

OPINION

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

Explanations needed for tuition increases

The university recently proposed that, for the 2001-2002 academic year, full-time undergraduate tuition should rise five percent from \$22,410 to \$23,530. Housing costs are proposed to increase between 7.3 percent and 10.1 percent, depending upon the type of room and the hall. Undergraduate summer tuition has been increased by 5.5 percent from \$275 to \$290 per credit hour for the 2001 summer session. The fee for automobile registration will also increase by \$25 to \$175.

According to John Anderson, the vice president of finance and administration, the tuition hike is in part a move by the university to recoup money spent on things purchased in the past – the microfridges in every dorm room, the ThinkPads for every student, free laundry services, the construction of Polo Residence Hall and renovations of the residence halls on the Quad. Something students may not know is that in the 1990-1991 school year – just one decade ago – tuition at this university was \$9,700, half of what it is today; tuition has since increased by an astounding 140 percent. This is a remarkable increase, although it is in fact comparable to many other universities' increases.

The university has used this money in ways that do benefit the student, but when tuition more than doubles in just 10 years, there is cause to wonder whether the money is truly being spent in the university's best interest.

Anderson said that recent tuition hikes were not necessarily part of a larger financial plan for the university. He did say, though, that there is a confidential report comparing forecasted costs for the university and forecasted revenue.

Faculty members and students should be made as aware as possible of the predictions the university is making that may affect future costs, especially during such a time of economic uncertainty. Many of our families have spent our whole lives preparing to pay for our college education. Should they not be allowed the opportunity to prepare for these tuition increases?

Moreover, with tuition costs spiraling by over \$1,000 per year each year, will the university increasingly attract only one type of student?

The university, it has often been noted, already has a reputation as being overwhelmingly white, conservative and wealthy. What is to stop this situation from becoming further exaggerated if tuition continues to climb?

Diversity may be a goal of the administration, but how can the university expect to become more economically diverse if tuition could considerably reach \$40,000 within the next two decades?

An even more disheartening aspect to the proposed tuition hike, a topic commonly raised in this column, is faculty salaries.

A large part of the university's operating budget comes from money brought in through students' tuition, and it seems logical to reason that a 140-plus percent raise in tuition would result in much higher salaries over the past decade, but this has not been the case.

The Undergraduate Plan, formerly known as the Plan for the Class of 2000, adopted in 1995 when the tuition was a comparably small \$15,000, promised that within five years, faculty salaries would be at the mean of cross-admit schools such as Duke University, Vanderbilt University and the University of Virginia. Five years later, faculty salaries are still not where they should be; university administrators have admitted that salaries remain below the mean of joint-admission universities.

Obviously, the amenities provided through the Undergraduate Plan have added a great deal of convenience to the lives of students. There are doubtlessly very few students who can imagine life without a ThinkPad. And other improvements to the campus, such as renovations to the Quad dorms and the addition of Polo have impacted a wide range of students.

But which makes a bigger difference in students' college experiences – not having to scrounge for quarters to do laundry, or having talented, dedicated and, above all, happy professors? Of course, there will always be students who will be willing to pay the tuition; the university's reputation alone should guarantee that. But without a concrete plan to set aside more tuition money for faculty salaries, will the university no longer be able to recruit quality professors?

If tuition is going to be increased, the money should first go toward raising faculty salaries. There may not be a simple way to directly correlate tuition hikes and faculty salaries, but if not, both students and faculty members deserve a reason why.

Professors shouldn't be made to wait another decade for the raises they were promised five years ago. Professors can literally make or break a student's experience at the university.

You can't put a price tag on inspiration.



Hunger also affects Americans

30 Hour Famine gives a small taste of the hunger many live with.

One hundred and twenty university students went to bed hungry on the night of March 23. Through World Vision's 30 Hour Famine, a program that benefits hungry and impoverished people in 88 countries, what these fasting students were experiencing

Sarah Rackley
STUDENT COLUMNIST

is not just a foreign phenomenon. Thirty-one million Americans do not get enough to eat, and 10 million go hungry at some point during the year, according to a USDA study.

The average 20-year-old American has about a 60 percent chance of spending at least one year living in poverty at some point in the future, according to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Despite the misconception that the poor are simply getting a free ride by taking advantage of the system, the fastest-growing segment of the poor population is the working poor. Already as our country's economy was booming, about 7.2 million American workers lived in poverty, according to the Department of Labor.

Why are there so many working poor and why do so many people go hungry in one of the world's most prosperous countries? Why are wages so low that someone working full-time may remain below the national poverty line? A single parent of two young children working one year in a full-time minimum wage job earns \$10,712 before paying taxes. At this level of income, such a family would remain more than \$2,700 below the poverty line, based on data from the Department of Labor and the U.S. Census Bureau. It is unjust that a worker who completes a full day's labor is not compensated in a way that will meet even his or her most basic needs.

Such prominent poverty in a country that spent the last decade in a period of "economic boom" is not acceptable. No other industrialized

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country permits the level of poverty and hunger that the United States allows. We must ask why we are in this situation after years of phenomenal economic growth. The answer is simple: Americans have not benefited equitably from the economic boom. We emerge from a period of economic prosperity where the average CEO earns 416 times what the average worker makes and 31 million Americans face hunger.

It is astounding that hunger is an issue when the United States produces enough food certainly to feed all Americans, and many of the world's hungry. Why doesn't this production benefit those in need? It is because it's not profitable to use what is left over in our country to meet the needs of those without enough. The Department of Agriculture estimates that 96 billion pounds of food goes to waste each year – thrown out by restaurants, farmers and food processing plants. That means that more than one-fourth of all the food produced in the United States is wasted, according to a USDA study.

Dan Glickman, former secretary of the USDA explains what impact the utilization of this wasted food could have. He states, "On average, each of us consumes about three pounds of food a day. If even five percent of the 96 billion pounds were recovered, that would represent a day's food for four million people. If we recovered 10 percent or even 25 percent, that would provide food for eight million, or 20 million people respectively."

So why don't we do this? Hunger and poverty are not partisan issues. No politician wants Americans to go to bed without getting enough to eat or children to suffer developmentally because of hunger. The reason we do not solve this problem that our country is obviously capable of remedying is because of a systemic, not a partisan problem. We discard 96 billion pounds of food annually instead of feeding hungry Americans because the market tells us to do

so. In the 1980s, special barges were constructed to dump tons of food into the ocean simply because it was not profitable to distribute this food to those in need. Giving this food to domestic or international agencies who would give this food to the poor would have hurt grain prices, and thus it was more economically sound to allow the extra tons of food to rot or be dumped into the ocean.

On a more local level, it is profitable for grocery stores and restaurants to discard perishables that really are still flavorful and safe for consumption. Consumers demand such high quality merchandise that many food products are discarded while they are still usable. Additionally, such businesses face obstacles to donating food to soup kitchens or directly to the homeless or hungry because the business remains responsible for this food. Businesses can face lawsuits if the food distributed to a charity or an individual is not up to standards.

We cannot rely on the market to solve the problem of hunger in the United States. We must instead ask the government to intervene to make more of our country's excess available to those in need. We can urge our representatives to support legislation that improves school meal programs and other hunger relief projects.

We can also take action here on campus to eliminate wasted food. When planning a group meal for a sorority, fraternity, church group or other social function, we can reduce amount of food discarded by improved meal planning and purchasing skills. Leftover food from such events can be donated to a charity such as the Samaritan Inn, which feeds the homeless of Winston-Salem. Possibly the largest change we can work for on campus is asking ARAMARK to donate to charity the food that would otherwise be discarded.

Our country clearly has the infrastructure and the knowledge to end hunger within our borders. The students who participated in the 30 Hour Famine showed that hunger and poverty are concerns that many diverse campus groups share. However, national leadership and effective public policy, along with local action, are necessary to provide for the needs of the less fortunate by countering economic forces that tell us that meeting human need is not profitable.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New art is a slap in the face to some students

I'm writing about the "Lazyboy Crucifix" that was purchased for the Student Union Art Collection. I just want to say that I find the sculpture offensive and am angered that the students wasted the school's money on something that they knew would be offensive to many of Wake's students. It's not as if they didn't realize that the sculpture would be viewed as offensive by many, in fact that's why they bought it. They bought it because it would piss people off, and because it pissed us off that's somehow going to make us better people.

How will that make us better people you ask? Well the answer is simple. They've already bought it and they're not going to get rid of it despite how much opposition the student body raises. They know there would be a heated debate about it and the debate is supposed to teach us "tolerance."

There is a word for people who do things to stir up controversies and that word is agitators.

"Tolerance" is a word that gets kicked around a lot of in our politically correct culture. Someone has a different view of something and we are supposed to tolerate that view no matter how wrong or offensive we find it. Let me throw out another word that should have been taken into consideration: "respect." Have enough respect for other people's personal beliefs to not do something that offends and antagonizes them. I say respect is the spirit of Pro Humanitate, not antagonism.

What should we do with this incredibly offensive sculpture now that we have it? My suggestion would be to throw in the nearest trash heap. Or sell it and try to get some of my tuition money back out of it. But do not put this piece of "art" on display. I say this knowing full well that the sculpture is going to be put on display no matter

what I say about it.

I also realize that by writing this letter I'm doing exactly what they want and contributing to a "heated debate." I won't respond to this issue anymore because I know that for all their talk about tolerance and accepting what people believe, they won't tolerate my opinion and take this piece of garbage to the dump where it belongs.

Jonathan Bennett
Senior

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