

# The Daily Tar Heel

98th year of editorial freedom

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## Creating a center for the mind

In a time when budget cutbacks seem to affect every academic niche at UNC, it's refreshing to learn about an academic center that will keep the pursuit of knowledge on this campus alive and kicking. The Center for Undergraduate Excellence, scheduled to move into Graham Memorial, will create this educational atmosphere in which every student is welcome, regardless of academic standing.

Approved in February by the chancellor, the center will be financed solely through private donations. The greatest obstacle, however, will be in choosing which programs will be allotted space in this campus academic mecca.

The center is slated to house the honors program, seminar rooms and auditoriums for speakers and debates. But Graham Memorial is not a small building, and Robert Allen, General College associate dean, has asked students for their suggestions.

According to George Lensing, chairman of the committee that will decide the center's content, this center should attract any student interested in knowledge. Other than the honors program, which requires a minimum GPA for entry, the committee wants to appeal to a wide range of students. An elite, intellectual hangout is not the intent of the center.

Several campus programs would fit perfectly into this mold. For example, tutoring programs are scattered all over the

campus — the Union, campus buildings, people's homes. Combining these services into one area would make finding such services immensely easier for students otherwise embarrassed to get academic help.

Centralizing the various leadership programs into the center seems another logical possibility. Programs such as the North Carolina Fellows or the Emerging Leaders, which cultivate students' leadership skills, may not seem academic in nature, but they are campus improvement services that the committee could consider.

a.p.l.e.s., the program that combines voluntarism and education, could find a home in the academic center. Because a.p.l.e.s. uses academics in its pursuits, it also could fit the center's objectives.

Although Study Abroad has office space, its facilities are small and its location is hidden. The academic center is a perfect place to centralize this heavily used office.

Quiet study lounges and carrels are a rarity on this campus. The center shouldn't be another library, but study facilities could serve the academically serious student.

Adding an academic center to UNC is an excellent idea. Making it useful to all students is an even better idea, and there are plenty of programs that could fit nicely into the center that would appeal to many students.

Long live academics.

## U.S.S.R. needs true democracy

All is quiet in the Soviet Union.

The tanks have rumbled out of Moscow, the mobs of Russian civilians have returned to their homes and President Mikhail Gorbachev has regained his shaky control over the crumbling federation of republics.

Of course, no one is suggesting Gorbachev's problems are over. Far from it: There is the matter of feeding the hundreds of millions of Soviets this winter. There is the issue of a whole new relationship to be forged with the president of the Russian republic, Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev certainly does have his hands full. But for now, the coup has failed, and people in the U.S.S.R. and around the world are breathing a sigh of relief.

Few people seem to be questioning the actions taken by Gorbachev since his return to power. He announced Saturday that he was resigning as secretary general of the communist party and that the central committee of that party should be dissolved. Many Soviets are even calling for the party to be banned from the country, and buildings around the U.S.S.R. that belong to the party are being taken over by local governments. Many are calling the communist party's demise "a triumph of democracy."

But this triumph may be a wolf in sheep's clothing. After all, very few people would point to the McCarthy era of America's past as the pinnacle of democracy in this country. When Sen. Joe McCarthy decided a little over 40 years ago that he would rid the United States of communist plotters, he embarked on something akin to a witch hunt. With the sentiment of the nation behind him, McCarthy sought to imprison people who merely professed a belief in communist ideals.

Admittedly, the situation in the Soviet Union is far different from that of the United States in the mid-twentieth century. The communist party never dominated the

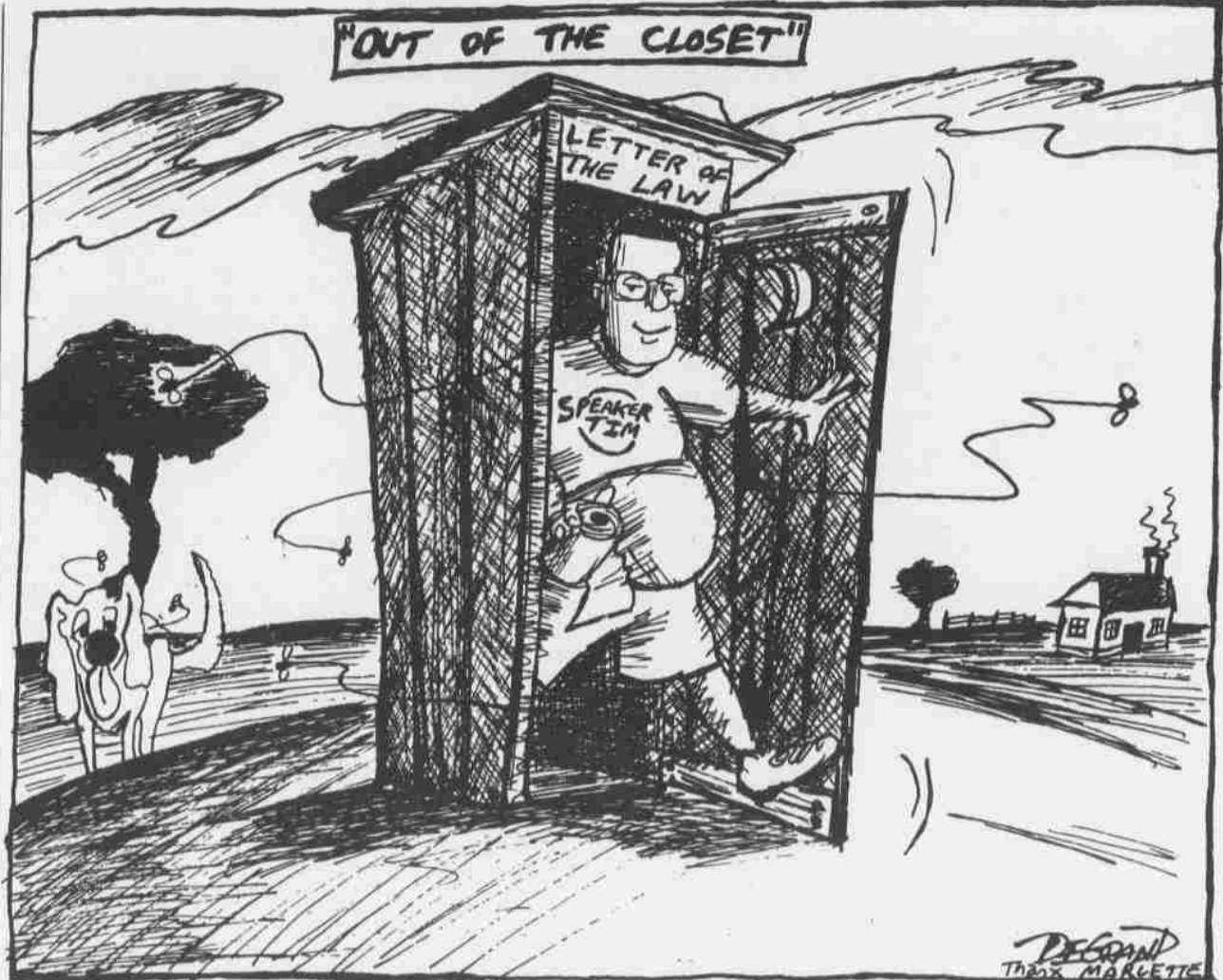
workplace here. Nor did it ever receive the support of mainstream politicians or the military. But a comparison is still valid.

Americans feared the "evil" communists in the 1940s and 1950s. The iron curtain was just descending in a country that had once been our ally, and very few people knew what to expect from this nation that also possessed the weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb. Not many people stood in the way of McCarthy's crusade to cleanse the United States of those "conniving reds."

And if Americans feared communists then, it's easy to imagine what the Soviets are feeling now. After all, they have suffered years of a Big Brother system that has left them poor and hungry. They have endured a coup attempt that could have plunged the nation into civil war. They have a right to be angry and scared.

But if they truly want democracy, the Soviets must temper their anger and fear with respect for the right of people to express their belief in a political ideal. Granted, communism, as it was practiced in the U.S.S.R., failed miserably. And it's hard to believe that anyone would still feel allegiance to a party that has caused so much pain and hardship. But as evidenced by the recent coup attempt and the many upper-level bureaucrats who may now be out of a job, some people still have a great deal of respect for the system that Karl Marx predicted would someday rule the world. To tell them they can no longer operate as communists would be overkill.

Freedom of expression is essential in a democratic society. And although the communist party should not be allowed to have a monopoly, it would be equally sinful to banish it completely. All may be quiet in the Soviet Union now, but if that silence is to be filled with voices of freedom, those voices of freedom must ring true.



## Students still needed to take stand for education

Editor's note: Ruffin Hall is budget crisis coordinator for student government, executive branch.

The summertime has always presented the "powers that be" an excellent opportunity to make significant changes regarding students, and the summer of 1991 was no exception. In this case, the "powers that be" proved to be the elected officials of this state in the form of the N.C. General Assembly. By the adjournment in early August, our state legislature had completed a budget package that resulted in spending cuts of \$576.5 million and tax increases (such as tuition) of \$657.5 million to cover a \$1.2 billion shortfall. (The total state budget is about \$7.8 billion!) This state budget will dramatically affect the outlook for the coming year on this campus. An examination of the spending cuts, the tax increases and the results of the 1991 N.C. General Assembly is necessary to determine the future for students.

### The spending cuts

During the month of April 1991, legislators were charged by the leadership in the General Assembly to come up with about \$60 million in higher education cuts. The committees responded with a proposal of about \$59.9 million (with about \$17 million coming from UNC-CH). These cuts drastically reduced the number of class sections, increased class size, eliminated vacant positions and hurt graduate assistants. Student government asked this student body to fight back, and we did. A rally on the steps of the legislature on April 10 and an extremely successful letter-writing campaign pushed many legislators to favorably adjust where the cuts would hit.

However, this proved to be only the first round in what would be several rounds of cuts. An additional cut of about \$20 million from higher education across the state was necessary to balance the budget.

Yet the political pressure that had previously been applied with letters and phone calls proved effective, preventing the most vital areas for students from being touched. The main issue for most of the summer was not spending cuts, but the other side of the budget question — taxes.

### Ruffin Hall

### Legislative Roundup

#### Tax increases

North Carolina has a long history regarding the sales tax issue. Often viewed as a regressive revenue measure, our progressive state has relied on the sales tax to solve many budget problems. However, the \$1.2 billion shortfall was simply too large for spending cuts and even a sales tax to handle alone. Tuition at the publicly funded universities and colleges became one of many other alternatives.

Several legislators suggested increases up to 40 percent, both in and out of state. One legislator, Sen. T.L. "Fountain" Odom, D-Charlotte, pushed a bill to require state students to pay at least the same rate as charged within their home states. Rep. Joe Hege, a Davidson County Republican, authored a bill to increase in-state tuition to the regional average by 1993 and raise it each year after that. Gov. Jim Martin even included recommendations for tuition increases of 20 percent to 30 percent in a report outlining his solution to the budget crisis.

When the debate was over, student leaders and administrators managed to keep tuition to a reasonable increase — 20 percent in-state and 25 percent out-of-state. When compared with other tuition possibilities, this decision meant that students did well to receive only the increase that we did.

The major delay in billing for tuition came from the debate over other revenue increases — the sales tax increase by 1 percent, the increase on the excise tax on cigarettes from 2 cents to 5 cents, an increase in the corporate income tax from 7 percent to 7.5 percent and adjustments in the income tax rate. Overall, no revenue possibility was overlooked in solving the state budget crisis, and the increase in tuition was only one component of a set of tax increases.

#### The results for students

In a recent survey of 45 states and the District

of Columbia at the annual meeting of the State Legislators Conference, 33 states reflected legislative sessions marred by worker layoffs, slashed services and higher taxes. Federal deregulation, increased demand for services, a political refusal to raise taxes and the general economic recession have all contributed to the budget problems of many states.

North Carolina is not alone, yet the recent legislative session can be looked upon with some favor. As required by state law, the N.C. General Assembly had to balance the budget with a \$1.2 billion shortfall. The legislators did not adopt policies that would have ignored the issue or covered up the budget problems, as many states have been apt to do. Instead, the legislature chose to take considerable political risk by mixing taxes and cuts to relieve the state budget. As Speaker of the House Dan Blue stated: "What we have done is preserve the basic core institutions of this state. I think that this is a tremendous budget given the problems we have faced."

Unfortunately, education was forced to bear more than its fair share of the state's monetary difficulties. The economic, social and political future of this state will continue to decline if our state leadership does not prioritize education. "Preserving core institutions" does not insure the continued growth and creativity of the education resources this state currently contains. To continue the expansion of this state and its citizens, we must all participate in the process. Anyone who participated in phone calling or letter writing last spring has taken the first big step toward this goal.

The student campaign with the state legislature made a difference and can do so again. Anyone interested in insuring this educational excellence can get involved with the Budget Crisis Management Team up in student government, executive branch.

The academic integrity of UNC-Chapel Hill is being threatened by this state budget crisis. As members of this institution, we can all do something to continue our tradition of excellence.

Ruffin Hall is a senior political science major from Fayetteville.

## Junior transfer seeks meaningless UNC existence

### Jason Torchinsky

### Guest Columnist

The other day, not the one you're thinking of, but the other one, I was trying to impress this chick at the information desk in the Union by sneezing the tune of "Radar Love," when, after one particularly forceful sneeze riff, I slammed my head into the counter, sending my teeth spraying about me like a sudden hailstorm. I stumbled backwards, blinded by pain and blood and crashed into one of those empty glass display cases that seem to litter the floor. Just before I blacked out, I made a mental note to try to get this girl's phone number.

I did not waste my time in my coma-like sleep. I committed my mind to reflect on my plight, one shared by many others: the plight of a junior transfer student. I now submit the results of my feverish reflections, and I hope I am at least successful in informing the rest of the University population of what it is like to transfer into Chapel Hill, or, perhaps more likely, to reduce the amount of white space in this newspaper.

I am not certain who it was that first said "without change there is only death," but I would venture that whoever did say it was referring to water in a fish tank and not to academic institutions. I should know, as I have not only lost enough goldfish to feed an army but have also recently changed academic institutions.

I shall not bore you with the details of my personal situation and interpersonal relationship qualms that arise whenever a move such as mine is undertaken — that would prove too long and tedious and require the use of certain three-dimensional models that this newspaper is simply not equipped to reproduce; rather I will try to remove some of the mystery that surrounds the process of transferring.

There are some questions that arise that we can never hope to know the answer to, such as "Is there a supreme being?", "Has life any purpose?", "What flavor is a Frosty?" or "Where does wood come from?" And, until now, "What is the junior transfer orientation assembly like?" was on that list, at least for the purposes of this column. Well, to remove some mystery, here are the few things I recall about the assembly. The assembly began with some Carolina

choir singing a few songs I can't recall. I do remember that they possessed that same remarkable ability of all choirs to make any song, regardless of tune, or melody or whatever sound completely indistinguishable from any other song they sang. It's a remarkable feat to witness, and I still get misty-eyed when I look back upon it.

Then a small group of balding, elderly men took turns speaking. I believe that they were either deans of some sort or some manner of enchanted elves — the program was not clear. Anyway, their main topic of speech seemed to be heat. Granted, Memorial Hall was a bit warm, but from the way these men opened each of their speeches, one would think that entire rows of people were collapsing from heat stroke every few minutes. Every speech began with some apology that we had to remain sweltering or some bad pun about a "warm welcome" or just a blatant whine about the temperature.

I wonder how these men would have begun their speeches if Memorial Hall was air-conditioned. I suppose that instead of beginning a speech with something along the lines of "We hope you enjoy Carolina, if, God willing, you can persevere through this heat, as we all must do..." they would be forced to begin a speech with "This morning I was so terribly itchy, as no doubt many of us are..." or perhaps "Welcome to Carolina. I hope everyone with searing abdominal pains like mine soon finds relief..." I just don't know. Madness.

The orientation assembly did at least get me somewhat excited about attending Carolina and made me want to rush out and see all of those famous Chapel Hill sites, such as the Old Well, the stately Matherhorn and those fascinating Aztec pyramids. Another interesting perk about being a transfer is the inability to get classes you want. This type of frustration is rather new to me, as I used to have no problem getting the academic courses I wished. In fact,

even as a little kid, I always was able to get the best education. I was in one accelerated course that was so advanced that, thanks to it, I was only 7 when I turned 9. But now, nothing is open to me and, after much haggling with Caroline (with whom I'm now seriously involved) my schedule now consists of four shop classes.

At first, the problems of transferring to Carolina seemed insurmountable; but now, when I step back, gain some distance, some objectivity, some perspective, I realize that these problems are not insurmountable at all — they are merely impossible to solve, and I shall be condemned to play slave to them for the duration of my stay at this institute. So, as my mom told me before I left, with a little luck, a little confidence and a lot of determination, I should be able to carve myself out a miserable, meaningless existence in a hostile environment. All it takes is a little faith. You're right, Mom. I can do it! Solidarity!

Jason Torchinsky is a junior art history major from Greensboro.

### Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. We attempt to print as many letters to the editor as space permits.

Readers may respond to other letters in the Readers' Forum, to editorials or to articles. When responding to a piece that has been printed in the DTH, please include the date and headline of the article or letter in question.

When writing letters, please follow these additional guidelines:

- Letters should be limited to 400 words, although longer letters are accepted. However, the shorter the letter, the better chance it has of running.
- If you want your letter published, sign and date it. No more than two signatures.
- All letters must be typed and double spaced.
- Include your year in school, major, phone number and hometown.
- If you have a title that is relevant to your letter's subject, please include it.
- The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity.

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