

# OPINION

This column represents the views of the Old Gold and Black Editorial Board.

## Lotus Notes causes e-mail headaches

If you've used your e-mail account at all this semester, and thousands of you have, you've probably noticed that the Lotus Mail server, which facilitates all freshman, faculty and administration e-mail, keeps crashing. Failure of the server means that freshmen, faculty members and administrators cannot send or receive e-mail while the server is down, which often lasts for hours at a time. It also means that upperclassmen cannot send mail to or receive mail from these people. And sometimes when the server crashes, the sender of the e-mail thinks the message has been successfully sent but finds out hours later that in actuality the lost e-mail must be re-sent. So not only is this server problem annoying to freshmen who unsuccessfully try to write to their friends, but it is seriously interfering with the business and the academic life of the university. Lost e-mail to and from administrators and faculty members is a bad thing. Assignments and meeting schedules can get lost in the electronic abyss of cyberspace, perhaps even costing student grades. Lotus Notes, though a good program for its intended purposes, was not made to handle the volume of e-mail that the university processes. Lotus Notes is supposed to be used for intranet activity, not for a large load of e-mail used by thousands of people at a university. So when the server is overloaded, which happens often since Lotus Notes wasn't

made to handle all that e-mail at once, it crashes. Since the administration finally realized this minor point, it did decide to phase out the use of Lotus Mail. It will be available for use next semester, but a new system is being implemented from then on. So something is now being done right. But unfortunately, the program has already cost the university the wasted time and money it took to train professors and administrators to use Lotus Notes. So why has this e-mail chaos happened at a school that prides itself on living on the edge of technology? Why did the administration, who implemented the Plan for the Class of 2000 (against student protest, we might add), choose an e-mail server that obviously doesn't work correctly for our school? And while we're at it, why was a third e-mail server even introduced when the university was already using both Pine and Eudora? While it's great that Lotus Mail can encrypt messages, most students aren't exactly working for the CIA. Most professors and administrators probably aren't either. Maybe in the hunt for a new e-mail server, the administration should solicit student opinion — after all, we've experienced three servers already. But above all, the administration must keep students informed on a regular basis about what's going on with the e-mail system so that social lives and grades don't suffer.

## Frequent fire alarms are more than a pain

We all used to laugh at the phenomenon: catching dozens of guys filter out of Bostwick Residence Hall, unfortunately forced to reveal their illegal presence, every time the fire alarm went off at 3 a.m. But few of us are laughing anymore. The new fire alarm system installed over the summer is causing excessive unnecessary evacuations in most of the residence halls on campus. As well as the side-effect migraines and ear-ringing from those piercing, five-million decibel alarms. It's reached the point where fire alarms are more prevalent on this campus than parking tickets. That's scary. You can't even take a hot shower in Taylor or boil a pot of pasta in Student Apartments without making everyone in your residence hall hate you for causing the fire alarm to go off. But this mere annoyance could

actually have some dangerous repercussions. Besides adding to students' already excessive stress and sleep deprivation, the frequent and false fire alarms may very well produce a boy-who-cried-wolf effect one day. The fire department has surely been less than amused for years that they've had to come to campus several times a month for no reason. But now that they have to do it several times a day, they will probably never take us seriously again. If we ever had a real fire, the entire campus would probably go up in flames while the firemen were taking their time getting here, all the while thinking, "Those darned college students take too many steamy showers." Students as well are already becoming guilty of this attitude. Students don't take the alarms seriously anymore, and they still won't the day the alarm is for real. It's a good thing the administration is currently working to solve this problem.

## Dangerous drinking must stop

Students should take responsibility for this widespread problem.

This past weekend I attended a collegiate journalism conference in Chicago. My predictions were correct in that the attendants of the conference were over-

Kate Cosgrove  
FEATURES EDITOR

stressed, sleep-deprived college journalists strung out on a little too much Starbucks and nicotine. However, I was wrong in assuming that this was the only thing that we would have in common. Discussion groups soon led me to understand that every student there represented a university facing the same major crisis. A seminar titled "Covering Binge Drinking on Your Campus" made it particularly clear to me that dangerous drinking is a nationwide problem afflicting our age group. Perhaps it was the editor from Louisiana State University's newspaper, the university where one student drank himself to death earlier this fall, and where several others were rushed to the hospital, who delivered this point most cogently: "The pictures that we ran of this event were reminiscent of the Heaven's Gate

Cult mass exodus," he said. In other words, when the students were found, they were sprawled out unconscious. Many were barely viable and one, as we know, was definitely not. Tragically, they had done this to themselves. The reports and studies on binge drinking have become so visible in the news lately that before this weekend, the term almost seemed to have lost its effect. The problem with the term binge drinking is that it does not conjure up any of the necessary images. Binge drinking resonates of normal college party habits. It is a word used by *Newsweek* and *Time* and all other tabloids trying to release shocking studies on our generation, as if we were laboratory rats. And it is no wonder that we no longer listen — it is an American phenomenon to believe that they are not talking about "us" when they say that what we are doing is wrong. But what will it take for us to listen? Maybe we need to reevaluate the phrase binge drinking. Perhaps it needs to be called dangerous drinking — anything that will describe in more graphic detail the harm that ensues from excessive indulgence. People do suffer severe brain damage, cause fatal collisions, fall from balconies, fall through greenhouses (yes, it happened at a Massachusetts campus this year), or at the very least spend an evening in the emergency room, because of excessive drinking. The term binge drinking masks these atrocities, but they are nonetheless daily

occurrences on college campuses. A student at the conference asked the LSU editor how the campus had reacted to the student's death. He said that students had become more attentive to the dangers of drinking, the newspaper had stopped running advertisements for certain bars and of course the university policies had become more stringent. Is that what we need? Is that the kind of tragedy that every college campus needs to become more attentive? I should surely hope not. We complain about the administration breathing down our backs at social events, the Alcohol Law Enforcement practically attending our tailgates, and Resident Advisors being dorm Nazis. But I wonder if they are reacting to the tragedies that have occurred because they realize that we won't. As students it is our responsibility to prevent dangerous drinking. It is our problem and our lives that we are bargaining with, not those of the administration. If we can show the university that we are responsible we will gain more license and respect in the long run. Let's not allow the repercussions of the LSU death to fall only upon the shoulders of Louisiana. Let's bring them to this university and use them to engender a daily awareness of what we need to prevent. And the next time that you hear of a student who was rushed to the hospital to have his stomach pumped, do not assume that we are safeguarded from worse tragedy. Consider the next vodka shot that could have put us in *Newsweek*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Homosexuals should be treated equally

In response to junior Matthew Smith-Kennedy's Oct. 23 editorial titled "Homosexuals should seek American Rights, not gay rights": Are you saying that human beings don't have the right to strive for social and political acceptance? Well, do we agree that a human being has the right to love whom they please without being subjected to ridicule, persecution and violence? This is what the Human Rights Campaign is about. For many years, there have been many harmful myths promoted by the media about gays and lesbians (read: human beings, American or not) as well as other minorities. In your sarcastic remark about "going international," are you suggesting homosexuals emigrate from the United States? "We have rights here," you say. Do you mean "we, the heterosexual Americans?" I for one am not fooled by the fact that you try to use actress Whoopi Goldberg as an ally. Wait till she finds out. That's enough of Mr. Smith-Kennedy.

Bisexual Awareness web site. Please include me as a lesbian staff member at the Student Health Service willing to provide support to GLBTs and questioning students.

Tracey Armstrong  
Student Health Service Registered Nurse

### Way to go, volunteers of Project Pumpkin

I want to thank senior Kelly Corcoran and all the organizers, student organizations and volunteers who continue to make Project Pumpkin such an outstanding contribution to campus life and to the community of Winston-Salem. It was a splendid occasion. The joy of the children was matched by the cool air and fall colors of the Quad. A good time was had by all. Such a project is the outcome of countless hours of devoted labor. On behalf of the university community, and the children given this treat, I congratulate and commend you all.

Thomas K. Hearn Jr.  
President

this semester, and the campus newspaper has been an integral part of that success through their interviews, previews and reviews of events. However, for two weeks in a row Student Union events have been reviewed in detail with no mention of the sponsoring organization — the Oct. 23 Indigo Girls concert review by senior Jennifer Gough and the Oct. 30 Beck Weathers lecture review by sophomore Suzanne DeBose. I would like to state that these events don't "just happen." No matter how big or small the event, Student Union volunteers book, promote and produce each and every one. They handle the details and the aspects of events that most people never consider to ensure a smooth production that patrons enjoy. Student Union volunteers are the stars behind the scenes. Keep up your good work at the *Old Gold and Black*; just remember to give credit where credit is due.

James Buckley  
Associate Director of the Benson University Center

For more letters, see next page.

### Student Union deserves credit for hard work

As the adviser to the Student Union, I would like to express my appreciation to the *Old Gold and Black* staff for their coverage of Student Union sponsored events this semester. SU has had many successful events

### Our letters policy

We welcome letters. Send yours via e-mail to letters@ogb.wfu.edu, by campus mail to P.O. Box 7569, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27109, or deliver it to Benson 518. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

## OLD GOLD AND BLACK

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