

# The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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## Education starts before college

Although UNC is often listed among the premier public universities, North Carolina high schools have long been a different story. When the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for 1987 were recently published, North Carolina students scored 49th among the 50 states — only South Carolina students fared worse.

Abysmal showings on standardized tests are nothing new for North Carolina's system of public education. In 1986, the state also ranked next to last. Despite the fact that standardized tests are only one barometer of educational progress, they still provide useful insight into student performance.

In North Carolina's case, the scores reveal a public education system in need of much improvement. Nevertheless, the state is beginning to see payoffs from its growing commitment to students. In addition to slight increases in SAT scores during the 1980s, state students also now score above average on the California Achievement Test, an annual exam that measures student performance in primary and middle schools.

The General Assembly recently affirmed the commitment to improve by funding the third and fourth years of the Basic Education Plan — an eight-year effort to give all public

### board opinion

students an equal education. The plan will eventually boost school spending by \$800 million a year and allow all school systems in the state to hire more teachers and workers, offer more courses and reduce class sizes.

To improve higher education, the Board of Governors will impose higher admissions standards for the entire system in 1990. Although UNC-Chapel Hill requires three math units and two years of the same foreign language for admission, the system's minimum requirements of only two years of math and no foreign languages will not change.

By failing to study a foreign language, many high school students miss an opportunity to gain the perspective of another culture's speech. By studying only two years of math, many students miss a chance to develop vital analytical skills.

While admissions standards can continue to vary greatly within the system, each school should require four years of English, three math, two history and two years of the same foreign language.

Without these improvements, the UNC system will continually be forced to compensate for educational shortcomings. As freshman classes are poorly prepared to meet the demands of a college curriculum, higher education is relegated to something less than its name would imply.

## When classes call, just say no

Now is the time to bring a subject out into the open which until now has only been discussed in hushed tones. There are some students, the renegades, the outcasts, who indulge in a dubious activity known in technical circles as "habitual disregard and evasion of participatory academic sessions." Better known, to the initiated, as "blowing off class."

These pathological idlers are misunderstood — their absences are not a matter of choice, but of forces beyond their control. A "Family Feud" style survey of their reasons is in order:

- **Hangover.** After a night spent in the clutches of Pepe Lopez, no student can be expected to sit through a morning class with that South American revolutionary chewing on his neurons. Not to mention his tongue, which tastes as if he's been licking the salt off the windshield all night.

- **Weather.** A Carolina-blue sky, the smell of popcorn in the breeze, sunbeams dancing on the bricks — there's nothing to be done but have a good long Pit-sit. True students of human nature are inevitably drawn to those steps, where overheard dialogue teaches more about human interaction than any sociology class. Listen . . . "Y'all are so tan, I hate you! Bye! Call me!" "What a babe, huh?" "Yeah, man."

- **Vanity.** A junior stands in the

doorway of his economics class, looking around at his fellow students. Two minutes before class, and already their eyes are glazed, their jaws slack and drooling. He knows that if he sits down, for 75 minutes he, too, will look like them. A moment's hesitation, then he heads for Lenoir and pizza.

- **Stress.** Not necessarily academic. Personal stress is defined as the body's repression of the mind's desire to choke the living hell out of some idiot who really deserves it. Hands shaking, stomach knotting, brain strangling . . . Sometimes it's best just to draw the shades and listen to Windham Hill albums.

- **Protest.** Many people cannot stand to be in a roomful of silent and timid students, where the teacher's questions bounce off averted eyes and become rhetorical. To protest student apathy, some students boycott such classes.

- **Sickness.** Yeah, right. Concerned friends and relatives of truant students must realize that this habit is not the student's fault — it is a disease. For some, the problem is like chicken pox; for others, leprosy. With proper counseling and a little compassion, perhaps one day even the most plague-ridden student will be able to fight the temptation to cut class, and, in the end, just say no. — **Brian McCuskey**

### The Daily Tar Heel

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Printing: The Chapel Hill Newspaper

## Readers' Forum

# Campus racism takes many faces

Peter Rogers

Guest Writer

Incidents of racism and bureaucratic apathy do not suddenly rise out of a vacuum. Rather, they are products of their environment and are often only the most visible examples of underlying attitudes and practices. This is very much the case in the confrontation between 14 officers of the University police and the University administration, as represented by Security Services Director Robert Sherman's and Chief Charles Mauer's reorganization plan and the University Personnel Department's grievance procedure. In this reorganization, which created 12 new positions ranging from major to sergeant, the 14 officers were passed over for promotion, despite their seniority and experience, and personal relationships seem to have been the primary criteria for advancement.

What is at work in this, and similar situations, is not the legalized segregation of the Jim Crow era or the vicious racism of the Klan and other hate groups. Instead, it is a combination of the subtle racism that pervades our economy, society and political system and of the lack of sensitivity and accountability often displayed by University authorities.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s fought and defeated some of the most obnoxious aspects of racism in this country, those laws and institutions whose sole function was the subordination of blacks and other minorities. Today what we face, and must fight, is our inheritance of past injustices and their present-day manifestations in society. Any casual

observer wandering about our campus would notice this immediately. Blacks dominate in the maintenance and service positions that make UNC a working, physical entity. As one moves up the scale of pay and "responsibility," fewer and fewer blacks are represented. At the top is the Board of Trustees, where we find one black out of 13 members, and he, William Darity, felt sufficiently alienated from his fellows to consider resignation earlier this year.

Given such a reality, what is surprising is not the current University police controversy, but the general absence of similar protests. It would probably be too much to accuse Sherman and Mauer of overt racism, but their casual drafting of such a plan perpetuating an unjust status quo is just as revealing. The villain here is the unconscious classification of people by race and a lack of awareness that this process occurs. Since we have come from a racist past, it is only to be expected that we continue to confront a racist present.

The second feature of this affair, the sluggish and unresponsive behavior of the University grievance procedure, should provide an institutional awareness of problems such as discrimination. Instead, what we find here is a desire to paper over problems, or worse, engage in confrontation with those who persist in asserting

their rights. Long before this summer's reorganization, complaints had reached the personnel department concerning problems within the University police. When a crisis finally did erupt the personnel department delayed its hearing on the matter and, in the end, offered only a cosmetic solution. The officers filing grievances were not paid for the time they contributed to the investigation, while others consulted at the grievance hearings were. Those officers who rejected the personnel department's recommendations have been urged by University authorities not to proceed any further, and in frustration some are now turning to legal action.

For a university that aspires to be a beacon of truth, justice and tolerance, this is a tragedy. The existence of procedures on paper and lofty, but often empty, statements is not enough. What is required is accountability, and since this does not seem to be forthcoming from the institutions of the University, it must come from without. This is why concerned members of the campus community must scrutinize and often press the University, to prevent it from following the practices of the past when handling the problems of the present.

Today, at 11:50 a.m., there will be a rally in the Pit in support of the 14 officers, followed by a march to the University police station at 12:30 p.m.

Peter Rogers is a senior international studies major from Chapel Hill.

## Speed limit saves lives

To the editor:

This is an open letter to all those who commute to and from work or classes via Airport Road. I share that road with you at certain times of the day and want to make an urgent request of you for my own safety. Please observe the speed limit. The speed limit is 35 mph from Rosemary Street out to Estes Drive and 45 mph from there out. Many people exceed these limits by 10 mph or more. This suggests to me that they do not care about the lives or welfare of anyone else on the road.

We, the citizens (through our elected officials and hired staff), established those speed limits to protect the public safety and welfare. If the limits are inappropriate, we may change them through the same means. Meanwhile, we are obligated to obey them.

Drivers exceeding the speed limit endanger those who are not by following too close (in the vain hope, I suppose, of egging them to go faster) and by making it very hazardous to merge into an adjacent lane. The speeding driver severely impairs his ability to avoid accidents, and also that of other drivers. I have seen a child dart out into Airport Road and almost get killed. Do you want to be the driver responsible for a child's death? You may not care about your own life or the lives of others, but the law requires you to respect my right to live and to protect the lives of my loved ones.

Besides creating hazards, your speeding gains you nothing. While driving at the speed limit, I usually catch up with the speeders at a stop light or where the road merges into



two lanes and traffic slows down. Try it; you will find you get there just as soon traveling at the speed limit. And you are more likely to get there.

ALBERT HARDY  
Systems Programmer  
Administrative Data  
Processing

## Hooray for free press

To the editor:

Three cheers for the free press! This wonderful little provision in our Constitution allows me to print as many Edgar "Bolt" Upright cartoons as I please, and allows people like Lisa Jacobs to write just as many letters demanding them to be burned ("Rape cartoon is degrading," Oct. 1). Isn't this great? But alas, a few things need to be clarified.

Jacobs did indeed phone me at my place of employment and I tried, with little success, to

explain why I had no qualms about running the said "degrading" cartoon. I'll try again here. Perhaps this time I'll be listened to.

The cartoon, entitled "Bored," presents a world created by Upright. In this world, there lives a man, "Bad Otto," who likes to fantasize about women. The last time I checked, thinking was not a crime. Furthermore, I don't think this scene advocates rape. Bad Otto is, after all, bad.

As Jacobs reports, I did in fact say that rape is a reality. There happen to be people in this world who think about rape. And just because Upright presents one of these people in his cartoons, in my newspaper, is no reflection on his views of rape or mine.

It's the same old story. Two years ago, DTH editors ran the "God is dead" quote by Nietzsche, and suddenly were called secular scum. Last year, a cartoonist who portrayed two

administration officials who were ignorant about racial problems was declared a racist.

A few words about "underground" cartoons: In the '60s, this genre sprung up, and was fueled by cartoonists who refused to censor "taboo" subjects such as sex and drugs (eek!). Unfortunately, there are still the Lisa Jacobs out there who aren't ready for this kind of openness and awareness.

Like I said, this is one helluva country we live in, huh? Here in the good ol' U.S. of A, we Americans aren't forced to do anything! And that's why I would advise Jacobs never to pick up "I.E." — The Cartoon Newspaper — again.

One more thing. I would love to hear anyone's view on this subject. However, please don't call me at work. Try 929-1108, or write P.O. Box 2598, Suite 138, Chapel Hill, 27515.

ADAM COHEN  
Chapel Hill

# Man hath no vanity like license plates

Chris Chapman

Guest Writer

Fall is upon us now, which in addition to changing leaves, shorter days and other such givens, means the "nation's automakers" — as they are invariably described in the media — are releasing their 1988 models. Early returns indicate that more and more cars will take the aerodynamic styling popularized by the Ford Taurus. "Aerodynamic styling" is synonymous with four-wheeled jelly bean.

Cars have always fascinated me. Indeed, the first word I learned to spell was "Ford" because my mother drove a gas-guzzling Ford station wagon. It was the kind with fake wood on the sides, a true family truckster, a sort of motorized Motel 6 for long interstate trips to visit grandparents. But the point of today's diatribe is not monolithic station wagons long rusted out, but rather, on a physically insignificant aspect of automobiles: the vanity license plate.

The vanity license plate is a relatively new feature in automotive history. It serves as a state-sanctioned brand to distinguish a car owner from the motorized herd. Vanity license plates identify motorists in a variety of ways.

Some drivers use them as a form of occupational advertising. This is usually limited to successful professionals who drive expensive cars. A friend of mine in Philadelphia knows a wealthy plastic surgeon whose Rolls Royce reads "DR.

NOSE." Oftentimes walking to class, I see a black Mercedes convertible with the license tag "CRE8MBAS" in the parking lot behind the business school.

Other times, vanity tags are used merely to announce the driver's name. The plates are often monograms, such as "CLW." These plates are used to commemorate some romantic attachment. Married couples will get plates that combine their initials, like "CLW-KDW." Maybe it's just me, but proclaiming your love on a license plate seems kind of cheesy. Wouldn't a Whitman's Sampler be easier?

Some vanity plates are used to remind other motorists of just what car they're following. Licenses like "BIMMER" or "560 SL" clue in the uninformed driver that he is following an expensive bit of machinery. Other drivers combine their initials with the cars model as in "KTK-RX7." Still others emphasize particular attributes of their cars, as in "HOT Z," which I saw adorning a fire-red Camaro.

Other license plates signify team affiliations. Michael Jordan's "UNC-23" would fall into this category, as would "HEELS-3" currently parked in the Granville lot. Some license plates proclaim Tar Heel

allegiance, often by combining the drivers initials with UNC, as in "JDK-UNC." This affectation is not limited to Carolina. In Kansas City this summer, I came out of a store into the parking lot to find a Honda with a Duke window sticker bearing the license plate "BLUDEVIL."

Most vanity license plates are fairly silly, but there are some whimsical ones. In the Granville parking lot one can find a Volkswagen Beetle tagged "MORNIN'," which is complemented a couple of rows away by a car with the tag "EVENIN'." Two of my favorite tags were on a pair of Porsche 911s. One read "4MYFUN." The other read "I'M QUIK," which is a silly plate, but at the time I saw him he was being ticketed for speeding. Not quick enough, I guess.

Of course, North Carolina drivers need not limit their self-expression to the back license plate. Because the state only requires one tag, drivers have the whole front plate. This has led to calamities like the air-brushed multi-colored beach scene, often found with labels like "Myrtle Beach Days," with "Days" spelled D-A-Z-E. How clever.

Chris Chapman is a junior economics/history major from Overland Park, Kan. His license plate reads JO-C57819 which means "Johnson County, Kan., registration number C-57819."