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The Daily Tar Heel
84th Year of Editorial Freedom

Incomplete grade policy needs modification

Though it is sometimes easy for students to forget about the world outside Chapel Hill, the administration cannot afford this luxury. The students it educates must compete with others from schools across the nation, and its academic policies should give these students a fair chance of winning summer internships, scholarships or jobs.

But UNC's stringent policy of averaging an incomplete in a course as an F is denying students a fair chance and needs to be revised. At present, if you are forced to take an incomplete in a course, you first must have the instructor's permission. This presumably means you have a valid excuse. But instead of allowing you a certain period of time to record a grade before averaging an F into your grades, UNC averages an F in right away, leaving a year to make up the incomplete. Only then will the F come off your record. Your average lowered could very well hurt your chances for a summer job or internships when you face a person from a school with a more lenient policy.

Students are thus penalized after they have been given permission to take an incomplete. Instead of an incentive to quickly finish their work to avoid an F, they get an F immediately. This situation does not exist at many other schools. A survey by the *Daily Tar Heel* of several colleges and universities on the East Coast revealed a fairer and more judicious policy at many fine schools. These schools give a short deadline, with no F penalty, before an F is averaged into the grade.

At Syracuse an incomplete is not averaged in unless a student does not make it up after one year; then it becomes an F. Providence gives the student 30 days to make up the incomplete; the University of West Virginia one semester; the University of Florida, one quarter; at Yale and Dartmouth arrangements are made for a deadline and if the student does not meet it, the grade is recorded as an F. If a course at Harvard is not completed before the end of the term, a student must petition before a board of academics for an extension to a specific date. Should the student still fail to complete the course work, the instructor enters the grade he wants.

UNC needs a policy similar to that of these schools. A student could be given 60 days before the grade is entered as an F and then have the rest of the year to complete it. Then one would have an incentive to quickly finish the course and keep that embarrassing F out of his average for a year. If a student is given the right to take the course incomplete, he should at least have time to do the work before being slapped with an F.

As it is now, the University is burdening its students with an unnecessarily tough policy, one that many schools don't recognize. The University should remember that the world is larger than the city limits of Chapel Hill and modify this policy.

Food stamps for students

Many students are passing up a good way to cut their grocery bills. The government food stamp program is a \$5.4 billion giveaway for which 17.3 million students are eligible. But for some reason students aren't taking advantage of the program. According to a recent release by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only 1.3 per cent or about 250,000 students are using food stamps.

Students face the same criteria for food stamps as anyone else, with two exceptions. Students whose parents claim them as dependents cannot take food stamps if their parents are ineligible. And students are not forced to register to work as other food stamp recipients are.

Students who pay their own way to college and make less than \$245 per month (scholarship monies included) are eligible for the program.

Probable deterrents to student use of food stamps are 1) red tape and 2) the social stigma attached to "poverty programs."

Applicants for food stamps must meet with a food stamps program officer and supply all representative financial records. This bureaucratic shuffle no doubt cuts out many an applicant.

But probably the biggest deterrent is pride. Food stamps unfortunately seem to be an obscene expression to most students. But it's a shame. Food stamps come from the same place many scholarships do—the government. And no one curses or ignores scholarships.

The images food stamps evoke seem much less important than the good they might accomplish by keeping a student in school or by making his stay there more enjoyable.

The Daily Tar Heel

publishes Monday through Friday during the academic year. Offices are at the Student Union Building, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. Telephone numbers: 933-0245, 0246, 0252.

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The Daily Tar Heel is printed by Hinton Enterprises in Mebane, N.C.

Reading and writing

Testing skills better than 'social promotion'

By MARY HELEN BEACH

In his 1952 book, *Where Main Street Meets the River*, Pulitzer Prize winning editor Hodding Carter reflected on his experience teaching a college freshman English class.

He had just graduated himself and was surprised at how ill prepared his students were for college level work. Only two of his students passed easily. For the others, he had to teach on a much lower level. He even resorted to "offering a passing grade to the student who was closest to predicting the score of the upcoming football game."

That took place more than 30 years ago, and, if anything, the situation has become worse. Illiteracy and deficiencies in reading and writing skills have reached alarming proportions at nearly all levels of education.

It is surprising, therefore, that N.C. Gov. Jim Hunt's proposed program for testing to improve these skills is meeting such resistance.

Hunt's program is twofold. First, it would require that all students be tested at various grade levels to determine where their deficiencies are. They would then receive special help in these areas before moving to a more difficult level. Second, it would require testing of eleventh graders to see if they could pass skills on at least a ninth grade level. They would have to reach this level before they could graduate.

According to a *News & Observer* editorial, most of the opposition centers around the fact that the tests are "potentially embarrassing and damaging to the pupils who may not do well on them."

It is much more damaging and embarrassing, not to mention a waste of money, for a student to go to college, only to discover that he is lacking the basic skills needed to do well there.

Colleges and universities cannot realistically be expected to teach incoming students basic reading and

writing skills. It costs both the college and the student money to operate these programs. It also takes time to develop those skills—time outside of other classwork.

The only good way to develop good reading and writing skills is for these skills to be taught throughout the elementary and secondary school levels. This is not being done now.

Journalism students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill must pass a spelling and grammar test before they can graduate. Many students fail to meet the passing score of 70 on the first try, and most of the passing scores are surprisingly low. This is one indication of the problem. The words used are simple—nothing that isn't from everyday use—yet still many fail to pass.

Programs like that proposed by Gov.

Hunt would help see that students receive a better education and thus a better chance after they finish school.

As for the complaints, in North Carolina, they have come from a black political group and the state teacher's association.

The black group claims that Hunt's program would result in "unfair racial comparisons." In other words, they think the program is unfair to minority children. This claim is unfounded. The aim of the program is to assure that every child in the state will receive the best possible education, regardless of race. The aim is not to prove that minority children are less skillful in reading and writing than others. With this program, minorities would no longer need to fear such a comparison.

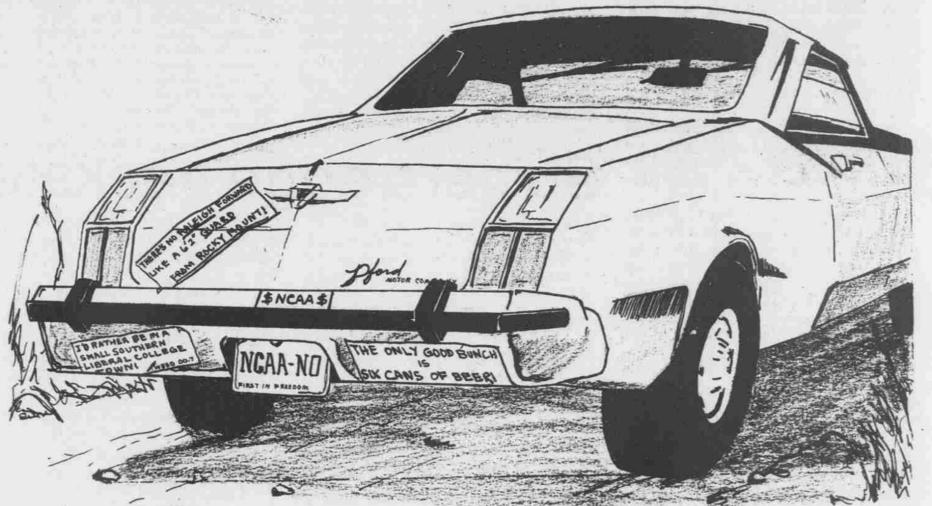
As to the teacher's group, it is hard to

believe that they would put possible embarrassment of some children above giving them the good education to which they are entitled. It almost seems that the teachers are more afraid of stepping on some parent's toes or of taking on more work for themselves.

It is time that teachers stop promoting children just because they fear it would embarrass the child to be held back. These "social promotions" only hurt the child more later. They just get further and further behind, until they have no hope of catching up. Programs like Gov. Hunt's would help to stop the problem of illiteracy among school children.

Mary Helen Beach is a senior journalism major from Durham, N.C.

smarker
THE DAILY TAR HEEL



letters to the editor

Ignored basketball managers deserve praise

To the editor:

Now that the National Championship game is over and the sting of defeat has lessened somewhat, people will begin to reflect upon some of the personalities of this great 1977 Tar Heel basketball team. Walter, Phil, Mike and the rest will get their share of praise, but three very important people will be largely ignored. They are the team's managers.

John Cohen and his assistants, Jeff Mason and Rick Duckett, have given much of themselves to the effort that nearly brought the big one back to Chapel Hill, and I think it's time that somebody raised his voice to give these three the praise they deserve.

Thanks, guys, for helping to make it a great season for the Tar Heels.

Chris Schleter,
Head Football Manager
110 Ehringhaus

Beach trips and speeding tickets

You're headed south down 15-501 for the beach. You're not drinking beer or smoking pot; just driving down for some rest and a good time. Traffic is mild on this particular day because you got an early start—6 a.m., and you know damn well that's early for a Saturday—but it'll sure be worth it when you, your girl and your canine hop out of the car to romp around in the hot sand.

Good radio stations are scarce and the drive from Hippy Hill to the coast is just long enough to give you those commonly known fanny discomforts. Anticipation mounts in its own subtle way. Raeford is only 22 miles and that's approximately halfway—at least you think so. Conversation comes and goes, the gas gauge just goes, and as the sun creeps upward the pre-lunch junk food munchie attack begins to crowd your thought. But it's not worth stopping for. That would mean 10 minutes of fun in the sun lost forever, and anyway you're the only one that's hungry (save your dog because he's always hungry). Your girl friend doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive.

You jump. "What was that?" The fastest bumper in the world has just occurred. Your emotions slide like honey off of a spoon. The blue light sends its insulting message through your rear view mirror.

"May I see your license please?" You didn't intend to speed, but it's a fact: the digits "70" stare at you from the god-like box in the disguised patrol car. Your temporary speeding above the designated 55 m.p.h. limit has cost you between \$27 and \$37, has nearly ruined your trip and hangs over your head and on the record for three years.

What can you say? (Besides some choice, cute four-letter type words.) I've often wondered what salutation you are supposed to give the patrolman as you step out from his air-conditioned privacy. "Thank you"?

You might just ask yourself after the heat has subsided, "Does the violation that I have committed deserve the hassle that I have received?"

David Pharr
Chapel Hill

Tax reforms in House

To the editor:

As we approach another Tax Day (April 15), there are a couple of bills pending in the House of Representatives which will be of interest to many students and faculty of the University of North Carolina.

Some 54 million Americans are hit with an income tax penalty of up to 20 per cent because they are single, or because they are married with both partners working. The Committee of Single Taxpayers (COST) has been working for several years to eliminate this inequity. To accomplish this goal, Rep. Ed Koch has again introduced HR 850 in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Also pending in Ways and Means is HR 84, introduced by Rep. Herb Harris, which would make a beginning toward income tax equality for renters, similar to what has for so long been available to homeowners.

Anyone interested in more information about these bills is urged to send a long, self-addressed stamped envelope to me at the address below, mentioning that this letter was read in the University of North Carolina *Tar Heel*. Thank you.

Lee Spencer
Box 4330
Arlington, Virginia 22204

Bryant group concerned parents

To the editor:

Just as singer Anita Bryant may be misinformed about child molestation by homosexual males (which indeed very rarely occurs), Gary Parks (March 28) is just as misinformed about the ideals behind the Save Our Children, Inc. group. Ms. Bryant, like any concerned parent, only wants what she thinks is best for her children. I am sure that Black parents would not want their children taught by a Ku Klux Klan member, nor would Southern Baptist parents want a child of theirs taught by a self-proclaimed atheist.

What Ms. Bryant and the S.O.C. are afraid of is the influence someone they consider abnormal would have on their children if that person were teaching in a public school. Obviously, a person's sexual preference, race, religion or political belief is his or her own business, but beliefs are hard to suppress in a classroom, where they would influence small children. I am not proclaiming which (if any) of these beliefs are right or wrong, but merely stating that only unbiased attitudes are of any help when observing matters such as these.

Ms. Bryant and company do not feel that Gay adults lurk in bathroom stalls awaiting little boys the way a lion would its dinner, although Mr. Parks may lead you to think this. After reading his letter, I had to wonder whether it is Ms. Bryant who is guilty of inhuman bigotry.

Joel Roberts
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