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## Acceptance breeds an inclusive society

At some point in our lives, living with a disability will touch all of us, whether it is we who face this struggle or someone we know.

Each day, individuals with intellectual disabilities struggle to lead a "normal" life — that is, doing the things that many of us enjoy each day without a second thought, such as being accepted in the society that surrounds us and automatically picking up on social cues and practices.

Many of us might also know someone with a disability, perhaps through volunteering with Special Olympics, religious organizations, school or family.

### GUEST COLUMNIST

The 1990 census revealed that there are 6.2 million to 7.5 million people nationwide with intellectual disabilities, and these individuals have amazing things to contribute to society as well. Chapel Hill's own Kerry Hagner won a gold medal in this summer's world Special Olympics in China, something that I certainly have not managed to achieve, and my interactions with the disabled community leave me continually amazed at their talents and ability to form friendships.

The recent comments made by a University professor have made the disabled community and its advocates, both in Chapel Hill and nationwide, truly concerned about increasing awareness and education about the difficulties and triumphs that people with intellectual disabilities face daily.

Although no one will dispute that living with an intellectual disability is harder than living without one, this does not mean that those with intellectual disabilities cannot have an equal quality of life and positively impact as many, if not more, of the people around them than those without disabilities. There are support networks, group homes and funding such as Medicaid to assist those with intellectual disabilities in achieving their life goals and living much as any of us, here at UNC, would. In Chapel Hill, organizations like the Arc of Orange County and Residential Services provide opportunities and aid for those with disabilities.

My friends with disabilities and I share interests such as Carolina basketball, seeing movies and simply hanging out — in other words, we have little differences other than that those with an intellectual disability have labels affixed to them that I do not, and the difficulties they face in being accepted in society make any day-to-day difficulties I might face seem trivial.

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act passed, granting individuals with disabilities non-discrimination in the workplace and in other public venues.

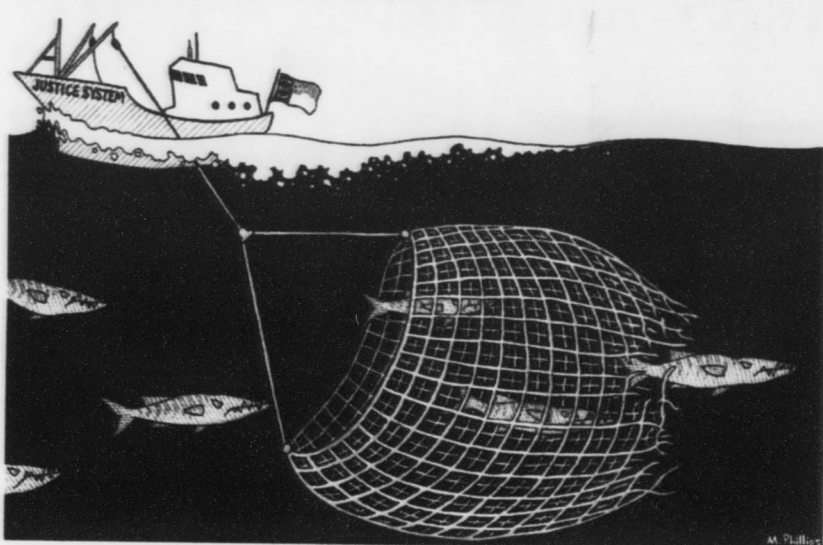
However, this act means nothing without our assistance — if we believe every erroneous fact we hear about the inability of people with disabilities to have viable lives and to contribute to the society around them, we will continue to treat them with less than the respect they deserve. If we instead recognize that they do face challenges and that they have things to share with us, we can help improve their quality of life by being an understanding friend.

In my own group on campus, Best Buddies, we foster friendships and help erase the constructed divide between those with intellectual disabilities and those without. If we recognize their challenges, as our neighbors, family members and friends, we can further their quality of life by providing an accepting community.

Things are changing for the better, and one person, whether they have an intellectual disability or not, can have an enormous impact on the lives of others, as my work with Best Buddies has shown me time and again.

By just accepting those with disabilities as they are, respecting the challenges they face and reaching out a hand in friendship, we can help change things, one person and negative stereotype at a time.

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



## Simplicity is beautiful

Student Congress should pass bill to reform elections

Student Congress is attempting to simplify campus election rules.

It's a move we've called for before, and we're glad to see Congress finally making the process easier on everyone involved.

All that's left is for Congress to vote to pass Rep. Val Tenyotkin's bill Tuesday night, moving student elections three giant steps in the right direction.

We hope it does get passed. Many of the amendments to Title VI of the Student Code, which governs elections laws, arose in response to problems experienced this year.

As before, students can solicit signatures for their petitions 28 days before the date of the election. The petitions are due in a week and the Board of Elections has two days to certify the candidates.

Under the new rules, candidates will be able to campaign publicly as soon as the board certifies their campaigns, which gives us a 19-day campaign season.

Previously, public campaigning began 21 days before the election,

but the use of campaign materials was forbidden until 14 days before. Now that awkward period when candidates could campaign publicly but couldn't use signs or other props is gone.

Also, complicated definitions of public and private campaigning are being re-examined to make them easier to understand.

Nineteen days will be more than enough time to campaign, especially if the really important part of the electoral process, big signs that clutter the Pit with uninspiring but vaguely catchy slogans, gets extra time.

We haven't heard of anyone fighting this bill, and it seems likely to pass. We hope no one gets the dumb idea to try to stop it.

The setup the new system will replace is truly a masterpiece of excessive regulation.

Kristin Hill, a candidate for student body president this year, called it "kind of like having rules for the sake of having rules."

The regulatory nightmare was so ridiculous that catching candidates in spurious violations became half

the sport of student elections.

Those violations often led to fines and other penalties, and they made running for office more an exercise in wading through the rules than actually campaigning.

And, of course, the BOE got to spend its time investigating potential violations. We look forward to the board no longer being burdened with working out whose A-frame violated which start date.

Maybe they can use some of that newfound free time to make sure that our special elections proceed without a hitch, since this bill transfers the job to them.

The bill also cleans out obsolete language, including the rules governing campaign voice mails, and restores the option of using conventional ballot boxes should something go wrong with the electronic system.

On the whole, we're glad that the election process is being simplified, and look forward to fewer violations in the future.

We hope that Congress will look at this bill as a model for future reform.

## Take action

Town economic plan is vague, but at least it's a start

The impending departure of Schoolkids Records leaves another hole in the downtown Chapel Hill streetscape.

Public forums on an economic development strategy released by the Town Council concluded two weeks ago, but we thought we would add our voice to the discussion.

With the flight of businesses from Franklin Street, it's encouraging to see that the council has a plan for the steps that should be taken to help spur increased economic development.

Although the overall plan is vague, its existence means the council has at least implicitly acknowledged that there is a problem with economic development in general and Franklin Street in particular. Now we just need a concrete plan of action.

The draft is broken down into six main areas: transit and mixed-use development, green building, employment, town/gown, local business and diversity/social consciousness.

All of these areas contain good ideas toward defining and

accomplishing the town's goals.

A couple in particular stick out as important and should be first on the list.

The plan calls for a retail analysis in order to figure out which goods and services are successful in the Chapel Hill economic market and which are not.

This information is important in courting and placing new businesses to ensure that they will be able to sustain operations, a feat that has been less than easy in recent years.

The town also is calling for the development of incentives for small and local businesses to help them succeed. Locally owned stores are more beneficial to the economy because they keep revenue from sales in the community while also contributing to the commercial tax base.

One of the more minute details of the plan that could have a profound positive effect is compiling a database of existing office space throughout the town.

This is a worthy goal because it allows the town to know the exact office availability it has to

offer and can be used to show businesses that they have a place to move to in Chapel Hill.

Filling office space is important as it can help to decrease the labor flight of Chapel Hill residents to offices in Durham and Raleigh, taking their daytime spending with them.

Unfortunately, the plan is too suggestive and doesn't contain enough directives.

A fire needs to be put under the seat of Town Manager Roger Stancil to develop a plan, and it is the Town Council's prerogative and duty to exude a sense of urgency.

One goal is to "consider offering guidelines" for promoting green development. This is far too vague to be effective. Instead, the town should have cut out the wishy-washy language and call for the implementation of said guidelines.

The Town Council overall has done well with its new plan for economic development. Now we just have to wait for the ideas to actually be implemented.

Stancil, let's see what you and your staff can do.

Sean Honea  
Senior  
American Studies  
Former Staff Sergeant, U.S.  
Army (1997-2005)

### Local businesses are what make college towns great

TO THE EDITOR:

I was first elated to open The Daily Tar Heel, for the seventh year as a UNC student, to see the annual "Carolina's Finest."

That was until I saw some of the so-called winners. Starbucks, Best Buy, Streets at Southpoint? Call me an old fogey, but half of what makes Carolina great are the unique establishments, exploring the many hole-in-the-wall places and supporting local business.

If these big business places are where the kids these days are conducting their business, what's the point in living in a college town? I guess even a more liberal university town doesn't mind getting rid of the mom and pop shops.

Let's just put a Wal-Mart where the Pit is while we're at. Who's with me? Maybe many of those who submitted their votes this year.

Tim Schwantes  
Graduate Student  
Public Health

### 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 nine board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the editor. The 2007-08 editor decided not to vote on the board.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"It feels good to win these games, but we're not satisfied — we're still very hungry."

WAYNE ELLINGTON, UNC GUARD

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feel strongly about something that has been printed? Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online. VISIT [www.dailytarheel.com/feedback](http://www.dailytarheel.com/feedback)

### Public outcry can influence policy on the war in Iraq

TO THE EDITOR:

I am an Army veteran who served eight years.

My response to those who condemned the war protest:

I understand your concerns about the "walkout" being ineffective. To a great extent my generation has forgotten "what it means" to protest.

It's not about hurting the University. It's about hurting ourselves and hoping someone will wonder why. By participating in a walkout, I am choosing to put myself in harm's way because I can no longer abide an outrage, and I am willing to damage the powerful's expectations of my future in order to stir up some empathy from the world.

I realize this only works if a massive number of people participate.

However, it seems people only act unified when faced with the fear of being forced to endure a horrible situation, or empathizing with someone you care for that has.

Consider what ending the draft did. It limited the number of troops who could be called upon and forced us to rely on the reserves and heavy rotations of the active duty units in a long war in order to tie the president's hands by making him feel the pain via public outcry.

To some extent, it worked. Whether for better or worse, the midterm election changed policy in Iraq. However, with the fear of the draft removed, it also removed the public's visceral fear of having to fight the war. Thus, people are willing to disapprove in principle but not to the extent that it would cause them personal loss.

I will not condemn the students who are willing to risk, if only symbolically, their future for something they think needs to be put right. It is only the smallest step, but at least they care about something other than themselves.

### Immigrants don't have the same rights as U.S. citizens

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to "Attacking the wrong party" (March 17), the term "melting pot" does not refer to immigrants just coming to the United States, but "melting" or assimilating into our culture. If all immigrants who came to the U.S. would do so through legal means and would absorb into our population, most Americans would be far less critical.

In regard to the argument against the bills Sen. Elizabeth Dole introduced, legal residents do not enjoy the same rights as citizens. There are vast differences between someone allowed to live here and a citizen of this country and rightfully so.

A large percentage of all drunk driving instances are accounted for by noncitizens. Having said this, the punishments for driving under the influence should be harsh, especially for these individuals.

Legal immigrants should live here under a close watch and on a trial basis. We have to put up with the indiscretions of natural-born citizens but are not obligated to deal with those of legal or illegal immigrants. Why should we accept individuals into this country and allow them the many benefits of living in the U.S. if they will not acquiesce to our laws?

Kevin Wise  
Junior  
Political Science

### War protest was useful in promoting conversation

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Chris Buchheit's letter to the editor ("Immediate withdrawal in Iraq would be detrimental," March 20). While I agree that a swift exit from Iraq would not be the best solution, I believe the protest was meant to be more symbolic of the increasing dissatisfaction Americans, especially young people, are feeling with our current situation.

Buchheit makes the point that we have had an equally high number of military deaths throughout our last three presidential administrations. How are military losses an argument for staying in Iraq? Should this not, instead, be motivation to take a stand against this gruesome pattern?

While a few hundred students protesting are not going to end the war, it may have an effect on the decisions future presidents make about whether to engage in military action, and as young people, this will prove very important.

The purpose of the protest was not meant to pit students against each other or attack anyone's personal beliefs but was rather a way to get students thinking and conversing about the war and the impact it has had over the past five years.

The very fact that we are still discussing it shows that it has done just that, and I am happy to be part of a campus that is willing to make this conversation happen.

Robyn Mitchell  
Junior  
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### The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,  
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of editorial freedom

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