

Fla. reopens evolution debate

Theory to be included in curriculum

BY MEGHAN COOKE
STAFF WRITER

A recent state school board decision in Florida has reopened the evolution versus creationism debate, a controversy that has resurfaced in curriculum discussions nationwide.

Despite opposition from more than a dozen school boards, the Florida State Board of Education decided last week to officially include evolution in the science curriculum.

As a compromise, the curriculum now refers to evolution as a "scientific theory," a phrase that leaves the validity of the concept debatable.

Joe Wolf, president of Florida Citizens for Science, said the curriculum did not specifically mention evolution, leaving teachers to approach the subject at their own discretion — some skipping it altogether.

"(The old standards have been) universally judged as highly inferior, in the sense that it didn't teach much of anything," Wolf said.

T. Willard Fair, chairman of the

Board of Education, said there was not enough evidence to fully convince the board that evolution should be taught as fact.

"Most people said they didn't want evolution taught as a fact," Fair said. "They wanted their children to be exposed to creationism, as well as evolution, so that the kids could be able to draw their own conclusions."

Texas education officials are also expected to re-examine their science curriculum this year. While currently allowing evolution to be taught, the state permits students to critique the concept.

In January, the South Carolina Board of Education approved a biology textbook after a debate regarding its assertion that evolution is the foundation of life.

In 1997, a bill proposed in the N.C. House of Representatives would have ensured that public schools teach evolution merely as a theory, but the bill didn't leave committee.

Terry Stoops, education policy analyst for the John Locke

Foundation, a conservative Raleigh-based think tank, said that evolution is well established in N.C. schools' curriculums and that topics like abstinence education are a larger source of controversy in the state.

Stoops said students should be exposed to a variety of opinions about the origins of life, including creationism and intelligent design, the idea that life is too complex to have begun without a guiding hand.

Charles Lytle, president of the N.C. Academy of Science and a zoology professor at N.C. State, said creationism and intelligent design should not be taught in schools as they are unscientific.

Efforts to try to teach these theories in public schools have failed. In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that teaching creationism violates the Establishment Clause, which prohibits states advancing religion.

"Evolution explains so much about what we know about living organisms," Lytle said, adding that many people have tried to discredit the theory but that evidence against it has not been confirmed by scientific tests.

"The best thing as a scientist is to give you the best answer we have based on the evidence we have available."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Priority registration up for grabs

Meeting will determine group status

BY ZACK TYMAN
STAFF WRITER

For students seeking priority registration, their fate will be determined this week.

Friday was the deadline for campus groups to submit applications for priority registration, and a committee will meet Wednesday to decide who qualifies.

Priority registration allows students who meet certain standards — such as hours devoted to athletics or degree programs, as well as certain disabilities — to register for courses before the rest of their graduating class.

University Registrar Alice Poehls said 12 to 15 groups, encompassing about 1,000 students, applied for priority registration, which was lower than her expected turnout.

But she said she believes the application process went well.

"I'm pleased with the methods people used to choose whether to apply and evaluate the needs of students," Poehls said.

Before the system was in place, some students received priority registration on an informal basis.

Under the new system, the application process is carried out at the group level only, and the priority registration advisory committee will not see the names of the individual stu-

dents. A decision about each group should be reached by the end of the meeting, and registration times will be announced by March 1.

No late applications will be accepted, and no appeals to the committee's decisions will be permitted, Poehls said.

Biology professor William Kier is part of the committee that will evaluate the applications.

He said that this is a new experience for everyone involved.

"This is the first time this is happening, ... so I really don't know what to expect," Kier said. "The aspect of the process that really appeals to me is the openness."

The meeting Wednesday is open to the public, as prescribed by the PRAC's proposal, but no public input will be allowed.

Sophomore David Bevevino, one of two student members of the committee, will provide a student perspective to the meeting.

"We aren't sure if we are doing this by vote or not," Bevevino said, "but I will be able to contribute."

Psychology professor Steve Reznick served as chairman of the task force that put together the original proposal for priority registration, which was approved by the Faculty Council in December.

In the proposal, the task force said that the program could benefit nursing and education majors, who spend a significant amount of

ATTEND THE MEETING

Time: Noon Wednesday
Location: Student Union, Room 3413
Info: regweb.unc.edu

time working as part of their curriculum, as well as varsity athletes and students with disabilities.

"We were trying to define groups eligible for priority registration," Reznick said. "It's not automatic that these groups would get it."

Reznick also said he predicts that 5 percent to 10 percent of the student population will be affected by the new system.

UNC is one of the last ACC schools to implement a priority registration program. And for John Blanchard, senior associate athletic director, it is a welcome addition.

"We've been advocating for this for a long time — over the last 15 years," Blanchard said. "It has been a long process."

But not every varsity athlete will necessarily receive priority registration as athletes are evaluated by individual sport.

Because this is the first time the priority registration process is taking place, Poehls stressed, it is in the experimental stages.

"There is programming written to allow us to evaluate the progress," she said. "Right now it's a matter of observing and reporting."

Contact the University Editor at uodesk@unc.edu.

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- Best female athlete
- Best male athlete
- Most underrated athlete
- Favorite sports Web site
- Favorite intramural sport
- Favorite coach
- Best off campus work out
- Most despised rival
- Best place to watch a game on TV
- Most popular phys ed class

THE SCENE

- Best place to shop on the web
- Favorite place to people-watch
- Best place to get a mixed drink
- Cleanest bar bathroom
- Best meal after midnight
- Best place for a microbrew in the Triangle
- Best new hangout (bar or restaurant) from 2007

COLLEGIATE LIFE

- Best drinking game
- Best parking ticket appeal excuse
- Favorite study spot
- Best class to do the crossword in
- Best road trip
- Quirkiest roommate habit
- Favorite spring break destination

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- Best up & coming artist
- Favorite campus music group
- Favorite radio station
- Favorite local group
- Favorite place to see a band
- Favorite Web site (not sports related)
- Favorite movie in 2007
- Best place to find that new CD
- Best place to see a movie
- Favorite reality show
- Favorite album in 2007

OUT 'N' ABOUT

- Favorite place to get your caffeine fix
- Favorite place to get a frozen dessert
- Best restaurant for a healthy meal
- Best restaurant to impress a first date
- Best delivered meal
- Best burger
- Best ethnic restaurant
- Best lunch bargain
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