

# Studying abroad expands one's world

A semester in France proves to be the opportunity of a lifetime for one university student.

This morning I descended the two flights of winding, wooden stairs into the quiet, sunlit kitchen at 5 Boulevard de Brosses. As I sat down at the breakfast table and reached for the baguette and honey, my French father entered in his bathrobe and slippers. "Bonjour Kristin", he said. "Tu as bien dormi?" I wished him a good morning and answered that, yes, I had slept very well. A *café au lait* and a

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short while later, I grabbed my backpack and headed for the door. In a moment I heard, "Bonne journee, Kristin, et travailier bien!" Work hard, he had said, and I laughed to myself; sounds just like dad at home.

Living with a French family has undoubtedly been the highlight of my experience here in Dijon. I not only have ample means to practice my French, I feel that I am gaining great insight into

the French culture and family life, much more so than I would if I were merely travelling with friends or staying in a dorm. My family here not only provides me with food, shelter and a "French" atmosphere, but are a group of people who care about where I am late at night, who want to listen when I tell about my day, who are patient with my broken French and who are concerned that I receive the best experience in France possible. My family is very eager for me to learn. They have an enormous collection of books and jump at the chance to teach me something from one of them if I have questions about anything. My French father found out that I would be going to Venice over my vacation and brought out a gorgeous book on Venice to show me the best places to visit. Conversing with my family every day is a learning experience in itself. In searching for the words to express myself on a daily basis, I have learned and retained a much greater French vocabulary than I ever could memorizing words in the classroom, as well as some very useful words and phrases not necessarily found in my French-English dictionary.

Dinnertime is when most conversation takes place. Whether we're discussing the Clinton scandal (a favorite topic to tease Americans about) or my French little brother is teaching me tongue twisters or curse words, the whole family is enthusiastic, not only about teaching me French, but about learning what I think as an American in France. In addition to actual conversation, I have

learned that French table manners are quite different from ours, as is the ritual with which the food is served. I have also come to find that French people in general are more direct than we Americans are (who tend to pad what we say in order not to offend) and that the woman's role in France is still very traditional. Participating directly in the French culture and learning what is expected from me as a temporary family member, I am beginning to understand what it means to be part of a French family and truly live in France as the French do.

I am only a month into my stay here and already I have fond memories: watching the "Fetes de la Vigne" (wine festival) parade from our balcony, ordering pizza (yes, they have pizza delivery even in France!) with my French little brother when we were home alone, and even receiving a little chocolate from my French father with my mail every day. None of these experiences could have happened as they did without my French family, and I am truly grateful they give so much of themselves for me. The idea that someone would allow a perfect stranger into their home to live for four months with only the pretense that she is a Wake Forest French student and the assumption that the university was at the very least confident enough to send her is amazing to me. My homestay in Dijon has turned into one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. If anyone is thinking about going abroad, seriously consider a program with a homestay; it will enrich your travels 100 percent.

# Underage drinking calls for new fix

Curbing drinking on campuses is no solution to perennial problem.

What happens when you make responsible drinking harder? In the Sept. 10 article "Higher Education Act looks to reduce binge," there was the issue that Congress is enacting new legislation to cut down on

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underage drinking on college campuses, especially binge drinking. This is a futile cause.

I am not sure if their actions are because they are out of touch with the "rebellious youth" that just wants the freedom that many of them had at our age, or if they really do not care. You see, the problem with underage drinking is the solutions.

I drink a lot, and I must be a very bad person because I am only 20 years old. It is almost taboo to mention that this law is unfair. In the United States of America you are a man at 18, can vote, buy cigarettes and even put your life down for your country, but God forbid you have a drink.

Of all of the students that I know, none of us want to binge drink. We want to sit in the open and enjoy each other's company and joviality. We binge drink because there will be a party monitor to look into our clear cups at least a couple of times before we have to be tucked in for our 1 a.m. curfew and a resident adviser to come and check up on us like a neighbor stopping in when our parents are out of town. And we binge drink because we can not go to have a couple of beers off-campus because if more than 10 people show up the cops will storm in. Trying to stop irresponsible drinking with more rules is just going to lead to conflict and riots like it did at the University of Colorado. What we need is a solution that is a compromise, not one that further denies us of freedom.

So let's talk about what the major issue is here: Does the U.S. government care for our welfare, or is this just a case of cheap talk? The only thing that is going to happen when the government or liable institutions such as the university try to enforce unfair laws is that people are going to disobey them and hurt themselves and everyone with whom they come in contact.

I came to this school because when I got here three years ago you could have a beer within the walls of a fraternity and not have to worry.

You knew were you were going to find people and beer, and you did not have to worry about getting in trouble unless you were irresponsible. So, how responsible a drinker you were impacted the trouble you got into. Imagine that — being able to stop only the irresponsible drinking!

Now, at this school you have to be part of spy network just to enjoy yourself. Everything is now monitored by "Big Brother." The truth, however, is that the problem will continually get worse because the solution is hollow, and this fact causes it to hurt the very people it was made to affect.

The school is not to blame for everything, though. It is like a grandparent trying to tell a parent that he is unfair. At times, it would be a better idea for the school to look the other way. This is why things went so smoothly when I was a freshman, but we are still America's children. So, what can we do?

We have to promote safe drinking by first admitting that drinking will not be stopped. We have to have a safe "don't-ask-don't-tell" norm. If there is a way to not get in trouble and drink responsibly, I guarantee that every student would choose that over binge drinking.

But if your RA writes you up every time he sees you drinking without any warnings and with immediate severe penalties, then people are going to lock their doors and hurt themselves. Helplessness is the major problem here. Students have no voice at all in the very things that affect their lives and happiness.

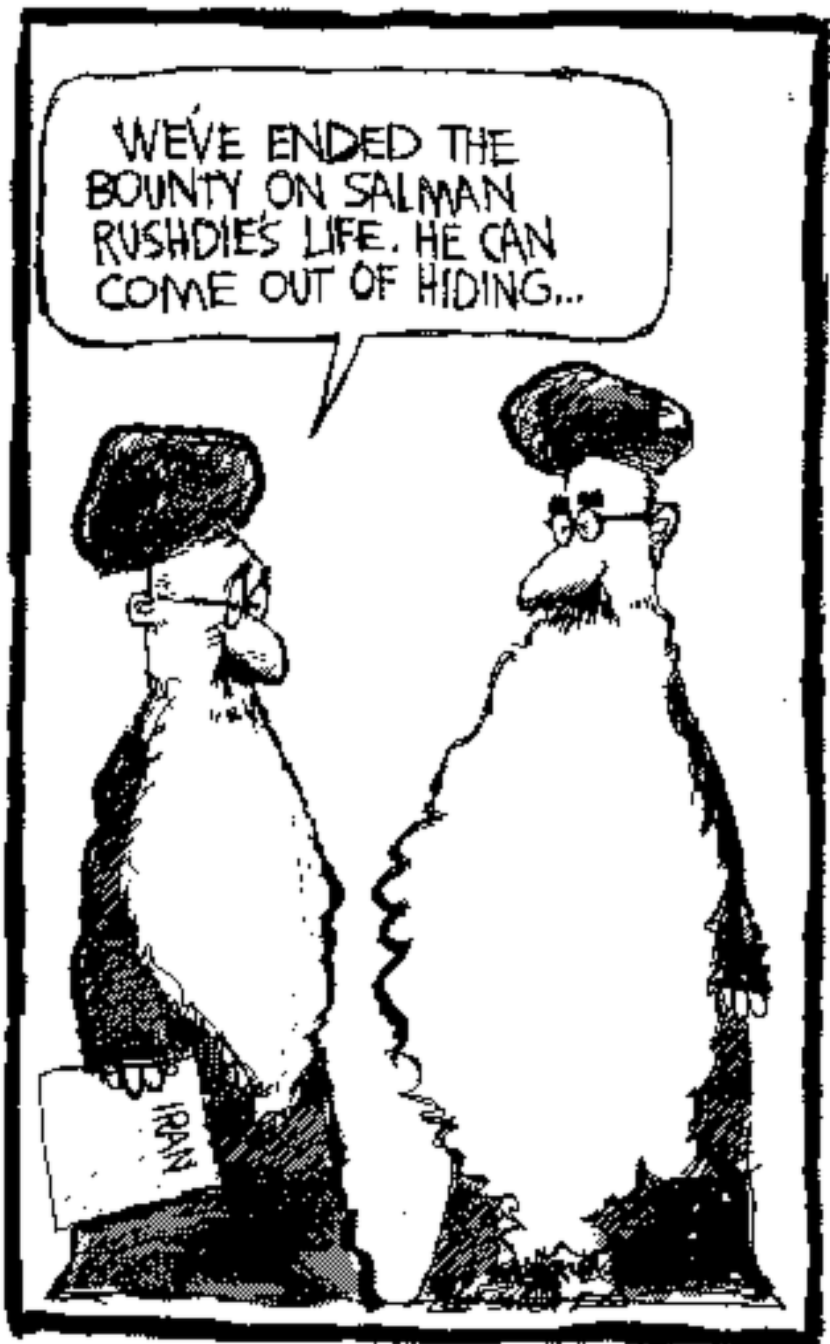
Most of us do not realize that we deserve the right to control our own lives, because we are dependent on this school for just about everything. This school is consistently referred to as a "country club" or a "never-never land," because we are pampered like children and at the same time treated like them. When a powerless student is faced with an un-winnable situation, then he acts like a child.

There is an easy way to solve the crisis of our deteriorating relationship with the community. The problem is that students need (yes, I said need), to congregate and socialize, yet the community deserves peace and property rights. So, what you do is take a section of Winston-Salem that is owned by the school (such as Student Drive) and make that more like an off-campus setting.

The reason most students leave campus is that they are fed up with obnoxiously sensitive fire detectors, over-regulation of what they can and cannot do and that sneaking suspicion that you are 5 years old and the baby-sitter is going to come in and tuck you in at any minute. If you take all the land that the university owns and block off these areas for students, then we will solve the problem.

Students are tolerant of their peers because they understand where they are coming from. The government is out of touch, and in an effort to make it look like they are trying to solve a problem, they are making it worse.

There are solutions to all of these problems, and if old and young adults can work together with mutual respect and open minds, then we will find them.



# Community should stand up to hate group

The university needs to combat destructive forces of Westboro Church group.

Last week, after listening to a compelling lecture sponsored by Student Union that featured Yaron Svovay (the author of *In Hitler's Shadow* who posed as a right-wing magazine editor to infiltrate the neo-Nazi movement in Europe) and his chilling recollections on hate crimes, I found myself unnerved. Then, reading more about the impending arrival of a conservative Baptist group from Kansas to picket us on our tolerance towards our

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gay community I began to worry. In fact, over the past few weeks, I feel as if I have become more acutely sensitized to the ignorance and hate organized groups like this have the potential to generate not only among us but in the world — and this, to me, is a frightening thought. Although this Kansas group's impending visit is not necessarily welcomed, it is perhaps timely. When we are faced with moments such as these, it seems to me that one of the most important things we need to

focus on and be clear about is who we are as a community.

It also seems to me that whenever one or more of our community groups are targeted, we are all in essence collectively targeted.

This type of pain and suffering that is promoted by groups who use a religious platform to instill hate and fear feeds on the "ism's" and "phobias" we may all share in common. This, in turn, then can either serve to separate us or bring us together as a community.

My hope is that we do not simply dismiss this Kansas group's visit as just another intellectual exercise or as an aberration of reality.

I hope we will utilize this as an opportunity to become more aware of the vast array of social and religious intolerance that exists around us. This Kansas group's visit will provide us with a sample of how hate can be promoted via their religious platform as Baptists.

The term "hate" is derived from the Greek word *kedos*, which means "grief." Thus, if we allow ourselves to promote hate on this campus either blatantly or covertly, then we are perhaps no better than this Kansas group.

On Sept. 17, there was a letter to the editor — "Destruction of flyers perplexes administration," — from Ken Zick, the vice-president for student life; Paul Escott, the dean of the college; Peter Weigle, the student life committee chairman and several community members regarding the

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concerns they had regarding the defacing of flyers publicizing a Gay Straight Alliance event. We also hear about the chilly climate minority groups encounter on our campus. The Women's Issues Network's clothes-line project and Policy Group for Rape Education, Prevention and Response's (PREPAR's) "Speak Out" also focus on another campus issue of violence against women.

The reality of living in the "real world" is right here at the doorsteps of our university.

We are by no means a "country club" like environment, as I believe our community issues here are just as real as those we find living out there in the "real world."

So, all of this then raises the following questions in my mind. How courageous are we to do something that will counteract these types of overt or covert hate activities?

Can we raise our own awareness and actions beyond what groups such as the one from Kansas will expect us to do? Can we come together as a community to participate in a vigil

against hate that affects us all and not only our gay community?

Also, are we capable of rising above our own ignorance and bias to exercise our compassion in how we treat others who are different than us?

And, what kinds of commitments do we need to continue to make individually and collectively as a community to combat that which creates and sustains "grief" within our social climate at the university?

These are some questions for which I have no answers at the moment. But, perhaps if we allow ourselves some time now to reflect on these things, then maybe we will all be better prepared to not only deal with the different kinds of issues this Kansas group's visit raises, but also what we also have to address here within our own community at the university.

I do believe we possess the capacity and courage to fight indifference and intolerance to make a positive difference in the quality of life index for those who live, study and work at the university. As I see it, we have two choices — we can ignore these events which continue to isolate us from different members of our community, or we can make a personal commitment to act on what we can in constructive ways. It's all up to us.

I hope our choice is to come together in the spirit of *pro humanitate* to take a courageous stand that honors all members of our community and the Baptist heritage we say we embrace and extol — or forever hold our peace. Amen.