

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

The Student Newspaper of Wake Forest University
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EDITORIALS

Honor system needs real change

It's no secret that the honor system does not receive universal support at the university. In fact, some argue that honor infractions are increasing in frequency.

The honor system of justice is in even worse shape. Students accused of violations often complain that they did not know their actions were wrong. They also say that punishments are often inconsistent. Professors worry that the all-student Honor Council, which is responsible for convicting and punishing students, is too lenient.

With so many people unhappy, it's good that a group of students has proposed the formation of a task force to find ways to improve the honor system. Several proposals of ways to improve the system have already surfaced. Unfortunately, most of them do not address the fundamental problems.

One suggestion, for example, is to place plaques reiterating the precepts of the honor system in every classroom. Another suggestion would require students to write a pledge of honor on tests and other assignments.

Both of these suggestions rely on the erroneous assumption that reminding students of the honor code will induce them to act honorably. The honor plaques are little more than an expensive but visible way to do nothing. And requiring students to make continual honor pledges will not deter infractions either.

The simple truth is that students already have promised to uphold the honor code by virtue of applying to the school. Except for the rare case of amnesia, it's not likely that students have forgotten their pledge to uphold the honor code.

Moreover, the honor system rests on the fundamental assumption

that, absent compelling evidence to the contrary, students should be trusted. Asking a student to continually reaffirm his honor pledge, or assuming he will forget it unless constantly reminded, undermines this system of trust. And if a student's initial pledge of honor cannot be trusted, how can any subsequent pledges be trusted?

In practice, the honor system already suffers from a lack of trust. Students are asked to bear the burden of honor without reaping many of its supposed rewards. For example, professors commonly ask students to show doctor's excuses when they miss class. Since some professors do not meet the reciprocal obligations of the honor system, it's not surprising that some students also fail.

Despite its shortcomings, the honor system can be improved. One solution would be to codify the honor code, detailing both what constitutes an infraction and what punishments are appropriate. This would rid the system of confusion and ambiguity and help to make punishments more consistent.

Faculty concerns also need to be addressed. Although any change that would take away student control over the system should be opposed, it does make sense to give the faculty a voice on the Honor Council. After all, faculty are affected by the decisions of the Honor Council as much as students.

Change is inevitable with such an unpopular honor system. Instead of focusing on ineffective cosmetic reforms, the task force should take the initiative and address the fundamental problems of the system. Otherwise, students risk losing whatever control they currently have over the system.

Is university now Wake Fortress?

Does the university need to build gates at every entrance to keep out the riffraff?

According to a plan being discussed by a committee on safety, that's exactly what is needed. Under the plan, a gatekeeper would record the license plate numbers of all cars driving onto campus after dark that do not have university parking stickers. The idea is that this would discourage criminal activity and make it easier to determine who these criminals are.

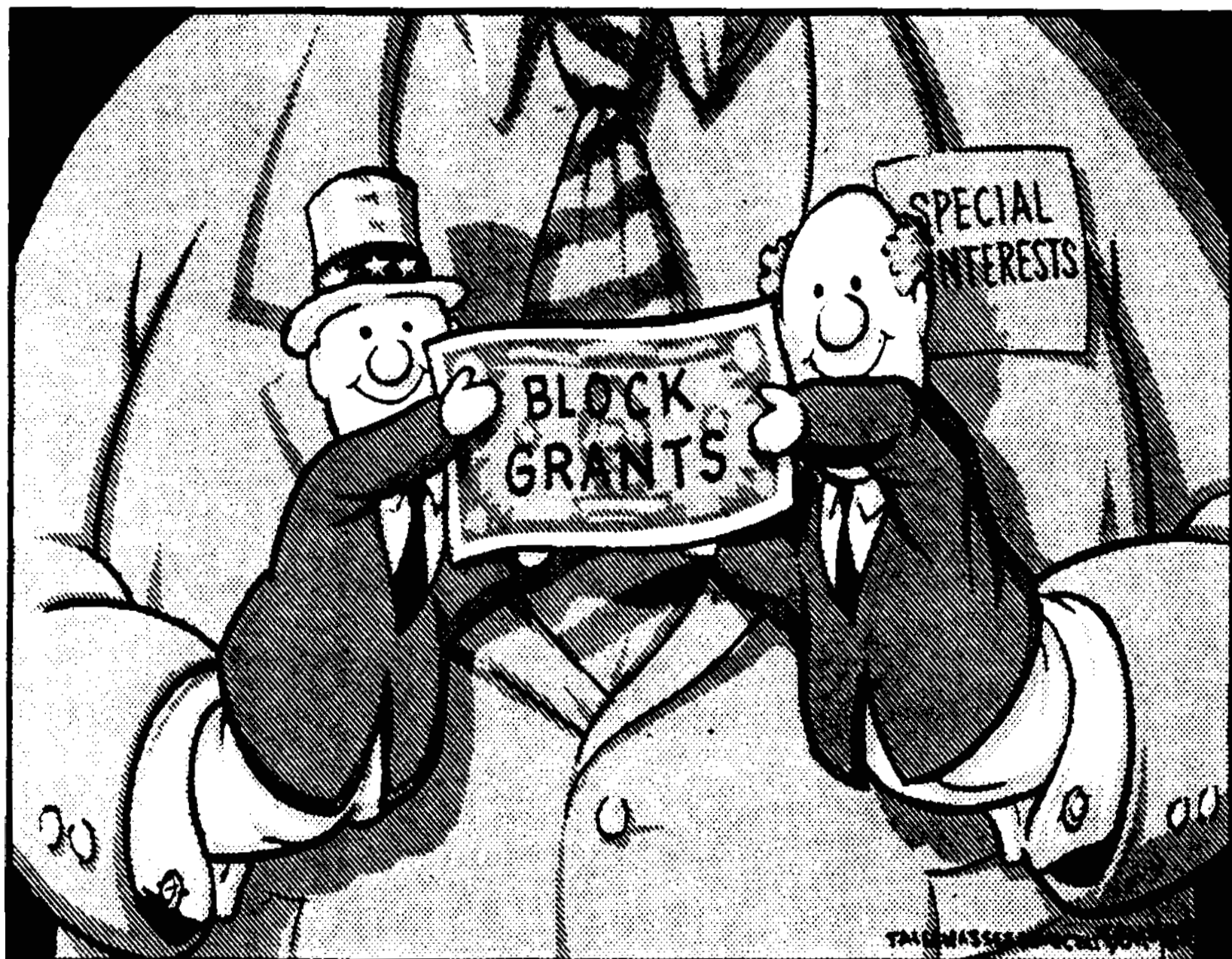
Unfortunately, this is a case where the medicine is worse than the illness. Criminals will still be able to walk onto campus to commit their sordid deeds. And with Polo Road so close to North Campus, the gates won't do much to protect those residents. Moreover,

since everyone will still be allowed on campus, it is not exactly clear how merely establishing the presence of a particular car on campus will deter crime.

Instead, gates will damage the university's character. We already suffer from an image as an elitist school within the Winston-Salem community. The danger is that if we give in to an obsessive fear of crime, the university will end up looking more like a military base than a place of learning.

The university has made several costly efforts to reduce crime lately, like implementing the card access system. Before we go to the expense and trouble of building gates and hiring a gatekeeper, should we not first see how well these changes work?

Shifting power from the federal government to the states...



Earth to Reynolda Hall: Do you copy?

Twenty-four hour lockdown. Zero tolerance for alcohol. Security gates. These are phrases one associates with a police state, not a free academic community. But it seems that our administration does not concern itself very much with freedom these days.

Not that they would tell you if you asked, though. Sure, this is a private institution. An occasional closed meeting or hushed decision would be expected.

But the wholesale refusal of the administration to listen to any student opinion, even that of the Student Government, in regard to the recent social policy changes, is both numbing and frightening.

Apparently the new alcohol and party policies are partial implementations of proposals in the elusive "Lilly Report," a document whose own authors admit is highly subjective.

If fraternities and sororities are abolished, the university will become a hotbed of intellectual discussion, claims the report. That may well be true. But if you look for the reasoning behind this bold claim, you will find that it does not exist. That's right! The entire report consists of platitudes like these backed up by nothing except, apparently, the hopes of the three professors that they are right.

Yet the administration seems to believe every word of this report as though it were gospel. The report could say, "Elvis's ghost seen at local KMart," and half the administration would zoom out University Parkway in nervous anticipation. It must be true — it was in the "Lilly Report!"

Many of the report's proposals may indeed be correct. But the university should spend a little more time debating and researching them before policy changes are made.

Of course, if you question the administration's new policies, it has a convenient answer: You are "part of the problem." That is how the administration deals with potential criticism of the new alcohol policy in a letter sent out to all students

CHARLES STARKS
EDITORIALS EDITOR

earlier this year.

That's pretty slick. If you don't like what it's doing, you have an attitude problem, according to the administration. Apparently administrators also feel this excuses them from responding to the

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criticism that appears in the *Old Gold and Black* each week.

After all, the mailbox here is not exactly stuffed with letters to the editor from administrators who want to explain policy. And we have not received a single phone call from anybody in Reynolda Hall requesting that space be reserved for a guest column to discuss the new social procedures.

Are administrators afraid to place their views side by side with those opposed to them? Do they fear their own views won't hold up if seen next to criticism?

Even if the administration did bother to respond to student concerns, it would probably say we are overreacting.

Overreacting. Tuition went up \$3,000 in order to install new technology of dubious necessity, and the only protest it encountered was a spate of critical editorials and a small rally outside Wait

Chapel.

Student support for the Program Planning Committee's Plan for the Class of 2000 was even less visible, though. So the Student Government voted for it. So what?

The individuals who serve on SG are oriented toward business leadership, not toward student representation. And indeed, they must be if they are to become successful leaders in business. Right or wrong, that's the way student legislatures are.

But it's time to stop dreaming that SG represents the students. For the administration to pretend that the computer proposal had student support merely because the legislature voted for it is absurd.

Patently absurd, really, when you consider that in a poll last year conducted by the *OG&B* (which the administration completely ignored), 64 percent of students said they were *not* in favor of the plan. When the poll results were announced, it never even occurred to anyone that maybe the proposal should be given a little more thought.

Not a single administrator suggested that perhaps it hadn't been discussed enough. The trustees did not even raise their eyebrows, much less consider, say, postponing their vote or talking about the issue with students.

Are the people who run our school so lacking in conscience that they have no interest whatsoever in our opinions? They are bright people, for the most part. Surely they know that SG cannot effectively represent the interests of most students on many major issues.

Surely they know that living in a police state is not conducive to learning, thinking or anything else. Surely they know that the college years are supposed to be a time of growing up, a time to assert autonomy.

Students here are often accused of being apathetic. But is that any wonder when no one will listen to them if they do speak up?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Grade evaluation

Grades are not a matter of trust. As George Demetriades ("Loss of Trust," Sept. 28) mentions in passing, they are an honest evaluation of a student's performance in a class. It seems that Demetriades has lost track of this true significance of grades.

According to the Wake Forest University Bulletin, the two highest grades that a student may receive in a class are an A for "exceptionally high achievement" and a B for "superior" work. The professor, then, has the responsibility to evaluate students according to these criteria. And the student should accept a grade as an indication of his or her performance. While many faculty and students at Wake Forest do follow this philosophy, it seems to me that most do not. Grades have come to represent something other than an evaluation of accomplishment; they have become a currency which students trade for educational honors, career advancement and even occasionally social status.

Certainly Demetriades and others would not complain about stricter grading standards if they were interested in a straightforward appraisal of their work instead of personal benefit. If this is indeed the case, as

it seems to be, then Dean Escott is right to ask us to re-consider our grading system.

Are the students of Wake Forest, in general, of such an outstanding caliber that seventy percent of them should graduate *cum laude* or with higher honors? Do these same students wish to challenge themselves to achieve in their classes, or do they want a high grade that they can barter for a higher-salaried job?

I myself accept the challenge. I ask my professors for a true evaluation of my accomplishments, and I challenge myself to meet the criterion of exceptionally high achievement. After all, challenge is the way of Wake Forest, both old and new, not the way of Duke and other universities plagued with grade inflation. Challenge drives the life of the university; professors who dare students to participate fully in education and students who dare to learn will make Wake Forest a vibrant world for academics.

Andrew Frey

Shorty's fills void

The Student Government executive officers would like to clear up any confusion that may have resulted

from last week's editorial on the approval of the Shorty's proposal by the administration ("If they build it, who will come?" Sept. 28).

The mission of Shorty's, as included in the SG proposal, is to "provide our community with a place where students, faculty, staff and alumni can interact, socialize and relax." This has *not* changed.

Moreover, the proposal details that students have been in favor of building a campus pub for at least the past six years.

This, too, has *not* changed.

The Shorty's proposal further states that "nowhere on campus is there a place open to all students for evening socializing and entertainment."

This, we are proud to say, has changed.

By the fall of 1997, Shorty's will be open for business in a new, 3,000-square-foot building, nestled in the woods between Palmer and Piccolo Residence Halls and the golf facility.

Obviously, this counterproposal offered to us by the administration was not what we expected; however, that does not mean we were not satisfied.

After making several presentations on Shorty's to President Thomas K. Hearn Jr.; John Anderson, the vice

president for finance and planning; Ken Zick, the vice president for student life and instructional resources and others, we felt that our vision of Shorty's was sincerely conveyed to them.

In turn, we believe that they truly understood the need for such a campus pub and coffeehouse and why the four of us were working tirelessly to get this accomplished.

The bottom line is that there is currently a huge void on this campus.

There is nowhere to go to and socialize simply as a member of the university community, rather than as a member of this club or that club. Shorty's will fill that void, and, more importantly, it will be bigger and better than we ever imagined.

The new Shorty's will be more than double what it would have been in the Benson University Center. Also, the new Shorty's will be built from scratch; we will not have to plan around an already existing structure.

Lastly, the new Shorty's will be designed by a committee co-chaired by Telecommunications Director Buck Bailiff and myself, and comprised of representatives from the Division of Student Life, Residence Life and Housing, the Resident Student Association, Student Union and

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We do not accept public thank-you notes. Corrections will run in the corrections box on page two. All letters to the editor must include the author's name and phone number, although anonymity in print may be requested. Submissions should be typewritten and double-spaced.

We appreciate contributions submitted via floppy disk or the university network. Letters should be delivered to Benson 518, mailed to P.O. Box 7569 Reynolda Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27109, sent via electronic mail to ogb@wfu.edu, or faxed to (910) 759-4561.

The *Old Gold and Black* reserves the right to edit, without prior notice, all copy for grammatical or typographical errors, and also to cut letters as needed to meet layout requirements.

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