

The Daily Tar Heel

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of editorial freedom

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WHAT'S HOME

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I didn't get punched; also no one registered

I guess I thought it would be more exciting than this. I saw myself getting clocked in the face, stumbling back, dropping the voter registration forms and watching the little American flag land in the dirt, a poetic metaphor of democratic participation.

COMMUNITY COLUMNIST There was that kvetch, the guy promising to punch the next person to ask him if he was registered to vote.

I wanted to be that person. It would've made a hell of a column.

When I began my attempt to document the struggles of the registration kids first-hand, I thought at least people would tell me they don't vote because they're anarchists or yell any of the other angry responses common in the week before this Friday's registration deadline.

They didn't. I wasn't punched or yelled at, just faced with a campus that's reached its saturation point.

With the help of Barack Obama supporters, so numerous they sometimes accidentally ask each other if they're registered, almost 10,000 voters have been added to the rolls in Orange County since May.

North Carolina, for the first time since 1976, is now in play.

But their efforts have also made it so people on campus immediately recognized the clipboard and the flag. They shot out a "yes" before I could manage an "Are you registered to vote at your current address?"

Many were cordial. They smiled. Some weren't from America, they let me know with convincing accents.

But it was a lonely road out there. Even when I was just walking with the clipboard, people tried to avoid eye contact. When our eyes did meet, they wore looks of guilt, bracing for the approach of a stranger.

The Obama kids know this. They have their own stories of negative reactions.

There was the Virginia Tech game at Kenan Stadium when they were cursed and spit at by folks angered that anyone would try to mix sports and politics.

Chris Lazinski, a sophomore, approached a homeless man with high hopes of helping him utilize his right to vote. The man was a former Klan member voting for John McCain. Epithets were thrown.

In the past week the Obama supporters have switched tactics. Instead of approaching strangers, they sit back with signs that say, "Register to vote here."

Their numbers have jumped on campus. In mid-September they were registering less than 30 people a day. With the new tactic and the approach of Friday's deadline, their registration numbers are now in the hundreds per day.

At the Obama office on campus, there is a large thermometer hanging on the wall. At the top, their goal of 5,000 is written in purple. The red, marking where they are now, has passed 4,000. They've registered Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians and even a Communist.

The saturation of our campus, though, is part of a partisan strategy: If you want your candidate to win in a state, you increase the voters in his strongholds.

In North Carolina, one of those strongholds is Orange County, where Democratic presidential hopefuls win handily and UNC provides a campus full of young, mostly Democratic voters.

So it's annoying. But if you like Obama, they're helping your guy. And if you don't, that's all the more reason to get registered.

The deadline is Friday.

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



School must increase aid

More financial aid options needed to recruit top graduate students

UNC has more than 8,000 graduate students, but as members of the University community, these students are often overlooked. Some are even struggling to make ends meet. This is unacceptable.

A strong Graduate School is vital to the overall strength of the University. If UNC hopes to remain competitive with its peer institutions in attracting the best and brightest, it needs to provide a compelling financial assistance package to graduate students.

To their credit, University officials are aware of the problem and working to address it. A number of ideas have already been floated, and Roger Perry, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said

the board is looking at ways to increase funding for graduate student support.

Providing full financial support to graduate students in their first year would be a great way to entice prospective students.

Most graduate students are unable to work as teaching assistants in their first year due to credit requirements, so this would go a long way toward easing the financial burden on these individuals.

UNC should also consider higher pay for teaching assistants. These students provide a great service to the University by teaching recitations, managing lab sessions and working with faculty to improve class quality.

They should be fairly compensated for this work.

Of course, this extra money will have to come from somewhere, most likely from an increase in undergraduate tuition.

However, undergraduate students, in particular, would benefit if the University recruited more highly qualified students to the Graduate School, as the quality of the teaching assistants would undoubtedly improve.

Indeed, all aspects of the University would benefit from increased financial support for graduate students.

While UNC already has a lot to offer as a top-tier University, financial incentives are a proven way to attract qualified students in an increasingly competitive environment.

Blog increases accessibility

Chancellor Thorp offers a glimpse into his daily routine and statewide adventures

It seems everybody has a blog these days. Who's next, Chancellor Holden Thorp?

Well, yes. Thorp has begun typing away at his computer to give us updates about his daily activities, along with pictures.

And yes, he writes his own entries.

We applaud Thorp's decision to take another step toward increasing accessibility.

His blog contains everything from information about UNC's involvement in protecting the state's coast to a high school picture of Thorp with huge glasses and holding a Rubik's Cube.

The blog is a great way for Thorp to directly update the University community about what he's doing on the job.

It is easier for students to browse through his blog updates than search through DTH archives or attend every public meeting Thorp is involved

with.

Thorp writes that the purpose of the blog is to share "thoughts, ideas and news about how the University is fulfilling its commitment to our students and to our state."

But more importantly, he writes, "I welcome your comments."

Anyone can read and respond to Thorp's posts. So far, he has already received appreciative comments, but also challenges and proposals.

But he hasn't received enough of them.

Thorp has shown a willingness to be open and receive comments and criticism.

Students should take part in the discussion, or at the very least, pay attention to what Thorp is doing.

Students who don't will

miss out on information about Thorp's recruitment attempts, his belief about what sets UNC students apart and even his appreciation for people who wear periodic table socks.

Of course, not everything can be covered in the blog — students will have to do their own digging if they want to get the full story.

And maintaining a blog does not immunize Thorp from criticism of controversial measures taken by the administration.

But it's a step in the right direction in promoting transparency.

You can access the blog at holden.unc.edu.

Comment. It's your University, your chancellor, your chance to be heard. Thorp is listening. Or reading, at least.

Speak up about dining

Carolina Dining Services solicits feedback on students' campus dining experiences

Chances are, when reminiscing about UNC's two dining halls, Lenoir and Rams Head, positive memories are not the first to come to mind.

In fact, the most likely response is despair and misery, knowing that you still have 80 dining hall meals left this semester.

Complaints about Carolina Dining Services are abundant.

With the average cost per meal ranging between \$5.75 and \$8.60, depending on the meal plan, one wouldn't expect long lines, flavorless food and meat quality ratings lower than your last midterm grade.

But during lunchtime, lines stretch from Lenoir to the Student Union, there are few, if any, available seats and the food is more than likely unappetizing.

Even the dining services' Web site rarely reflects the daily menus accurately.

In fact, the only redeeming qualities of our monopolistic dining halls are the convenience and variety that they provide.

Yet to make it all worse, CDS butters you up with the occasional theme dinner or recruitment day, demonstrating that they can make great food, they just choose not to.

And with a cancellation fee of \$250 and a required yearly contract, it is almost impossible to drop your meal plan.

It appears that CDS has little business incentive to provide quality food consistently.

But hope for a satisfying meal is not lost.

CDS is offering a survey to stu-

dents that, if nothing else, will allow students to take out their frustration in mass. Students can even win an iPod touch or Best Buy gift cards.

There are feedback forms on the dining services' Web site and at every dining location on campus. CDS even maintains a Student Dining Board of Directors to act as a liaison between the student body and Carolina Dining Services.

While one might be skeptical of the influence that the board yields, there are ample yet underutilized methods for students to provide feedback to CDS.

If students want their dining experience to improve they must provide feedback and pressure dining services to meet their expectations.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"The Student Code can't be inconsistent with North Carolina law."

BETH SOJA, RALEIGH ATTORNEY

FEATURED ONLINE READER COMMENT:

"You didn't mention the awesome event where the men ran out into the ring and tried to punch the bulls in the face."

— ON "RIDE 'EM, EFLAND"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nobel laureate endorses Obama's research priorities

TO THE EDITOR:

On Monday scientists all over the world joined the Nobel Prize Committee in recognizing the achievements of two French scientists and one German scientist for discovering the viruses that lead to AIDS and to cancer of the cervix of the uterus.

Discoveries of such importance take years of dedicated effort and require uninterrupted financial support to sustain long periods of difficult research.

The citizens of North Carolina and our state government have shown great foresight in developing an infrastructure that supports a world class endeavor in biotechnology. The Research Triangle is a well recognized example of this leadership of which we can all be proud. Its development has brought many millions of dollars of new income to our state.

We need to have the same quality of leadership at a national level. The future prospects of our country depend on our ability to push the envelope of science and technology.

We cannot rest on past successes, nor can we allow our current severe and very real financial problems to interrupt or postpone the basic research needed for our future financial well being and the health of ourselves and our children. Innovation and new ideas are our future.

The statements made by the two major candidates for president of the United States of America allow us to see who will support the needed research.

Sen. Obama says, "I will increase funding for basic research, physical and life sciences, mathematics and engineering at a rate that would double basic research budgets over the next decade."

Sen. McCain says, "I will impose a one-year spending freeze on every agency of the federal government, excepting only national defense, the care of our veterans, and a few critical priorities."

The future will not wait a year to be funded. Vote for the candidate who sees where our future lies.

Oliver Smithies
2007 Nobel Prize winner
Professor of Pathology and
Lab Medicine

Obama propaganda on campus irritating, illegal

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to commend those who took the initiative today to litter our beautiful campus with blatant Obama propaganda by placing static laminates and permanent white and blue stickers all along walls, bathroom stalls, the outsides of various buildings and trash cans.

You all succeeded in making your point.

1. You are not as environmentally friendly as you make yourselves out to be. I highly doubt those static signs are recyclable and/or biodegradable.

2. You have violated N.C. General Assembly ordinances that prohibit the defacements of public property. The temporary static ones might be alright, but I assure you your permanent rally stickers are, in fact, not.

3. You all have only further proven to me that you have no

idea how to respect the property of others by just doing whatever the hell you want with it.

Way to go. Thanks to everyone who took part in this venture.

You have succeeded in allowing me to make up my mind for who to vote for this November.

I assure you it will be anyone but Obama. I have grown tired of your radical approaches to getting your senseless "point" across.

Hats off to you all, I took note.

Kendall Law
Sophomore
Political Science

Housekeeper negotiations must be more transparent

TO THE EDITOR:

Thursday's article, ("Housekeepers, UNC reach compromise," Oct. 2) is laden with misinformation and under coverage. To call this new proposal a compromise would entail two groups working together. But the reality is that the administration asserted what it wanted and gave the housekeepers a plan they couldn't refuse, literally.

Administrators created the housing-housekeeping committee after the housekeepers organized themselves and created a petition to keep overtime pay for the weekends.

Early on in the committee meetings, the administration planted its desire for seven-day coverage in cleaning the dorms. Perhaps creating the committee was an opportunity for administrators to implement a preconceived seven-day coverage proposal, instead of addressing the needs and concerns of the housekeepers.

The article said that new positions will be made using hours from unfilled positions, but the positions are actually coming from frozen retirements and moving or reducing hours from the temp staff. For instance, temp employees hoping to become permanent who are currently working 40 hours will work only 16 hours, and suite-style bathrooms will be cleaned three days a week, reducing service to the students.

The reduction in weekday services will still overextend the housekeepers. There will be fewer housekeepers to clean most zones less often, but the amount of grime built up in the dorms doesn't change. This means more work when the housekeepers do clean, and it will probably take longer.

I went to the meeting presenting the "compromise" to the housekeepers, but was denied entrance.

After the meeting, I listened to the dissatisfaction of housekeepers with the new proposal. I also listened to Van Dobson, assistant vice chancellor for facilities services, harangue a housekeeper for meeting with Chancellor Thorp, as well as telling them not to speak to students, the union or the press.

The administration should allow more transparency on this issue, so the students can be properly informed.

Annie Hoffman
Senior
Psychology, Studio Art

Editor's note: The Daily Tar Heel also wrote a second article on the announced compromise between housekeepers and the administration, ("Some housekeepers reject deal," Oct. 3).

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
- > Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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