

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

The Student Newspaper of Wake Forest University
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EDITORIALS

Survey results show satisfaction

Last year's seniors offered their opinion about the university one last time through the recently tabulated senior surveys. Their comments offer insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the university.

First, the university must be congratulated for its attempt to get student opinions, other than those voiced by the Student Government or other student representatives who may have a narrow perception of the university.

The idea of eliciting opinions and criticism from those who have attended the university for four years is a valid plan. One complaint expressed in the survey was that students did not have enough of a voice in college policies. It is a nice to see the administration make an attempt to get opinions from the general student population, even if it still has a long way to go before letting students help devise college policies.

Unfortunately, the attempts to get an honest opinion from the seniors may have been foiled because of the lack of student participation. While 39 percent is an impressive amount of respondents, it is not even a majority of the class. After all, if only 39 percent respond to a voluntary survey, the claim that the sample is representative of all students cannot be made. The survey may have been biased by the fact that only a certain type of person took the time to respond to the questions.

The only solutions to this problem would be either to take a random sampling of seniors or to make the survey compulsory for all graduating seniors. Both solutions would provide a more representative student response.

Overall, the students who responded to the survey were very pleased with the education they had received. The peer group was comprised of universities and colleges thought to be comparable to the university.

Students here also rated the importance of creativity and initiative in a job. This seems to indicate that they have much different priorities when looking for a job than peer group students — taking the expected path instead of branching out in new, creative directions in the job.

The grades of this university's students were also compared to those of other peer groups. They seem to point to grade inflation at the upper levels. The number of B- and lower GPAs was comparable to those in the peer group. The peer group schools gave out more Bs and less As, though.

The information that was gleaned from the survey could be a useful starting point for finding areas in need of change. Several

of the specific areas in which the university compared unfavorably to the peer schools are areas that most students would agree need change.

For example, the fact that the university compared unfavorably to the peer group in the area of the climate for minorities is probably not surprising to most students. The result only serves as a reminder that this area has not seen any real progress, despite attempts at improvement.

Race relations on campus remain strained at best. Significant improvements need to be made before the university will measure up to peer groups in the area of the climate for minority students.

While the change in the name of the Minority Affairs department to Multicultural Affairs is an acknowledgment of a problem, it is basically a face lift done to cover up the real problem. The hiring of a new director for the office is more of an improvement. Name changes won't help the problem of minority isolation; changes in attitude, policy and personnel might. Of course, students also must work to improve race relations.

Social life was another area in which this university compared unfavorably to others. While the category of social life is too broad to indicate the true nature of the dissatisfaction, the fact that so many of the responding students were unhappy with the social life seems to suggest more choices should be offered in the social area of the university.

The new party policies created this year may improve students' attitudes toward the social life at the university, but only more extensive surveys could determine the true nature of the problem. The only surveys that could possibly be effective are true statistical ones; anecdotal reports such as the Lilly Report do not provide enough objective evidence.

The university compared favorably to the peer group universities in several areas. The library and recreation facilities, two of the most recently improved areas on campus, received accolades from seniors. Personal services were also recognized, with praise being awarded to faculty performance, attitude and personal relationships with students.

While several things were criticized by last year's seniors, many areas were also praised. Hopefully changes will be made to improve the areas found to be lacking, while preserving the positive aspects of the university. The responsibility for the changes cannot rest solely with the administration, however. If students want more input in college policies, they must take the initiative and try to improve things themselves.

Honor code should be internalized

As Chairwoman of the Honor Council, I attended the National Conference on Ethics in America from Nov. 14-19 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Junior Tripp Parker, who is the Vice-Chairman of the council, also attended.

The purpose of the conference was to develop a national awareness regarding ethical behavior in the undergraduate community.

I took from this conference a renewed pride in honor and what it really means to commit to a code of honor, whether it be personally, professionally or at an educational institution.

Let me first say that of all things we hold sacred at the university, I rank the honor code up there at the top. Having served on the Honor Council since my freshman year, I have seen an internal perspective of the system.

As a senior, I also have also viewed the honor system from the perspective of a student. I fully understand the challenges we face as we seek to improve our honor system. I recognize and see firsthand the apathy and cynicism that pervade some attitudes here. The questions we must ask ourselves are: Do we want an honor code, are we prepared to take the steps to achieve our goal, and are we willing to stand for principles of integrity and ethical living here at the university?

I dare say that almost every member of our community here would respond affirmatively, but the actions and opinions of many members

KATHY HENNESSY

GUEST COLUMNIST

of our community lead me to believe otherwise.

I hope to bring attention to the current system, the future of it, and most importantly, the level of importance we put on ethical decision-making long after we leave the university.

With the pressures and decisions we are to face after graduation, we need to develop a concept of ethical living that can apply to all aspects of our lives. As a challenge, I urge everyone to think about why having a code of honor is important to them and this institution.

As a university student myself, I believe that an honor code far surpasses a set of rules. Not that social and housing regulations are not important, because they are. However, honor is something that cannot be imposed on you like a set of rules.

My definition of honor includes being able to make sound ethical decisions, having the self-discipline and self-respect to support what is right under any circumstances, understanding the larger goal of having good character, and possessing the willingness to promote and serve society.

If an honor system is to be successful, it must be internalized. Every student must have a desire to create a community that functions

on the precepts of honor.

The honor code is also something that we can call our *own* as students if we choose to, without it being imposed on us by any higher authority.

In order for us to feel that sense of ownership, I feel that we must hold all responsibility for the implementation, education, and development of our code.

Currently, as a part of the judicial branch of the student government, I

refers to a small group of students with limited resources and a small amount of influence on the overall system.

I envision an honor code that is looked upon in a different light. I believe that separating from student government is the most crucial step in empowering the students to form an autonomous group and establish and look after a code that is separate from rules and regulations. I feel we have many opportunities to contribute in ways which will affect many future student bodies. Reforming our honor system *will* make a huge impact on the future of the university.

As students, I hope we all realize our privilege with this opportunity. Look for an open forum to discuss these topics next semester, as well as a student body referendum with improvements that we are discussing now.

The Honor Council and the newly created task force are coming up with a plan of reforms that we feel will reflect a code of character and integrity that the students can take pride in and call their own. If you would like to comment about this article or about the honor system, please feel free to e-mail me at hennek19.

To me, a spirit of honor and integrity is one of the most important concepts that we can apply to every aspect of our lives, and realizing the advantage we have at this university by living according to a code of honor is my goal for all of us.

I feel the claim to be "student-run" is inaccurate because it refers to a small group of students with limited resources and a small amount of influence on the overall system.

see the terms "Honor Council" and "Judicial Board" used interchangeably, and many do not know the distinction between them.

To me that's a sign of equating a code of honor and integrity that, ideally, we can internalize and feel ownership in, with a set of external rules and regulations set for us by the administration.

In addition, with the Judicial Council (influenced primarily by the administration and faculty) holding the decision-making capabilities about the effectiveness and future of our system, I feel the claim to be "student-run" is inaccurate because it



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How to expell rats

First, I don't have any insider information about the campus rat population, but I appreciate student concerns. Second, it doesn't really matter whether their rat genealogies are traceable beyond the current administration or not.

Third, the rats pose several hazards and are here in imposing numbers for several reasons. Therefore a simple, single-faceted solution won't work.

Approaching the problem from an anthropological perspective, there are two campus changes that contribute to sustaining a burgeoning rat population.

One is the increase in fast food availability on campus. Fast food equals frequent garbage. It also may be that campus members are more casual about their disposal of fast food trash. Fast food equals fat rats.

The second is the widespread behavior of bagging garbage in plastic bags. These bags may sit around for hours, overnight, or for days before being picked up and handled as the other garbage in tightly closed dumpsters or cans usually is. A millimeter or two of plastic is no barrier to any rat worth its weight as a rodent. Plastic bags equal plump rats.

So a reasonable set of responses

may include three approaches. Campus members need to take more responsibility for proper disposal of food trash.

Campus social groups may need to pay special attention to ensuring that late night trash is in tightly closed containers, and fast food vendors may have ideas about educating their customers. The convenience of plastic bags also has to be countered with perhaps a change in pick-up schedules, work patterns, or training for housekeeping and facilities management staff.

Of course, a better compensated housekeeping and facilities staff might improve morale and motivation for solving such campus problems. They probably have the most "local" knowledge of the situation, and maybe they should be involved in this discussion. The third response would be an extermination contract.

Doing nothing invites rummaging raccoons who can carry rabies, increasing encounters between residents and rodents, and a general deterioration of the campus. To wait for parental concerns to surface or for a lawsuit to be filed seems foolish. Do we really want to see more headlines about fat rats, rabid raccoons and garbage bags?

Dorothy J. Cattle
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Pride in education

I write in response to Andrew Frey's most recent "lesson for the day," or if you will, letter to the editor ("Grades Justified," Nov. 16).

It is not my purpose to quarrel over the issue of grade inflation but rather to address the slanders made by Frey against my person, as a member of the university student body. Frey questions the quality of the university's students, our commitment to learning and our honesty. I question his motivation, his logic and his conclusions. Now let me tell you why.

I, unlike Frey, am simply unwilling to speak for anyone besides myself. To do so, I feel is to do a disservice both to those for whom I presume to speak and to myself. Instead, regarding the quality of the university's students I can only make my own observations and trust that they find some parallel and sympathy with yours.

While here at the university I have met many beautiful people, persons of the highest caliber — befriending some, loving others — and learning from them all. To meet one such person I count myself blessed and lucky, to meet many . . .

I do not define "commitment to learning" in the narrow terms of book study and lecture, but rather as a hunger for that which is new. To

relegate colleges in general, and Wake Forest in particular, to the role of academic instruction only is to cut away that which makes these years a period of true learning.

You know of what I speak — the ideas, the experiences, the adventures — that come to us only when we do not expect them, and that are rarely found in a classroom.

With these things in mind, I have to wonder why Frey has chosen to write repeatedly and at length on the subject.

I have to wonder why he denigrates the concerns and abilities of his fellow students by referring to us as "self-righteous" and "intellectually unstimulating."

As for myself, I would rather be self-righteous than self-serving. As a person who writes little, I must ask myself why I have written. What little maturity, wisdom and discretion I possess dictate silence.

I can see no good that will come from my letter, for you either know of what I speak and agree, or do not. My reason is a selfish one. I am a proud person — proud of who I am and where I go to school — and I do not stomach well insults to either.

So in the words of Forrest Gump, an intellectual in the purest sense, "That's all I've got to say about that."

John Morris

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