least 5 percent of their endowments each year to help mitigate tuition hikes.

While it's unlikely that this policy would affect UNC, which typically spends between 4.3 and 7 percent of its endowment annually, the policy is still not a good idea.

Most schools are not as well-endowed as the nation's biggest private universities. Most aren't sitting on several billion dollars.

Requiring smaller schools to spend from more fragile endowments before they have the chance to build them up could hurt those universities in the long run.

Federalism is also an issue at hand. Education is an issue left to the states. Public schools receive state appropriations. If anyone should be making this kind of order, it should be state governments.

The best the federal government can do without encroaching on state liberties is to tie federal funding — which even

private universities receive — to spending a requisite percentage of the endowment.

Politically, however, this would not be Congress' best move, as opponents would likely bash it for pulling funding from higher education.

We're not denying it would be nice if universities would spend a little more of their endowments so they don't have to raise tuition so much.

But there's no guarantee that a spending requirement would achieve that end, anyway.

A university is more or less an insatiable black hole for money. UNC's needs are endless; it could easily spend more of its endowment and still make a case for tuition increases.

And we highly doubt that the Senate knows the best uses of university money.

The best thing the Senate can do is publish the results of its study on how universities spend their endowments.

If the results aren't acceptable, maybe the public outcry will change things. But the senators can't do it themselves.

## Control the story

CMS should continue incident reports, send less often

When Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools started issuing daily incident reports, the system never specified any restrictions about who had access to the reports.

But now that the media has started picking up on some of the news in the reports, the school board isn't sure if it wants to keep them coming.

The original intent behind the reports was to keep members of the CMS Board of Education informed of newsworthy events such as acts of violence, arrests or car wrecks.

Keeping board members updated is an admirable goal that in and of itself is not a problem. But if CMS thinks these reports shouldn't be in the hands of the media, then the system is sadly mistaken.

By compiling the reports into officially distributed documents, the school district has, in effect,

created an easily accessible public record of incidents in the school. As such, it shouldn't be surprised when the media outlets pick it up.

In America (or any country with a free flow of information), newspapers and television stations have the right to any stories they come across that aren't explicitly private. Whether or not the media choose to publish certain accounts is an issue of taste and ethics, not one of legality.

As any good press secretary will tell you, CMS needs to control the story.

CMS can't keep the media from looking at the reports, but instead of issuing them on a daily basis, they could reduce the reports to a weekly publication.

If the reports were reduced to weekly periodicals, no one would be any less aware of important occurrences, but instead of the media finding out each individual incident separately, they

would be lumped together, making it appear as though fewer incidents occurred and that they were less severe.

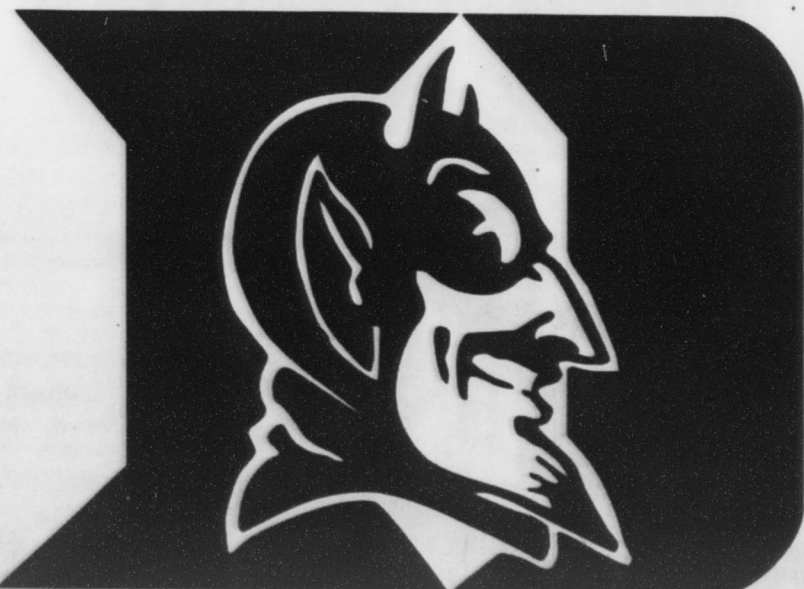
Though CMS can't exactly publicize only the information that they are comfortable with the media seeing, if an event occurred that CMS knew was media-bound, the school district could release information about it before reporters got word.

CMS Superintendent Peter Gorman is expected to make a decision about the reports soon.

If he decides to discontinue the reports altogether, faculty and board members might not be as knowledgeable as they could be about the happenings in their schools.

But if CMS continues to produce the reports, the schools need to recognize that the media are allowed free and unrestricted access to any information that they contain.

Due to a longstanding wager, we had to run this satanic symbol. The Daily Tar Heel apologizes for subjecting you to it.



### QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"They got any shot they wanted. I don't know very many times that our defense dictated what shot they got."

ROY WILLIAMS, COACH

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

#### Prediction subjected Heels to reverse discrimination

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Wednesday's article, "The lowdown on tonight's game," (Feb. 6).

While I understand the desire to exclude bias in a newspaper, the DTH is, indicative of its name, a Tar Heel paper, not a Duke paper.

On the eve of the biggest rivalry in college basketball, students on this campus should not crack open their paper to see the edge given to their rival team's coach and the idea of a Tar Heel victory without Lawson proclaimed a "strange thing."

School spirit means cheering on one's team even in the face of adversity: Do note, DTH, that adversity includes torn ACLs and high ankle sprains.

The absence of aforementioned school spirit in Wednesday's paper is appalling, reprehensible and a downright shame.

It appears that the DTH staff needs to be reminded not to play the devil's advocate when the devil in question is royal blue.

Ash Barnes  
Junior  
Asian Studies

#### Reward dedication and spirit — allow camp-outs

TO THE EDITOR:

I had a Phase 1 ticket. I spent hours digging through the CAA Web site, ticket policy and even went so far as to e-mail Colby Almond, the CAA president, about camping out.

Flash forward to Tuesday night, t-minus 25 hours to tip off. After getting no news to stop me, things are looking good.

The security guard tells me that I can't have a tent, but I can spend the night. Then at 11 p.m. the four groups received heart-breaking news. Our efforts were futile.

A (Carolina) Fever student told us it was going to be random — random.

School spirit, camping out, bonding with other students were all useless. We called (Almond), and he informed us that we should leave; I was wasting my time. If I didn't, DPS would remove me.

Where was this news days ago? Much less, who would make such an atrocious decision?

I'll tell you, a CAA president who doesn't care about students or the game. Someone who already has his seat reserved.

I want back the experience of camping out and the hours I spent preparing; I want to believe that Carolina students care about other Carolina students, and I want my opportunity to stand feet away from whoever is playing point guard and watch them destroy Duke, as I hate the Blue Devils and Coach K with every last inch of my body and with every ounce of blood that pumps through my heart.

Bring back tenting if you have to, but don't screw students who care.

Richard Young  
Senior  
Peace War and Defense

#### Left-handers have the same rights as righties

TO THE EDITOR:

The language of today only reflects the right-handed prejudice in our society.

It creates a sense of inferiority for left-handers. Actions are "right or wrong," which is to say that left is wrong. Why not "correct or wrong"?

Left-handers are seen as having abnormalities, and children are still forced to write with their right hand.

Also, why must I drive on the right side of the road? Society tells me that to be correct, I must be "right." It's exclusive.

Some countries allow their drivers to decide which side of the road they wish to drive on; why can't we as a society adopt this equality? I have rights ... or is it "corrects"?

Sounds ridiculous, right? Well, so does the term first-year student. The use of freshman as a tool for "symbolic annihilation" is borderline absurd. Are we so enamored with political correctness that the term "freshman" is paralleled to racism? ("Freshwhite" isn't a word.)

Why stop at the English language? Plenty of romance languages refer to nouns in gender. I'm sure the French will change their entire language.

It's a word. It expresses the idea of students in their first year of college. It does not express an inherent bias.

If changing the use of right seems ludicrous, changing freshman doesn't make sense either. Democracy is equal rights, not special consideration. Check your Amendments again — start at 19.

Craig Golden  
Freshman  
Mathematics

#### Help those that help you by increasing financial aid

TO THE EDITOR:

I appreciated the piece Wednesday that argued for increased funding for those students without U.S. citizenship ("Help Wanted," Feb. 6).

It perplexes me that our society, on one hand, benefits from the hard labor of this population, and then turns around and criminalizes and dehumanizes these same folks (but of course, never the employers of the immigrants, the ones who exploit these folks for maximum profits).

It is about time that we offer these folks that — literally — put the food on our table to have the chance to sit at the table with us. Making housing, health care and education more accessible is a great way to start.

Finally, I would caution us from using the word "illegal" to describe any human being — how can a person be "illegal"? And, if it were to be used, shouldn't it be the indigenous population of this land who is using it?

Anthony Fleg  
Fourth year  
School of Medicine

### The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,  
114 years  
of editorial freedom

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### 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.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Columns, cartoons and letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. Editorials are the opinions solely of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board. The board consists of eight board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the editor. The 2007-08 editor decided not to vote on the board.