

# The Daily Tar Heel

96th year of editorial freedom

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## Students shaping the BCC

*Editor's note: The student voice at UNC often seems swallowed up by the immense University bureaucracy. Some charge students with apathy and short-sightedness; others accuse administrators of merely paying lip service to the concept of student involvement. Who's to blame?*

This is the first of a seven-part editorial series which will attempt to answer this question and others like it. The first six editorials will examine a specific University decision and evaluate how effective and appropriate student involvement was or has been in each. The final editorial will evaluate various methods of involvement and the strengths and weaknesses of the student voice.

In 1981, the UNC system signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, officially committing UNC to increasing minority enrollment to 10.6 percent of the student body by 1986. Today, nearly three years after the passing of the federally-imposed deadline, the University's minority enrollment of about 8 percent still falls short of that goal.

When they signed the agreement, many administrators probably didn't even know how to begin to make UNC more attractive to minorities. The obvious answer, both then and now, is to seek the help of minority students: What do they like about the University? What do they dislike? What improvements should be made?

The questions have been asked, but some students don't think administrators have heeded the answers. A case in point has been the controversy over the development of the Black Cultural Center.

### The BCC's birth

In the early 1980s, students who had seen impressive cultural centers at Purdue and the University of Massachusetts began to talk about establishing a cultural center for blacks here. According to Margo Crawford, the first director of the University's Black Cultural Center, Black Student Movement leaders brought the idea to the administration. In her words: "The BCC is the baby of the BSM."

The first official meeting on the BCC came in 1984. At the invitation of Donald Boulton, vice chancellor and dean of student affairs, a group of 10 students, two alumni and seven administrators, faculty or staff met to discuss the possibility of establishing a center.

This committee agreed to serve as a BCC planning committee. The student members made valuable contributions during these early planning stages, helping to organize an advisory board and to draft a statement of the center's mission and a job description for its director.

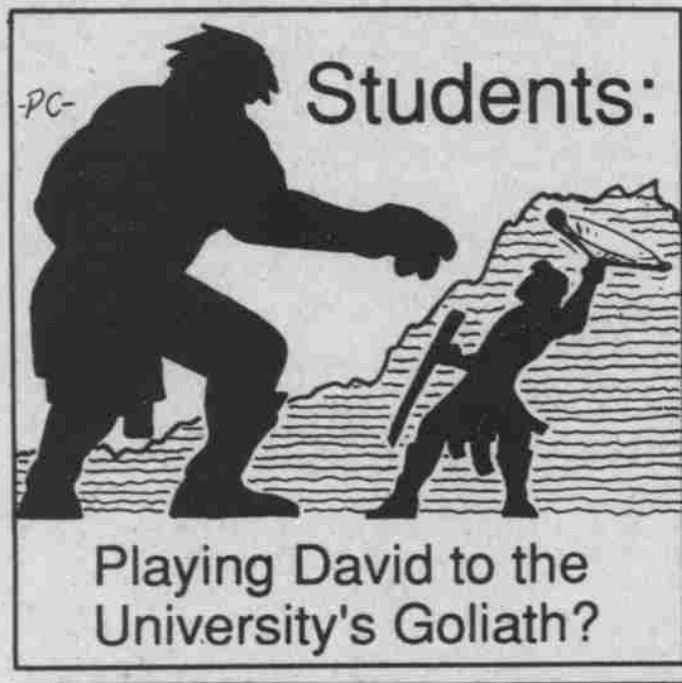
### Deteriorating relations

Despite this promising beginning, relations between students and administrators deteriorated.

Some of this dissatisfaction can be attributed to miscommunication. Students didn't understand why the center was progressing so slowly. Administrators, unappreciative of the students' sense of urgency, probably saw their impatience as unnecessary.

In early 1988, the BSM noted that the limited space the University had allocated to the center in the Student Union was inadequate. The glass-walled room is far too small and is often filled with noise from the many other activities in the Union.

When the temporary space in the Union was chosen, some students were excited over the central location and the speed with which a center was being established. But suspicion grew when months went by and no permanent site was proposed. Tonya Blanks, BSM vice president, said doubts about the administration's sincerity arose from the ambiguous nature of the Union space. Blanks and others wondered what they had agreed to — was the Union space permanent? Was this it? They wondered if the center



had been placed on the University's back burner — for good.

"If students don't do something pretty quickly, then it could be a decade before we see a real BCC on the campus of this university," BSM President Kenneth Perry told students at an Oct. 5 meeting. At that time, the BSM unanimously passed a resolution setting deadlines for the approval of a permanent BCC location and the beginning of construction. Many students at the meeting called for public protests and claimed that working through University channels had not been effective, but BSM officers rejected the more radical proposals.

When informed of the student-set deadlines, administrators cautioned against rushing the project. But at an Oct. 27 meeting of the planning committee, students and officials seemed optimistic. Everyone agreed: The BSM's deadlines could be met.

### Lack of communication

The Oct. 27 meeting was successful because the supposedly warring factions began to communicate. As Boulton said, "We finally got a chance for all of us to sit down and talk about what we've done and where we're going."

Most administrators say they are open to meeting with students. But when questions arise, administrators should go a step further, tracking down student representatives and presenting the University's position to them. At the same time, students should confront the administration with their doubts before they resort to making headlines with resolutions, threats and accusations.

Boulton said he has never been invited to a BSM meeting at which the BCC was discussed, although he said he has asked for such invitations. The next time the BSM meets to discuss the center, members should consider inviting administrators. Of course, as Blanks observed, all BSM meetings are publicized and open to all students. But it's unrealistic to expect administrators to attend every BSM meeting, just in case the BCC might be discussed.

### Cautious optimism

With students and administrators back on the same wavelength, the future of the BCC looks bright. On Dec. 9, the BCC's Facilities Planning Committee will present its suggestions to the Board of Trustees.

Of course, the fact that a BCC has been established at all demonstrates that administrators and students are communicating.

Already, students can point proudly to their active involvement in the day-to-day operations of the center. They have handled much of the programming, helped to select books for the library and prints for the walls and made final decisions on the center's artist-in-residence program.

Unlike issues such as divesting funds or allocating parking, when it comes to the BCC, all sides stand to gain: students from the cultural education and sense of identity the center will provide, administrators from the increased minority enrollment the center could attract. In this rare case, everyone could walk away pleased with each other as well as the end result.

## Nothing like Thanksgiving break at home

Did it turn out to be what you expected? Was it one big, Dionysian orgy of drunken debauchery? Wasn't for me, either. Yet we always seem to come out of Thanksgiving Break, if not wiser, rounder.

The Thanksgiving Holiday didn't start on Thursday; it started on Wednesday. That's not, of course, when we slaughter, consume and digest millions of nature-loving fowl. No, Wednesday is when every stupid person with a driver's license is encouraged to drive on the interstates. Although this national tradition is never publicized, every idiot with a car seems to hear about it. I'm from North Carolina, so I can say with all honesty that this state has more per capita stupid persons licensed by the Department of Motor Vehicles than any other south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

It just so happens that Thanksgiving at my house is spent with my mom's side of the family. They're from Graham, N.C. (for people from Charlotte without ties to this budding hamlet, Graham is on the Wrightsville Beach side of the state). It's all very traditional and American. The women-folk take to the kitchen and the men to the sofas and chairs. While the women (or, as my Uncle Jim puts it, the "grown-up girls") perform their culinary magic, the men scream at the basketball and football games on the TV and offer terribly insightful suggestions to the screen which never seem to occur to the actual coaches.

At the Thanksgiving meal, the adults sit at one end of the hierarchical table, with kids on the other end. Married adults have their spouses seated next to them (this year, however, my cousin and his wife had a baby and all three were thrown to the kids' end of the table). I'm seated in a great position beside the "eight and under" age group. I have a choice between listening to rational exchanges of ideas ("You are!" "No, you are!") or watching babies throw themselves into their stuffing and yams.

By the end of the meal, the entire table's conversation has usually degenerated into feuding between the new generation of "liberal, freeloading youth" and the

### Stuart Hathaway I Spy

previous generation of "fat, lazy capitalists."

The nights over the break are times to catch up with old high school chums. It must be particularly fun for freshmen who return home as College Students. Who can forget going out to a party that first break and responding to the question *When is your curfew?* with the infinitely mature *Whenever?* Stud.

We inevitably learn stuff we never knew about some of these old pals. And it just gets weirder as we get older. Returning from our freshman year, it goes something like "s/he did that with him/her while still going out with Jane/John?!" This past break, I was told that one of my best friends in high school had a bad experience with LSD. You know those signs in restaurants that say OPEN on one side and CLOSED on the other? Well, while he was tripping on acid, my friend, on his way out of this pizza place, saw the reverse side of an OPEN sign. Reading it CLOSED, he seems to have interpreted this to mean that the world outside Tony's Pizza Palace was closed. He went to the restroom to think about it and didn't come out. I dread learning over some future break that what I thought was my high school was actually an elaborate screen by the CIA to relocate the mutant children Elvis had with space aliens.

If you stopped to think about it (the opportunities abounded on I-85 Wednesday and Sunday), this whole Thanksgiving thing is pretty bogus to begin with. My first big introduction to the Thanksgiving message was in first grade when I played the part of Squanto in a play about Thanksgiving. You remember Squanto. He was the Native American representative of all Native Americans welcoming us to the "New" World. This was a big part, mind you. Lots of pressure. Of course, it was quite a blow when I found out the guy

was actually kidnapped when he was 14 by English sailors and sold in Spain. So when he returned to the "New" World, Squanto was able to tell our ancestors in New England before they starved to death: how to use fish heads as fertilizer for corn (you learned that in film strips).

And what, after all, is this "we" and "us" stuff anyway? A bunch of radical religious fanatics who couldn't hack it in England? When they got over here they certainly didn't leave much room at the table for the Native Americans they kept pushing West, or the blacks they brought over for centuries as slaves. So is a day when Americans celebrate the beginning of the exploitation and exclusion of minorities really something to gorge ourselves over?

And while we're on the subject, why is it that Thanksgiving break, one with so much potential, is placed so close to Christmas? Was it put there for students to cram an entire semester's work into a single four-day period? A noble gesture, but doomed to failure. I think Thanksgiving, if we're going to have it, should be in either February or April, when everyone needs a good 30-pound turkey. And speaking of poultry, if Dan Quayle was elected vice president of the United States, couldn't George Bush have run with a Chesterfield couch and still won? And wouldn't it be a safer world if he had?

When all is said and done, Thanksgiving Break is really an excursion into the past; a glimpse of what once was a more carefree life. Why, with Thanksgiving break the way it is, the University probably realized the temptation we have to stay at home, eat well and wear clean underwear. To keep us from getting used to such a lifestyle, the University keeps our breaks far apart from each other, and thus, in anticipation of the Christmas holidays, doesn't end our exam period until two days before Christmas Eve.

Stuart Hathaway is a junior political science and history major from Charlotte.

## Readers' Forum

### Library column witty

To the editor:

It would be less than decent of me not to write to thank Brian McCuskey for his column on the library ("The ghosts of authors past in Davis Library," Nov. 15), especially after thrashing him for his earlier stereotyping of librarians. I found the piece witty and imaginative, as always. I appreciate him taking the opportunity to educate the campus about some of the problems facing librarians and librarians these days. The chronic lack of staff to perform essential tasks and the soaring cost of library materials are only two of many daily worries. Librarians across the country are working together to lessen the impact of these problems on our patrons. We are forging cooperative collecting agreements and lobbying publishers to eliminate their unfair pricing procedures. (Did you know, for example, that many British publishers have three subscription rates for their journals: one for British libraries, a higher one for Continental libraries and the highest for American libraries?)

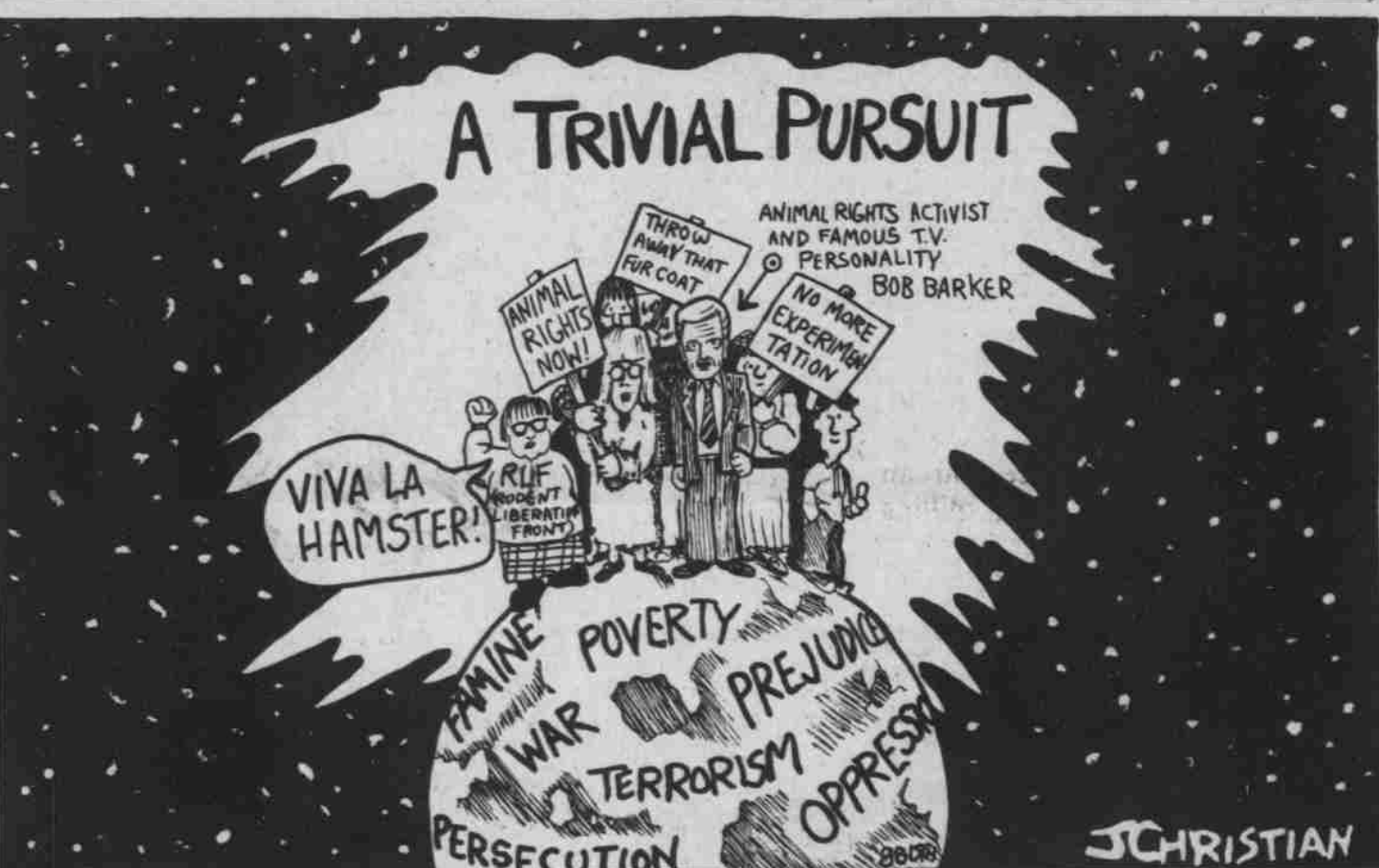
I know McCuskey was only teasing about keeping his books until they were overdue, but just in case Mr. Eliot shows up, I still have a few questions about "Four Quartets" left over from my own days as an English major, so if McCuskey would give me a call . . .

WILLY OWEN  
Davis Library

### Police roundup humorous

To the editor:

We have just finished reading the Chapel Hill Police Roundup in the Nov. 8 edition of the DTH, and we would like to thank you for providing us with a good laugh. We especially enjoyed the one in which some-



one reported a strange substance on the sidewalk at Eckerd Drugs. Thank goodness it was only root beer and no further action had to be taken. Imagine how horrified everyone would have been if the substance had not been reported, and it went unnoticed. What a mess we would have had on our hands! Thanks for the comic relief.

ELIF ERGINER  
Freshman Psychology

AMY NORMAN  
Freshman Accounting

### But some things aren't funny

To the editor:

The first item in the Nov. 15 Campus Police Roundup reported that someone visiting Alderman Residence Hall Sunday was believed to be "an escapee from Camp Butler, a mental asylum." The Nov. 17 Roundup began with a similar report, this time saying a visitor at Alderman was eventually "turned over to authorities from a mental institution at

Camp Butler." Although the second report at least replaced the archaic term "asylum" with "institution," both contained inaccurate information.

Camp Butler was an army installation built in 1942 as a wartime hospital. After the war was over, it was converted into a psychiatric facility that today houses 758 beds and serves a population of approximately 1.5 million people located in 16 counties in the north central region of North Carolina. The correct name for this facility is John Umstead Hospital and has been for quite some time.

Although many older adults still refer to the hospital as Camp Butler, the DTH staff should know better, and it should try to take a more professional approach in reporting serious news items such as police reports. I have some words of comfort to offer readers who may be worried that an "escapee" might show up in their dorm room. The facility is located about 25 miles from Chapel Hill in the town of Butler. After working as a volunteer at John Umstead Hospital for the past few months, I have yet to see any "escapee" wandering

around the town, down I-85 or on the surrounding grounds. Even if a patient were determined enough to reach out campus, there is little to be afraid of. After all, people affected by mental illness are everywhere, not just in facilities such as John Umstead Hospital. And fear is no answer.

PAM EMERSON  
Senior  
Journalism/psychology

■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.

■ Students should include name, year in school, major, phone number and home town.

■ For ease of editing, all letters must be typed and double-spaced.

■ All letters must be signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter.

## Only voting gives the right to complain

To the editor:

Now that the elections are over, I have had time to reflect on various people's comments; what concerns me most is that people with such adamant opinions have never been associated with politics and are, generally, not willing to do anything about their complaints. I am willing to listen to people's complaints about the election process. However, I can not tolerate people's complaints if they did not take the time to vote. A typical reaction to the candidates, for example, is "I don't like either one of them, so why vote." Granted, you may not like either presidential candidate, but don't you at least owe a vote to your state and local representatives? Not liking a candidate is no excuse not to vote.

Another common reaction that I often hear is, "Politics are all bull. I'm tired of the negative advertisements, media coverage and the lack of issue discussion."

Personally, I can't stand it when people jump on the bandwagon and respond to politics in this fashion. If people truly cared enough, they would research a candidate more closely and discover the issues for themselves. Granted, the media can distort images and negative advertisements are bad, but it is not an excuse to hate a candidate or not to vote.

I would also like to take this time to respond to Steve Tepper's (senior class president) comment on the election. He said, "Politicians today give no inspiration for a young person who might be interested in going into politics." Should it be the priority of a politician to inspire the young to enter the political arena, or should the politician's priority be the welfare of its constituents? Possibly, a politician should both encourage the young and tend to his constituents. Regardless, Tepper, if he is interested in politics, should move on his own initiative and seek a summer intern-

ship in Washington, D.C.

I do not claim to have any worldly knowledge of politics. In fact, I do not even seek any type of career in politics. However, I have interned in Washington, D.C. and spent my summer working on a presidential campaign. I am not saying that students need to do all this work before they express their opinions. What I am saying is that students should vote and research the issues for themselves without the media's influence; otherwise, students have no right to complain. If negative advertising turns you off, it may help to write some type of letter. Finally, if your opinions are so strong, I suggest you try to get involved, at least for a summer, before you complain.

BILLY JOHNSTON  
Junior  
Economics