

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

The Student Newspaper of Wake Forest University
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EDITORIALS

Ceremony deserves quality speaker

The announcement of Louis Gerstner Jr., the chairman and chief executive officer of IBM, as keynote speaker at the Class of 1997 graduation ceremony is disappointing, to say the least.

This choice collectively represents all of the negative decisions that have been made since the adoption of the Plan for the Class of 2000. In the Year of the Arts, the university is saying that the absolute best it can do in acquiring a speaker of magnitude is the CEO of a company it is actively and visibly doing business with.

Would it be any bigger of a surprise if he was introduced by Wayne Calloway, the CEO of PepsiCo? Probably not.

The decision to pick Gerstner is bereft of any imagination, creativity or ambition. Not only is this choice too easy, but it raises serious questions on what Gerstner has to offer graduating students.

A dissertation on the boundaries of free-trade and how it will affect the technological world is not a good graduation speech.

A graduation speaker should be someone exciting and unique. Students should be proud of their speaker and be able to take something away from the ceremony;

Race relations need community solutions

Race relations has been perceived as being strained for many years. The Kuh report highlights the current divisions, and the report done by the Student Government Executive Committee on Race Relations brings the problem to the forefront.

Both reports come to the same conclusions that most have already known: there is a problem with race relations on this campus. Kuh went a step farther, saying that the problem is being avoided.

This can no longer continue. For years, the administration, faculty and student body have watched, idly for the most part, as relations between different ethnic groups, specifically blacks and whites, fail to improve.

Efforts have been made, though. Minority enrollment has increased over the last two years and programs like ARCH work to promote increased relations. Obviously these efforts have not been enough. No one can be forced to attend meetings or go to mixers.

Even so, the administration has had the Kuh report for months, and what has been done about the issue? Have there been any university-sponsored forums on race relations? No. How about speakers? When was the last time the

some kernel of wisdom that the speaker has imparted.

It may not be fair to judge Gerstner before he has even given thought as to what he might say, but the situation is as such. One suspects that his message will center on the wonderful technology the freshmen have, but the freshmen will not be there.

The seniors will, and on their special day they deserve more than to be reminded that the university has left them behind technologically. While it is true that he has been a successful and intelligent businessman, is he really the best choice available?

All year, we have been hearing the university congratulate itself on its commitment to the arts. It seems those responsible for this choice were not as committed.

With all the good and interesting speakers available from the world of the arts, like Beverly Sills, the choice of Gerstner is disappointing and hypocritical.

Students dedicate themselves for four years with the idea that they are graduating from one of the best academic institutions in the country. The very least they deserved is that the graduation ceremony be as glorious as it can possibly be.

university brought in a well-known speaker, much less a minority speaker, who discussed the racial tensions in society?

Do not be mistaken. This is not a problem for which the administration is solely responsible. Every person in the community has a responsibility to improve the racial climate. However, the administration can help the process by sparking debates and forums, as they are the leaders of our university. It is the job of these officials to point the school in a direction. Right now, this has not happened.

In the student survey done by the SG Race Relations Committee, 74 percent of the 631 students who were sophomores, juniors and seniors said that racial tensions existed. Also in the survey, 88 percent said that the social atmosphere at the university is racially divided.

These are overwhelming majorities, and yet, there is no discussion on this topic. Why not start having monthly forums where problems and solutions could be discussed? Winston-Salem State University is within 10 miles. It would be easy to have activities with the school as well.

Solutions to this issue are all around us, but it will take a collective effort to realize them.

Graduation a 'sold out' affair

Let me know when our stock hits the market, because Wake Forest University truly sold out this week. Wake Forest, Incorporated, has taken its place, and I cannot wait to get rid of my shares. The commencement speaker for the class of 1997 is Louis Gerstner Jr., the CEO of IBM.

This choice of speaker is a travesty of this year's theme, the Year of the Arts, a cold shoulder to the graduates of the Class of 1997, and a slap in the face to the liberal arts mission this university purports to have.

The Year of the Arts committee has put in over a year's worth of planning, and so far, the campus has seen several magnificent events, with many more to come.

Those who selected Gerstner robbed these students and faculty members of the opportunity to put a crowning touch on a fantastic year of events.

For my fellow seniors, I feel equally dismayed. Many of us have felt disillusioned by the attention given to the Plan for the Class of 2000, and that we are dinosaurs waiting to be cleared out, so that the new breed of student, ThinkPad in hand, can take this university to a new and different glory than that which any of our achievements brought to campus.

Even with that disenchantment, we knew that we would have our own day to shine, in which we would not have to listen to how the World Wide Web is a modern-day holy

PATRICK McDONOUGH

GUEST COLUMNIST

grail, in which we would instead reap the rewards of our labor. This too is gone.

Instead, we will hear from someone who could care less about those who graduate, as long as those students three years below us have their standard issue black box. It is not the

It is bad enough to bring a CEO of a major corporation to a university commencement, but Gerstner's IBM affiliation hits especially close to home for many students, faculty and alumni who feel that the university is being radically altered right before our eyes by their corporate interests.

Surely we could have found someone more academic, who would reinforce the directive that we came to the university to learn, not to be

We need more speakers like Sills, who aren't afraid to offer more than a general "you will be the leaders of tomorrow" speech which every politician who lands on campus seems to conveniently carry around in his back pocket.

In conclusion, I offer the following two pieces of advice to those planning the ceremony. If this decision is not set in stone, then prove that this university is the national university it so desperately wants to be, and use whatever clout the school has.

Give Gerstner a rain check to be redeemed in May of the year 2000, and go recruit a speaker that has a strong connection to the liberal arts who will captivate, motivate and inspire the students, rather than someone whose presence and message will implicitly or explicitly tell us, "I'm here because your rising sophomores bought our stuff."

If this can not be done, and Gerstner must remain our speaker, please put his speech on Deacons On Line so I can read it sometime after graduation if I'm extremely bored.

Better yet, post it on the net a week early, and he won't have to read it aloud. The ceremony will end earlier, and that way, I'll have an extra 25 to 30 minutes at graduation in which I can introduce my family to some of my classmates and my professors, the two groups of people who truly shaped my academic life at the university.

By bringing in Gerstner, our commencement will be transformed from a celebration of our academic mission into a marriage ceremony for a corporate merger.

fault of the Class of 2000, but this will be a commencement for them, celebrating their choice to matriculate, not our moment to graduate.

Finally, this university prides itself on being a guardian of the liberal arts.

By bringing in Gerstner, our commencement will be transformed from a celebration of our academic mission into a marriage ceremony for a corporate merger.

I would be shocked to hear if any of Gerstner's job description is harmonious with our academic mission. I also suspect that any portions of that mission that may be concurrent with our own are undoubtedly subordinate to the mission of making a dollar.

trained for the digitized workforce.

For a moment, I actually thought we were getting some good speakers on campus after seeing Beverly Sills at the fall convocation, but now, her visit seems to have been a stroke of luck. Most of our other recent speakers have been downright dismal.

Remember Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who thrilled the crowd with his riveting discussion of "Squirrel Control Task Force vs. the State of Ohio" and the precedents the case set?

Sills, by contrast, was interesting, engaging and excited about being at the university. Additionally, she embraced the student body and entertained us, while delivering a message relevant to our lives.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Using Gates

We fussed. We cried. We whined. They still installed the gates. Students can't knock them over in anger. Students can't drive through them in rage (although this has been attempted). Students can't take the gatekeepers hostage.

Simply put, they're here to stay, and we can't do too much about them. Or can we?

If the administration is going to go over the wishes of a majority of students, over the complaints of on-campus neighborhood groups, and around the petitions and protests of members of the community, then why aren't those gates and guard houses being used to their utmost potential?

Consider this scenario. Granted, criminals, by their very nature, are going to be a little stupid. Yet, smart, efficient, and deadly ones do exist in the city of Winston-Salem, and they may very well be aware of the new gate systems at the university. Fine. According to many "experts," this knowledge should scare them away from passing through campus and raising heck.

However, they may also be aware of the times during which the gates are unmanned and standing wide open.

They may learn of the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. gate hours during which the campus is closed to all but student, faculty, staff, and fire truck traffic. They may deduce that those gate houses are, indeed, "empty" from 6

a.m. to 10 p.m. each day.

Let's see if anyone is following my reasoning. Let's further assume that these criminal minds figure out, "Hey, during the fall and winter months, the days are shorter, and the nights are longer!"

From this, these criminals decide that, maybe, with a little planning, they can enter campus when night falls, before the gates close, and have their way with our automobiles, our women (or men, as the case may be), and our campus property.

Why, they may even come up with the brilliant master plan of driving in after dark, parking out in a quiet parking lot corner, and wreaking havoc while having infiltrated the grounds of our "protected" campus.

Get real, Mr. Administration and Ms. Campus Police. The gates and guard houses aren't going to be used to their fullest potential if (a) someone isn't there all the time just to keep an eye out for trouble, with or without the gates down and (b) if someone figures out that they can still get on campus under the cover of darkness without having to worry about being checked.

The money was spent, the students have been harassed, and members of the community have complained. If you're going to impose this security system onto the university and Winston-Salem communities, then, by all means, don't make it a half-hearted attempt to scare away criminals and vandals that may not be as stupid as you might like to think.

Keep a guard at the gate full-time.

(I've seen car windows shattered and stereos stolen mid-afternoon on a Saturday.) Close the gates at nightfall. Get the on-campus neighborhood residents the parking stickers they need to pass freely to the homes you have enclosed with your gates and guard houses. Finish the electrical and communications work needed to have the guard houses ready as they should have been on Sept. 9. And by all means, hire gatekeepers who can see the required student window sticker from at least 15 feet away.

While I'm thinking about it, I wanted to know about another security measure implemented on campus this year. Are the huge, expensive lights in the Scales Fine Arts Center parking lot being operated on the same principle as the gates right now? Just erect them, but don't turn them on? The criminals will be frightened away by their height and very presence, right? I was just curious.

Michael R. Burns

Equality

Robert Keller appears to be an expert on women's military issues, ("Equality standards cannot waver," Oct. 10) but he doesn't have a clue as to what it's like to be a female in a "man's" military. I served a four-year enlistment in the U.S. Air Force from 1987 to 1991. As one of only two women in an aircraft maintenance unit of over 100 men, I worked as an aircraft radar and navigation

systems specialist on C-130 cargo aircraft. I have awards, ribbons and medals for peacetime service and service during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Now, that is what I have to back up what I'm about to say against a few statements that were made in Keller's column.

You stated that the male does more than the female to earn that pay. So tell me, was it "equal" when, as a senior airman, I worked as many as 30 days in a row with no days off, (yes, the military can do this to you) working 12-hour shifts outside on the flightline, in the rain and cold, lying on the ground, under the belly of a plane, getting dirt and grease in my eyes and hair, while a male senior airman, who worked an 8-5 desk job, pushed a pencil in a climate-controlled office, got weekends off, and earned the same pay I did?

Your article insinuated that even though women serve in an area of combat, they are never "in harm's way." As a female war veteran, your inference made me both angry and hurt. What an unbelievable slap in the face to the women in the Armed Forces who lost their lives during conflicts while "not engaging in combat." With SCUDS overhead, I was fumbling around in a blackout where people are screaming, trying to put on their chemical warfare gear and run for the closest bunker. Do you think that at that time I was saying to myself, "Gee, I sure am lucky I'm a female, otherwise I might be killed?"

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