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The Daily Tar Heel
85th year of editorial freedom

letters to the editor

Fall break a welcome cure for mid-term blues

To the editor:

In response to Robin McWilliam's column on the "academic value" of a proposed fall break for 1978 ("Fall break a time for scholarly pursuits? Oct. 11), let me begin by stating that I have just transferred to UNC-CH from a university that does have a fall break (UNC-G) and that I have observed no dire academic repercussions there due to the four-day vacation.

As a matter of fact, I feel that the extra break is very beneficial to us "serious" students who don't "manufacture" long holidays in order to zip off to the mountains or the coast. A fall break would be a welcome respite during the long weeks between Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

I personally would find it very academically rewarding to be able to take a couple of days off from the books in order to return with a refreshed outlook and renewed sense of vigor for my studies.

In case it has escaped McWilliam's notice, the proposed fall break would be around the middle of October which coincides with midterm time. For those students with midterms prior to the break, the vacation would offer a chance to recover before being plunged back into the academic arena. For those with mid-term exams after the break, the two extra days of study would most certainly be an asset.

As for McWilliam's implication that the four-day weekend might easily turn into a 10-day holiday, he is blowing the issue out of proportion. At UNC-G (otherwise known as the Suitcase Capital of the Southeast), this was not a problem of any notable size. Besides, if the value of classes is as high as McWilliam indicates, then the students skipping them are actually suffering the greatest disservice.

In sarcastically stating that "no professor in his 35th year of teaching could know the benefits of two days of classes," McWilliam implies that we are "losing" two days of classes when, in fact, they have been duly added to the end of the semester.

I can see no harm in offering the students a four-day break, which they so obviously want, in the middle of the semester in lieu of an extra two days between semesters.

No, we may not become "better scholars because of another holiday." But I certainly don't believe that we'll become worse scholars because of it, and some of us might even be a little healthier mentally and emotionally due to the four-day break.

Diane Norman
13-L Estes Park Apts.

'Bitter' about quotas

To the editor:

Ms. Lanier makes an interesting argument in her "Is the race fair" letter (Oct. 11) to the editor. By using a series of analogies, she rather forcefully attempts to differentiate

between absolute ability and the capacity to use this ability. However, her obviously emotional argument blinds her to some real impacts of reverse discrimination on all of us "insure white males."

One cannot question the fact that Latins, migrants, blacks and Indians have not received all the amenities society has offered members of the white middle class. One could reasonably argue that even in the post "separate but equal" period, many minority members must still "squeeze an education out of poorly funded ill-equipped schools" with "less than top rated facilities." Evidence of this abounds in the northern and southern cities from which many of us hail.

However, quotas based on race, among other things, certainly do *unfairly discriminate*. To make an analogy, A is a middle class white, having worked a job of 20 hours per week all through college while maintaining a more-than-adequate list of extracurricular activities and earning a very high quality-point average. B is a minority member receiving financial aid, having similar extracurricular activities, but a lower GPA, and perhaps lower test scores.

Yet the minority student gets accepted to graduate school or the job over the white student. Why? To fill a quota. Who was the absolutely best qualified with the greatest potential? Grades certainly don't always reflect the answer, and neither do test scores or activity lists. What does? I really don't know, but I somehow feel cheated, hurt and bitter knowing that someone else may get the position I've sweated, worked and strived for—not because they are better qualified or have greater potential, but because of some

quota to compensate for society's past mistakes. As Ms. Lanier asked so succinctly, "Is the race really fair?"

William F. Fairbanks
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Treating the symptoms

To the editor:

I feel that Roger Lancaster erred in his analysis of the Bakke case ("Bakke victory would be loss for all minorities," Oct. 7). I do not see how a policy of applying the same criteria to all university applicants can be labeled racism. Non-discrimination is not racism. To say otherwise is a contradiction in terms. Actually, the term "reverse discrimination" is a misnomer. It is in reality simple discrimination, no more, no less. "Affirmative action" is a euphemism for a return to the discriminatory policies of the past. The only thing that has changed is the identity of the privileged class.

Mr. Lancaster correctly states that special consideration has been employed in the favor of those with wealth and power. This is wrong and will not be corrected by creating a new privileged group. We should strive to eliminate all special considerations, goals or quotas; not create new ones.

He also correctly states that it is not the student black minority that discriminates against minority admissions. But white students have no control while the government holds the withdrawal of federal funds over their heads.

The unequal opportunities that Mr. Lancaster refers to never will be erased through continued dwelling on the race question. They will only disappear when race becomes no more a consideration in the affairs of our lives than the color of our eyes. The disadvantages that most black students operate under could be abolished through improved education programs. Then maybe fewer blacks would be turned away from medical school without the lowering of standards, and we all would benefit.

I would be the first to concede to Jenny Lanier that the foot race to which she refers in the Oct. 11 "Is the race fair" letter is unfair. But let's continue her analogy to its logical conclusion. Let us say that under our program of affirmative action we declare our disadvantaged runner the winner even though he lost. He then proceeds on to a more demanding race that in our analogy will correspond to medical school. Shall we let him slide through that one also? Of course not. He should be taught how to run well. Then let him compete on an equal basis with his brothers.

Here lies the crux of the problem. Programs of affirmative action and artificial integration only treat the symptoms of the disease and not its cause. Let us treat each other equally and stop worrying over percentages.

The Bakke case is a continuation of the equality movement. His victory may be a loss for some individuals, but would be a victory for the cause of equality for all.

David Shuford
2225 Granville

Impetus for reform needed

Five years have passed since a faculty committee appointed by the chancellor, unanimously recommended the adoption of a four-course load. Three years have passed since the Faculty Council approved compromised legislation which rejected the idea of a standard four-course load but encouraged departments to consider offering courses ranging from two to six hours credit per semester, thus creating the possibility of a four-course load for some students.

But the question remains the same: Why has a four-course load never been a viable alternative for most students?

"I think the best schools in the country are those that don't conceive of education as the piling up of courses," said Prof. John Shutz, who headed the Chancellor's Committee on Undergraduate Degree Requirements in 1972. We tend to agree.

However, before this committee's recommendation could be acted on, we acquired a new chancellor. Chancellor N. Ferebee Taylor sent the four-course load proposal to the Administrative Boards of the General College and the College of Arts and Sciences for further study. The Administrative Boards rejected the proposal and sent their report to the Faculty Council that said the "concept of a 'standard course' might curtail the existing freedom of departments to devise courses of varying credit." Finally, the Faculty Council, not one to "curtail the existing freedom of departments," suggested the variable credit plan to each department.

The problem is that most departments have not exercised their freedom to offer variable credit courses. Instead, most departments have continued to offer only standard three-hour credit courses.

"There's always something artificial about course credits," said Dr. George V. Taylor, chairman of the history department, referring to the fact that course credits are not always indicative of the amount of time invested in a particular course. Taylor said the variable credit course option was discussed informally in his department but "never as a serious consideration."

When asked about the possibility of a four or five credit course, Taylor said he supposed you could have a three hour course with one hour discussion for four credits. Indeed, this suggestion should be given serious consideration, as it would afford the serious student a more intensive study of the particular areas in which he or she is interested.

A few departments have modified certain courses, however, after the Faculty Council's suggestion. For example, the Romance Languages department offers intensive 1-2X course for six credits for one semester, according to Dr. Frank M. Duffy, chairman of the Romance Languages department. He said the four hour credit given to Art 31 and Art 32 were also responses to the Council's suggestion.

Notably, the natural science departments have many variable credit courses. The botany department offers courses from one to five credit hours. These courses include not only labs, but several seminars and special topics courses.

"I don't see how anyone can be seriously engaged in five courses at one time," said Dr. Willie Koch, director of undergraduate studies in the botany department.

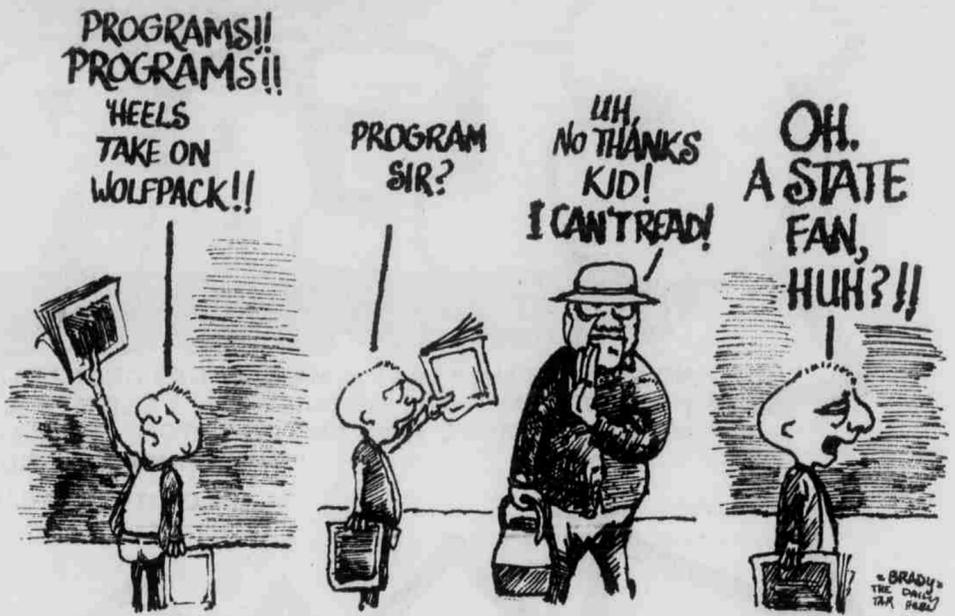
Koch noted that while some botany majors may have a four-course load, they still take the average number of credit hours or more. Essentially, the variable credit courses allow the serious majors to do intensive study in their areas of interest.

It should be noted that this academic freedom in the botany department was not just a response to the Faculty Council's suggestion. According to Koch, many of these variable credit courses were offered before the Council's suggestion. In fact, he credited the undergraduate association of his department with many improvements in academic reform.

But not every department has a viable undergraduate association which can instigate reform. Consequently, the only way to revive the four-course load alternative from its deep sleep is for each department chairperson to set up a joint student-faculty committee to study the course and hour requirements in that department, as well as the possibilities for variable credit courses. More seminars, special topic courses and intensive-level courses for variable credit should be considered by every department, and the student-faculty committee could present the possibilities after close examination.

The four-course load was not killed — it simply suffers from inertia. To provide a greater impetus for each department to broaden its scope, we suggest that the Faculty Council require each department to form student-faculty committees to study the variable credit options. Such a requirement would not "curtail the existing freedom of departments;" it would only ensure that every possible effort is made to structure a curriculum conducive to in-depth study.

The broader spectrum of educational possibilities which comes with the alternative of a four-course load would be of immeasurable benefit to the University. With a just little effort, the sleeping alternative may be awakened.



Efficiency not strong suit of General Assembly

By DOUG MARKHAM

Legislative efficiency has not been a hallmark of the North Carolina General Assembly, and the poor quality of the 1977 legislature was no exception. Aside from special-interest influence, one-party dominance and many individual legislators who should not be re-elected, the legislature has other significant problems of a structural nature.

Political scientist Alexander Heard once wrote, "State legislature may be our most extreme example of institutional lag." Certainly this is true in North Carolina. A national research group, the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures, released a report entitled "State Legislatures: An Evaluation of their Effectiveness." The report ranked our state 47th among the 50 states and suggested many needed reforms.

The most severe indictment of the North Carolina General Assembly is the total failure of the committee system. From introduction to passage, North Carolina's law-making system has serious defects. Many states allow pre-filing of bills in order to speed up the session. A few states require pre-filing. In North Carolina, only the Senate allows bills to be introduced before the session. As a result, lengthy and complex bills do not receive the careful study which they deserve.

Once a bill is introduced, many of the legislators cannot read and understand it. On occasion this may be due to the intellect of the legislator, but often bills are highly technical. A statement of intent in terms a layman can understand should accompany each bill as a preface. At the present time the Institute of Government prepares a daily bill summary, but this summary does not accompany the bill and is not prepared by the author of the bill. Since many of the legislators do not read the bills until they arrive at the committee meeting or session at which they must vote upon the legislation, an accompanying summary is needed. Otherwise, legislators will continue to be dependent upon lobbyists and floor debate which may be misleading.

North Carolina bills are subjected to the whims of the leadership. The attitude of the house speaker, who is not elected by all the people of the state, may determine the fate of the legislation. The presiding officer of the chamber has complete control over which committee will consider the bill. In contrast, 21 states have a uniform system of bill referrals which prevents favoritism and arbitrary bill assignments.

Not only are the duties of the committees poorly defined, but also there are simply too many committees. The 1977 N.C. Senate had 32 committees; the 1977 N.C. House of Representatives had 45. In 1975 the numbers were 24 and 40, respectively. North Carolina

in 1975 had more House committees than any other state in the Union. In fact, only four other state houses have even as many as 25 committees.

In addition to the existence of too many committees, individual legislators serve on too many committees. The average North Carolina legislator serves on six committees, more than any other state in the nation. Most states sharply limit members' service on committees to insure that each member can devote adequate time to his responsibilities. In fact one state, Maryland, limits each legislator to only one committee.

Scheduling times for so many meetings can be hectic. Imagine the problems of State Sen. George Marion, who on March 31 was expected to attend one committee meeting at 9, another at 9:30 and a third at 10 a.m. One North Carolina committee chairperson in 1975 gave out door prizes to committee members to insure their attendance at the meetings of his committee. Any committee system which requires a reward to entice an elected official to perform his duties is badly in need of change. Even a brilliant committee chairperson could not do an effective job with such a crowded schedule.

Although committee action has long been the center of activity in the legislature, only

within the last year have Senate committees been allowed to take roll-call votes. Committee roll-call votes are not published, and neither are the proceedings of committee meetings and hearings. Rules for committees are uniform in 37 states, but not in North Carolina. As a result, committee chairpersons have great power to shuffle agendas and either rush or delay legislation.

The procedures of committees and hearings reflect the poor organization of the N.C. legislature. Hearings are poorly advertised to the public and rarely do committee leaders solicit testimony from those likely to be concerned or affected by the legislation. In fact, hearings in the N.C. General Assembly are relatively hasty. Usually two days notice is given. California, which was ranked first in the national study, requires four days notice in each chamber.

The ineffective committee system is compounded by a lack of professional staff for research. Moreover, little effort is made to move legislation along by a schedule. As a result, much of a session's legislation is either ramrodded or sidetracked by hysterical committee action in the rushed final weeks of the legislature. Only a small and disciplined core of the legislative leadership is aware of and in control of the activity of the final weeks, and most members of the General

Assembly accept their directives blindly. Shouldn't the people of North Carolina be benefiting from the proper input of all our elected legislators?

If a bill survives the disorganized committee process, the proposal is subject to floor debate and vote. North Carolina is one of only 14 states which fail to require at least one roll-call vote on each item of legislation. The crucial vote on a bill may never be recorded. This is especially true in the closing weeks of the General Assembly when adjournment fever sweeps through the legislative body.

Procedural reform in our legislature is badly needed to assure accountability and efficiency in future sessions of the N.C. General Assembly. Replacement of many members and leaders would also be an improvement, for the 1977 legislature failed miserably.

The product is only as good as the craftsmen and their method. North Carolina deserves new legislative methods and craftsmen in 1979.

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You may be liable for aid given after injury

Editor's Note: This advice was prepared by the Student Legal Services which maintains an office in Suite C of the Carolina Union. UNC students have prepaid for this service and may obtain advice at no additional charge.

Common law generally does not place responsibilities on you to aid an injured individual unless you yourself have caused his or her injury. Where, however, you choose to give aid, common law requires that you do so carefully and responsibly. Regardless of your good intentions, if you negligently aggravate existing injuries or cause new ones, you may be liable, and you can be sued. Medical doctors are not covered by this rule.

Statutory law in North Carolina limits this broad rule. If you are giving aid to a person injured in an automobile accident on a street or highway, you will not be liable for further injury resulting from your acts unless they constitute "wanton conduct" or intentional wrongdoing. Note, however, that this statute does not cover any situations except those following motor-vehicle accidents or occurring on private property.

ADVICE FOR THE DAY: 1) In an emergency, seek trained medical help as soon as possible. 2) If you are in an accident, do those things you feel are reasonable to help the injured.

