

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

The Student Newspaper of Wake Forest University
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EDITORIALS

Consultant should bring neutrality

Hiring a consultant may not be the best way to evaluate the university. Certainly it won't be the cheapest.

But a consultant can give a neutral perspective to some of the major problems facing the university.

George Kuh, a professor of education at Indiana University at Bloomington, appears to have excellent credentials.

According to Kenneth Zick, the vice president for student life and instructional resources, Kuh was hired to evaluate the educational climate outside the classroom. Many faculty members and administrators have argued that the university's academic life is in need of improvement.

Unfortunately, this discussion has seldom left the realm of perception and opinion. A cursory reading of the Lilly Report, for example, shows that the report's authors based their arguments almost entirely on anecdotal evidence.

The danger is that fundamental changes will be made based on the limited, and perhaps even mis-

guided, opinions of a few faculty members.

One of the most promising aspects of hiring Kuh is that he can bring some concrete information to the discussion. He has already announced plans to distribute questionnaires to students.

Of course, there are problems with studying the university's academic climate. We suspect that no concept that abstract can be measured with precision.

Kuh also seems to have a relatively exact notion of how a college experience should affect students. For instance, he says there are six ways that college should change students.

But for a period of life that lasts for four years, and at an institution with several thousand students, it can be misleading to judge everyone's experience by one standard.

Whatever Kuh discovers should not be viewed as definitive. Instead, Kuh's analysis should be appreciated as another perspective.

With the rapidity of change at the university over the past few years, this reflection is overdue.

ARTIST: SEASON JOURNALISTS

BK



Rise and shine, Escott says

Halloween was Tuesday, but the most frightening thought we've heard lately has nothing to do with small children dressed like ghosts and goblins. Last week, Dean of the College Paul Escott announced that more 8 a.m. classes will be offered in the future.

Because students need more of a chance to complete their divisional requirements, and because the university hopes to decrease class sizes, Escott said the university is hiring more faculty members and will be offering more classes.

But there is not enough classroom space for this increase, so more classes must be taught at 8 a.m., a time of relatively few classes.

While the logic is sound, we're afraid the solution may be worse than the problem. Student aversion to early classes is notorious: Hardly anyone willingly signs up for them.

Some say the phenomenon can be explained by late nights at bars, while others say it has more to do with a general college lifestyle that is much more active at night studying or going out.

To be sure, some students like eight o'clock classes. But, for stu-

dents who only take them because they have to, the classes are often slept through or skipped.

Professors also don't like the early classes, for many of the same reasons. In light of the problems associated with early morning classes, there is a danger that if students take these classes only because they have to, then their education will suffer.

It is also worth noting that the prospect of crowded classes is a bit perplexing. Moreover, the space available for undergraduate classrooms has grown drastically over the past few years, as space has opened in Calloway and Babcock, the former law and business school buildings.

So where has this space gone? According to official university policy, the size of the student body is not supposed to be increasing. But there were also a record number of freshmen this year.

Eight o'clock classes may be a necessity, but they don't have to be the only solution. The university could also offer more late afternoon and evening classes. At least that would give students more of an opportunity to take classes at hours that fit their lifestyles more closely.

Escott battles windmill of grade inflation

Last week I attended the grade inflation forum sponsored by Student Government. I figured this would be a great opportunity to straight from Dean Paul Escott's mouth what exactly he had meant by his letter to the faculty regarding grades and what, if any, action our quixotic dean might be planning to combat the windmill of grade inflation.

Escott had said before that he had sent the letter only to encourage discussion and was not going to take any action at the present time. I hoped that he would repeat these remarks and that all my fears would be alleviated.

I also hoped Escott would hear the impassioned pleas of students, would take our words to heart and would understand that we are already trying our hardest, working constantly to do the best we can with our schoolwork.

But what I witnessed was the most disgusting display of administration bunk I have ever seen. The panelists, Dean Paul Escott and Debbie Best, a professor of psychology and the chairwoman of the department, tried to convince the sizable number of students present that grades were too high and why that was so horrific.

A few of the gems of wisdom they threw out as part of their argument: one, that the number of 3.8s and 3.9s is an enormous one; two, that there are no minimum GPA cutoffs for graduate school admissions and that GPA plays only a small part in graduate school decisions;

Three, that good recommendations will get you into any graduate school regardless of a lower GPA; four, that any changes that have been made by professors in their grading policies were not a result of Escott's letter;

And five, that professors cracking down on grades will benefit students because, gosh darn it, apparently too many good grades have just been freely given.

Can someone please send a wakeup call to the administration? First, not everyone is earning GPAs of 3.8 or 3.9.

RACHEL SHEEDY
MANAGING EDITOR

And even if students' GPAs have increased, the administration's reasoning for why this has occurred is similar to the old stereotype used against women — if women are doing well, it is because the tests are easier. Escott has broadened this stereotype to all students: If students are doing well, it is because grading standards have been softened. Whether the administration realizes it or not, this is an insult to students' intelligence and

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hard work — no matter how eloquently it is stated in administrative jargon.

Second, there are minimum GPA cutoffs for graduate school. If you would like hard evidence of this, I welcome you to call me and I will show you the application I received from American University just the other day which states that applicants should have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Numerous other schools I have looked at have also had minimum GPA requirements and many were higher than 3.0.

Third, certainly good recommendations always help but they are not the sole factor in gaining graduate school admission — whether the administration believes it or not, GPA does matter.

Fourth, it is true that there is no new grading policy. If professors are changing their grading

systems, it has been the professors' decision. However, Escott apparently does not realize that as dean of the college when he sends a letter to faculty about grades that his words might have some kind of effect.

In addition, if a new grading policy were designed to take effect with the next incoming freshman class, upperclass students would still be affected.

Fifth, students are working extremely hard. Students *earn* the grades they receive — there are no free handouts here. Where was I, and most other students, when these free grades were being passed out?

Many people tried to explain these last five arguments to Escott and Best, but their explanations seemed to fall on deaf ears.

The moderators, ready to cut down and deflate any opposing viewpoint with ridiculous counter-attacks, seemed to refuse to listen to any student's argument.

They also assumed that everyone at the university will attend graduate school; there was no mention at all of those who will enter the workplace.

Though they admitted the university still has some reputation-building to do, Don Quixote and his sidekick also continued to maintain that lower GPAs would of course have no effect on students' abilities to get into graduate school, as we all know that our university is such an academically challenging school.

Well we may know it, but does everyone else? Silly me, I didn't realize we had suddenly jumped to the status of being the new Harvard.

No one is asking for easy As, and no one is asking for honors to be doled out on a silver platter. I think it's safe to say that all students are asking for is that their hard work be recognized, not devalued as Escott and Best did as they wrote off students' arguments during the forum. We would like our university to help us reach our goals, not hurt us.

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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 letters@ogb.wfu.edu, or faxed to (910) 759-4561.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Far and away

Have you ever dreamed of immersing yourself in the culture of a non-western country? Six students will have the opportunity to study the politics and culture of Bangladesh during the spring semester, culminating in a 21 day study tour in Bangladesh in the summer of 1996. An ideal place to research a number of issues, Bangladesh would be an excellent case study for anyone interested in researching religion, politics, history, art and architecture, agriculture, disaster relief, environmental issues, health care delivery, human rights, public works, international trade, gender issues, development economics and many other topics.

Charles H. Kennedy, a professor of politics and the director of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, has taught in Bangladesh and recently secured a prestigious fellowship for Wake Forest University that is awarded to only one undergraduate institution every year. The 1995-96 American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) fellowship provides approximately \$30,000 to meet all travel and living expenses for six students and a faculty director for a three week study tour, in-

cluding trips to Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Comilla and Cox's Bazaar. In the past, students have visited the president, the prime minister, opposition leaders, the chief justice of the Supreme Court and numerous scholars.

Students who are selected for the program will be required to enroll in Politics 246, Politics and Policies in South Asia, taught by Kennedy. This course will offer an introduction to contemporary India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Participants in the AIBS program will, in addition to the normal course requirements, undertake extensive readings relevant to the history, society and politics of Bangladesh. The term paper normally required for the course must address topics relevant to Bangladesh and the student's research interests. Because this is such a rare opportunity, participants must demonstrate their commitment to the program by registering and paying for a four-credit summer school course and by paying a deposit upon acceptance into the program.

Students in any discipline would benefit from this experience. They will have the opportunity to explore issues relevant to their field of interest, whether they are majoring in biology, anthropology, economics or art history. All undergraduates, in-

cluding seniors, are invited to apply, but all things being equal, preference will be given to sophomores and juniors.

There will be an information session about the program at 7 p.m. Nov. 6 in Tribble A302. Applications will be available at the meeting. If any interested students are unable to attend, they can obtain applications at the politics department office or the Office of International Studies. Any questions can be directed to Charles H. Kennedy at 759-5453. Completed applications are due Nov. 13 at 5 p.m. in the politics department office (Tribble C3). Interviews may follow depending on the number of applicants, and students will be notified of their statuses before Thanksgiving break. Please come and find out more about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Megan Reif
Student Assistant
Department of Politics

Hazing happens

I found it very amusing that in Jennifer Fowler's article from Oct. 26 ("Allegations of hazing worry administration"), Mike Ford, director of student development, stated that

he believes the "extent of hazing has been relatively low and less dangerous and less serious in its consequence." Ford, wake up! I'm not sure what fraternities you've been examining, but which fraternities haze and which don't is common knowledge. And the "brotherhoods" that choose to haze don't do so lightly.

What was even more amusing was the fact that the president of the Interfraternity Council stated that "he does not know of any hazing activities at the university and that he was surprised at the reports." Roger Young went through the pledging process himself, and surely he knows firsthand that such activities exist. If the administration chooses to believe him, then surely it should drop the issue of hazing and let the fraternities continue with the methods they have used in the past. However, if they suspect such activities, they need to examine more than just "surprised" remarks from IFC officers.

I think the administration has two options: Investigate these charges in depth or drop the issue altogether. If it is going to investigate these accusations, all it needs to do is open its eyes.

Marc McNulty