

Where on campus does the tuition money flow?

The computer and library services on campus are worth the price of admission.

This morning, while preparing to write my weekly column for the *Old Gold and Black* but desirous of a little refreshment beforehand, I plopped myself down in front of my computer with a box of Cheez-Its close at hand and reached over to the refrigerator to pour myself a little beverage. Disastrously, when I was finished pouring my beverage into

Chris Pumblee
STUDENT COLUMNIST

my glass and was restoring the two-liter bottle to its original capped state, I managed to spill about a half pint of Cheerwine all over my computer. The computer, miraculously, stayed on and even would respond to keyboard input, but I decided that the best course of action would be for your ever-knowledgeable columnist to clean out the keyboard and other various places as best as I could with a Q-Tip or 12 and several rolls of paper towels. Forty-five minutes later, the helpful people at Information Systems had a loaner for me and had diagnosed my computer with an acute case of Cheerwine inhalation syndrome. Apparently, the only cure for CIS is \$500 worth of treatment at the nearest IBM service center.

Now, some may think that I'm writing this column to gripe and complain either about Cheerwine, IBM, Wake Forest, or all three. However, I'm only going to complain for a short while. Rather, I'm writing what is mostly a warning column to those of you who may be considering the status of things at Wake Forest and preparing to go back to your various places of origin and talk about the service given to

students here. I'm also reconsidering my stance on what we get for our \$30,000-plus per year. Last year, and for part of this year, I was one who wondered aloud every time I was asked to pay for something what I was getting for my money. Copies in the Library not free? What are we getting for our \$30,000? Are prices going up in Sundry and the Bookstore? Spend some of that \$30,000. Are we paying more tuition every year? Is \$30,000 not enough for the administration? Now, I'm reconsidering. After my trip through the valley of the shadow of IS, I realize that it takes quite an investment to provide the education that we get at Wake Forest University. Here's why I think so.

First, when we come to Wake Forest, we get a new computer and printer. While much is made of the fact that we are charged for that every year, I don't think that that's completely fair. Consider the cost of maintaining the RTA program, the IS support staff, and the servers and mainframes and infrastructure for the extensive campus network, and also to put into place new services, the latest of which is the wireless cards which are now available for most of campus. No matter how much the university takes in when they sell the computers, and don't doubt for a second that I'm paying at least half as much to fix my computer as Wake Forest paid for it in the first place, never forget that they're giving it to you. Unless you are so clumsy or otherwise unlucky as to do some damage to your computer that they determine to be user error, you will never pay a dime for the privilege of having network drops approximately every 15 feet in some buildings. You'll never pay a dime to avoid crowded computer labs and broken network printers that don't work properly at the very time you need them to no matter how much you pay per page to print. You'll never pay a dime for service and support when you can't seem to get the computer to get beyond the IBM logo at the beginning of the startup process, and you'll never have to worry about longevity of things like CD-ROM drives and LCD screens, because you'll trade the computer for a new one in

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two years or, if you're a junior or senior, you'll graduate and suddenly have a whole new view, the view from an office, which odds are will contain another computer provided by your new employer, who will have an equally stringent policy on user error and payment for computer fixes.

So, now that we've established that computing isn't that big a deal, let's tackle something else. I was just in the library today, and I notice that they're now charging not only for photocopies but also for printing pages from their computers. Some students are up in arms about this, and my roommate was one of them just the other day. He wondered the same thing I used to about why, when the university collects \$30,000 or more from every student every year, that they need to collect \$0.05 per page for printing in the library. Let's run over the things that are provided at no cost in the library. First, the library provides invaluable technology resources to do things like scan documents, burn CDs for those of us without the integrated drives in the laptops, make copies, do research, and a whole host of other things. None of these things would be possible without the library running through gobs of money for things like support for their machines, training for student and full-time employees, and most importantly to buy things with which we, the student body, can do research. Things like magazine and journal subscriptions, subscriptions to Web sites providing information, and just simply buying books cost lots of money per year, and I don't doubt that the library staff sometimes wishes for larger budget allocations, and since this is unlikely because everyone in every department

at Wake Forest is looking for the same windfalls, the only way to make more money to provide more services is to cut costs elsewhere, which is why photocopies and printed pages aren't free. Also, don't forget the cool stuff that the library has just for fun. If there is somebody out there that didn't know that the library has real novels that aren't assigned by any professors and videotapes and DVDs that are free for the asking, I wish they'd wander over there and ask somebody. In that alone, Z. Smith Reynolds beats every public library I've ever seen hands down, and they do it without seeing a tax dollar from anywhere, also.

Now on to the part of this article that everyone will enjoy, the part where I bash the university, IBM, and Cheerwine. I think it was totally bogus of the people at IS to lead me on to think that they might be able to fix my computer without sending it off to IBM when I knew and that guy who spoke to me knew that when they get a computer that's been the victim of a liquid spill, they automatically open it up, look to see if there is indeed any evidence that something's been spilled on the computer, clean the case up, and ship it to IBM, where the techs there spend an hour at most fixing the problem by replacing parts until the computer works properly, then charging for the part, plus \$200 per hour labor. In turn, the University passes those charges on to me through the deductible in their insurance plan, which pays for the entirety of the damage, no matter how many parts the tech at IBM replaces, after the deductible of \$500 is met. However, that's just customer service on something like a computer, where it costs less to replace parts as fast as possible than it does to actually pay somebody to look inside the case and see if they can get by without replacing the screws that hold the covers on the bottom. As for Cheerwine, I wonder what happened to the plastic bottoms on the two-liter bottles. Now the bottoms are molded plastic feet, and I can remember seeing flat bottoms on some older bottles of marginal soft drinks like RC Cola and Cheerwine. I think with that added stability, I might not have spilled that half pint of Cheerwine on my computer in the first place.

Oh well, such is life. I suppose that I'll go back now and try to prepare my parents for the news.

Discover your artistic side in boring classes

Classes: boring lecture time or opportunities for incredible self-discovery?

We are now approximately three weeks into the semester, meaning all of you students out there have had ample time to dissect your myriad syllabi and determine exactly which of your classes you will never, under any circumstances, be able to miss. Here I am thinking of the courses in which the grade

Jay Cridlin
EDITOR IN CHIEF

breakdown is listed as follows:

Quiz: 5 percent
Midterm: 5 percent
Final: 10 percent
Attendance and participation: 75 percent
I hate you: 5 percent
Likewise, you have all probably determined that at least one of your classes is duller than Dimetapp, and you have already expended significant class time and effort doodling Louvre-worthy pencil sketches of Scrooge McDuck.

Look, we all love to pretend that we love to learn and that education is fun and that we consider Hobbes' *Leviathan* perfectly acceptable reading material for toilet time.

But in reality, at least half our time in class is spent drawing elaborate depictions of (1) our more interesting-looking classmates and (2) our own names, written in fonts theretofore never conceived by the human mind. The other half of the time we are asleep.

I myself have had a lifelong unhealthy obsession with doodling. Now, don't be mistaken - in terms of sheer artistic ability, I am not exactly Guggenheim material. My drawings are more hackney than Hockney, more day-glo than Degas, more Klump than Klimt. I definitely come from the Raphaelite period, in that much of my youth was spent drawing Ninja Turtles.

But about 10 minutes into a discussion on the formal education of Blaise Pascal - the point at which pen usually hits paper - the passion I exhibit in my work is unmistakable. Just look at the shading under Pac-Man's eyes! The texturing on the extension cord of that talking toaster! The grainy detail on that portrait of a potato doing the Macarena!

But I do more in boring classes than just doodle. Lately, I have taken to getting other work done during some of my less stimulating class time. In fact, I am writing part of this column in class. See this sentence? I just came up with that in class. This one too.

But what really fascinates me is

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discovering the mind-wandering habits that others have picked up during their long and largely pointless educational careers.

I have one friend who whiles away the hours during her longest seminars by compiling lists. This may seem like a sensible, pedestrian pastime if you're talking about to-do lists or grocery lists, but these are lists that simply scream, "I am one macroeconomics lecture away from requisitioning a mechanical lung."

Her lists range from the abstract ("My favorite trees: maple, oak, Japanese maple, sycamore, hemlock") to the meticulous ("Favorite types of ink pens: Zebra BP F-301, black and silver; PaperMate Comfort Mate, black and gray; PaperMate Flexi Grip, black and gray; Bic Round Stic, white with blue cap").

This, I must admit, is a good idea. What would at first seem like a pointless exercise in *High Fidelity*-esque minutia is actually an introspective study of self. Who am I? Which 1980s songs do I think are overrated? What do I like on my hot dogs?

Notes from class, then, become a *This Is Your Life*-style almanac of your most vital statistics, all painstakingly scribbled out and ready to go for the back of your baseball card. Brilliant and practical.

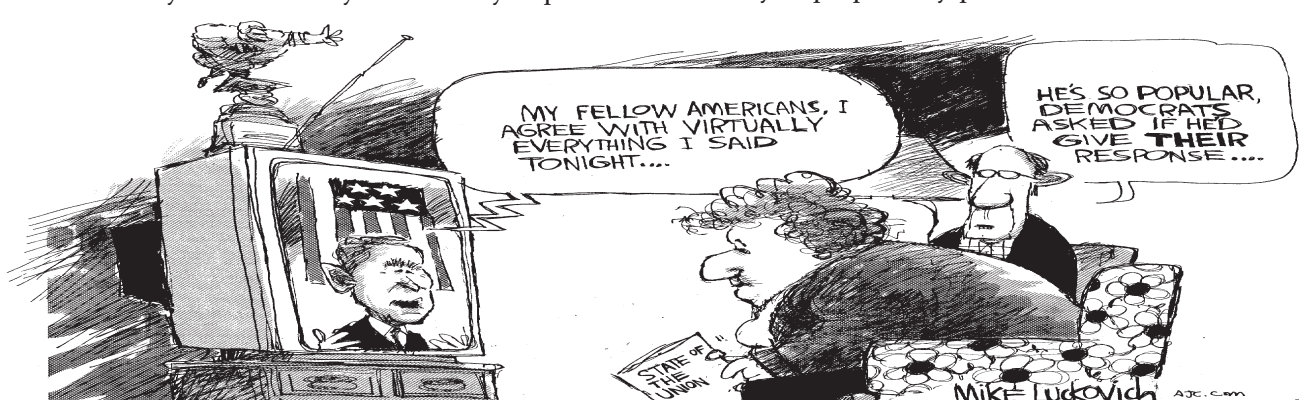
Others consider class time to be an hour set aside for self-improvement. Another student I know has, for the past four years, spent her most tedious classes teaching herself to write left-handed. Now, she says, she's more or less ambidextrous.

This is another great idea I wish I'd had. In fact, it has opened up an entire world of class-time options for the betterment of one's self. Instead of drawing crude sketches of my classmates, I could have been teaching myself to write Chinese characters, or at least twirl a pen between my fingers.

But if I went that direction, I'd be missing out on hours of prime doodle time. I value my educational dollar, thank you very much, and I plan to get as much artwork out of it as I can.

So years from now, when the ribbon is cut on the Jay Cridlin Doodle Wing in the Museum of Modern Art, you'll be able to tell your children that you may have been in the studio when the master was inspired to create "Toothbrush Disco" or "Break Dancing Alligator Pt. 2."

But don't spend too much time lecturing them on art history. They're probably just doodling anyway.



Athletes' union a bad idea

The Collegiate Athletes Coalition seems to unionize college athletes.

Labor unions have had a tumultuous history in the United States. While often making great gains in working conditions, wage increases, and standards of living, unions have also caused havoc within the social realm.

Doug Hutton
STUDENT COLUMNIST

No one need look farther than the rash of union uprisings in the late 19th century, most notably the Haymarket Riot or the Pullman Palace Car Strike, to find the dangers of blue collar upheaval. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act, designed originally to protect consumers from monopolies, was used to squelch overpowering labor leaders like Eugene Debs. Not until the General Motors strike of the '50s was union power completely restored.

Unions have become commonplace in the modern business world. Grocery stores, airlines, and school systems are three of many industries that organize contracts with labor unions. Collective bargaining has brought unions to the negotiating table as equals with corporate leaders. Only in rare cases today do unions strike; the repercussions from such a maneuver hurt both the consumer and worker. The relationship between corporations and unions has moved from one of disdain to one of respect.

Along comes the Collegiate Athletes Coalition, wanting to join the ranks of the U.S. Steelworkers Union as a legitimate union force. By bringing the nation's athletes together, the CAC hopes to buck the NCAA and create meaningful reforms to college athletics. Feeling that the NCAA reaps profit at their expense, this new organization wants to share in that profit,

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principally by adding benefits to healthcare packages and allowing monthly stipends. A noble purpose, I admit, but a truly terrible idea.

The unionization of college athletes has about as much logic as the pre-Copernican notion that the sun revolved around the earth. It makes about as much sense as your roommate after having 10 or 15 shots. It makes UNC students look smart. Do you see where I'm going with this?

Whoever supports the CAC has forgotten why college exists.

College exists for the higher education of our nation's young men and women. The CAC forgets that college athletes are students first, athletes second. The classroom is priority one, the court or field a distant second. This may seem hard to believe considering the amount of class time some athletes miss. For those who disagree with this paragraph, feel free to create a sports school devoted to athlete recruitment. And no, Kobe Bryant, high school doesn't qualify.

The CAC would receive some respect if its goals were not so outrageous. Monthly stipends? Do scholarship athletes not realize that they get a \$30,000 stipend each year, plus per diem money during the season? College cannot be made any more affordable than "free." Books, meals, rooms, classes are at no cost to the scholarship athlete. Meanwhile one of my friends with four siblings relies on his bank account for the same necessities. Let's move on to ridiculous point two.

Health care and life insurance do not come cheap from private firms such as MetLife or Cigna. Yet the CAC whines when each athlete gets a free \$10,000 life insurance policy and unlimited healthcare during the

season in which they play? For many, this coverage comes on top of the policies already held by their parents or guardians. While my father was unemployed last year, our family paid nearly \$800 per month for healthcare coverage. For the athletes to demand such extensive coverage on top of a free education is ludicrous.

Quick stop to question the NCAA as well. Why should off-season wages be capped? An athlete should be able to work as much or as little as he or she pleases with the little free time they have. But back to the CAC.

The CAC wants the NCAA to help athletes with post-collegiate job searches and careers. Two alternatives make for an easier solution to this problem: get drafted to the pros, or go to class to graduate within four or five years. The burden for employment should be placed on an administrative body that was designed solely to facilitate healthy athletic competition between colleges.

Every undergraduate faces the prospect of searching for a career in the today's uncertain job market. Our school has many resources available (Career Services, Student Athlete Services) to make the process less stressful. Athletes should turn to these groups, and within themselves, before crying to the NCAA.

I do not mean to demean our athletes through this column. Many of them work harder than any of us to maintain strong academics while playing the sport they love with passion and dedication. By no means, however, are athletes a group of workers that should have any right to unionize. They are students, young men and women still learning the ropes of the real world. Each university subsidizes their education, provides facilities and equipment, but receives only disgruntled whining from groups like the CAC. Education first, sports second. Though that doesn't always translate to profit, I've heard our endowment is fairly large. Just a thought.