

A talk with Dean Boulton

Working behind the scenes

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Most students have never seen Donald Boulton, Dean of Student Affairs at UNC.

Boulton is a shortish, slightly balding man in his early 40's whose small but well-furnished office is in the basement of Steele Building.

He has been Dean of Student Affairs at Carolina for almost a year. Appointed on May 22, 1972, having left a job as Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago.

The Dean of Student Affairs here oversees the departments of Residence Life and Student Life, the Student Health Service, the Placement Service, the YM-YWCA and the Carolina Union. As Dean of Student Affairs Boulton is in a position to wield a lot of power.

His eyes are a steady blue—not cold, but controlled; his voice sounds sincere.

"The first radical thing I did," Boulton said in a recent interview, "was to move my office out of South Building."

The Steele Building office, he said, is now easily accessible to both students and other Student Affairs personnel.

That was not, however, the first radical thing he did.

During the summer of 1972, Boulton helped revamp the whole division of Student Affairs. Former Student Affairs Dean C.O. Cathey had retired to return to teaching and Boulton, aided by Associate Dean of Student Affairs James O. Carter, set up a system in which the 10 associate deans had freedom to run their own departments but were answerable in the end to Boulton.

The offices of the dean of men and the dean of women were merged to become the Department of Student Life under former Dean of Men Fred Schroeder. Former Dean of Women Katherine Carmichael then became dean of Supportive Services.

The reorganizations were designed to make the office more responsive to students.

According to Steve Saunders, former Residence College Federation (RCF) chairman, Boulton came to student leaders in the fall and asked what they thought should be done this year.

"Student leaders didn't realize the power and activity possible in the office," Saunders said.

"He's a very personable man, a very active man, a driving man," Saunders characterized Boulton. "He has his faults, but it's better to have someone there who's doing things."

Saunders described former Dean of Student Affairs C.O. Cathey as inactive. The office was too fragmented under Cathey, he said, and Boulton has provided more leadership from the top.

For example, students and the Department of Residence Life had been wrangling for six years over a policy to let students paint their rooms. By December, the office of Student Affairs had announced a paint policy.

Saunders had been pushing for such a policy for over two years and said Boulton had procrastinated. "We could have had it two months earlier," he said.

Boulton said he had just finally quit ignoring something that had been dragging on. "I can't claim any success for the paint policy," he said.

When he sees ways to improve things, he said, he sits on the idea awhile and then tries to make suggestions to get the idea accepted in subtle ways. "I enjoy giving someone else an idea and letting him take it up and run with it," he said.

The living-learning project to be initiated in Henderson Residence College next fall ends a lengthy push for a living-learning program.

In the past, Saunders said,



Donald Boulton, Dean of Student Affairs

living-learning had been the concern of the office of Academic Affairs.

But when Saunders mentioned it to Boulton at the start of the fall, Boulton and James Gaskin, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences "picked it up and formed the committee" — the Boulton-Gaskin Committee to study living-learning. Boulton himself is excited over the living-learning concept.

Not all of Boulton's decisions have been popular.

He recently announced a 10 per cent room rent hike which was protested by the Residence Hall Association (RHA). RHA claimed the 10 per cent hike was unnecessary and that Boulton had ignored the student input he had requested.

Boulton had, in fact, lowered the increase from an original proposal of 15 per cent, but gave RHA no power in the decision other than an advisory position.

Boulton said he sees his job in a case like that as getting the facts about a situation and conveying them to the students. "I try to involve the students as

much as possible," he said, "but I have to make the decisions."

He sees his job as implementation, providing a better environment for students to learn.

He declined to say whether he had any plans of his own for the immediate future, claiming that he didn't want other groups to think he was telling them what to do.

The past year has been a year of learning, he reflected. "Needs were identified this year," and later, "Outside of nude sunbathing, no one requested anything unreasonable," in the way of official action.

A controversy over the firing of a housemother hurt Boulton most this year, according to Saunders.

A housemother received a letter from Residence Life asking that she quit. The letter reportedly implied that younger people were wanted for jobs like hers.

"We saw a trend toward younger people," Boulton said, "and our mistake was assuming everyone wants that. It's

too easy to generalize."

The women of the dorm organized a letter writing campaign protesting the firing and the housemother was eventually restored as Boulton publicly admitted the department's mistake.

Boulton has been working recently with student leaders and administration on establishing a counseling center for all students, he said, and pointed to a quarter-inch thick report on the topic on his desk.

He said there were no plans at this point for funding such a service.

Establishing such a center with the coordination of the Student Health Service within two years would be "pretty good progress," according to Boulton.

Saunders said Boulton had been open to feedback, both good and bad, on various projects, all year.

"His biggest problem so far," Saunders said, "is in trying to do too many things, implicitly raising too many hopes."


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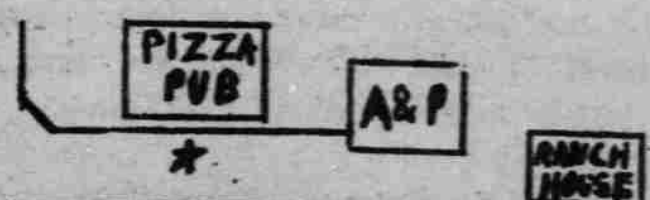
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