

OPINION

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

Off-campus pledge night a big mistake

Long considered one of the best social events on campus, spring semester pledge night will be a radically different party this year – one with dangerous and poorly thought out changes.

Upperclassmen familiar with pledge nights of years past remember an evening filled with fraternity party-hopping, frigid temperatures and a headache (and maybe a nasty cold) the next morning.

But now students will worry about more than just how to get from their rooms to the Greek lounges in nothing but a tank top and jeans.

This year, with the majority of parties scheduled off campus at the Millennium Center or area bars, the risk of drunken driving has become a much bigger deal.

While off-campus parties always have the potential to increase drunken driving among students, moving one of the biggest party nights elsewhere increases that risk by a great deal.

Unfortunately, with most fraternities planning parties independently of one another, no cohesive transportation system has been set up to combat this problem.

While individual fraternities and sororities pay for shuttles to get their members from campus to their parties, independents are literally left out in the cold.

Of course offering a shuttle service doesn't guarantee people will take advantage of that option, but it's a heck of a lot better than expecting people to make good decisions about how to get home at 2 a.m.

This week's article detailing student's sometime lax attitude toward drunken driving doesn't exactly bode well,

either.

And though Tricia Richerson, the director of Greek Affairs, and her staff express grave concern about what might happen, the fact remains that there are probably going to be a bunch of drunk students off campus this Friday with not very many safe ways to get home.

Concern just doesn't cut it – especially when lives are on the line.

What's to be done?

Frankly, the best option would be to maintain the status quo and hold pledge night here.

Yes, there will be underage drinking in probably the best of circumstances and fights, sexual assaults and alcohol poisoning in the very worst of cases – but at least we wouldn't be adding the mass transport of hundreds of inebriated students.

It's no stretch of the imagination to say that pledge night comes with an inherent set of problems, but by relinquishing control of the situation, no matter how unwillingly, Greek Affairs and Student Life are tacitly ignoring what could potentially turn into a huge disaster.

Short of keeping pledge night the way it's always been, a chance that seems unlikely at this point, we urge students to exercise extreme caution this weekend. You know the drill: don't drink and drive but please don't walk all the way home from the Millennium Center either.

We ask Student Life and Greek Affairs to offer a shuttle service for independents, charging students a couple of bucks for the ride. Greeks could publicize their shuttle service and offer rides to independents as well.

Ignoring half the student population is unadvisable and, in this case, potentially fatal.

Edwards impresses experts

Strong showing in Iowa pushes John Edwards to the ideological fore.

He is young, vibrant and the candidate that strikes fear in the Bush White House. This fear stems from the all-too-familiar scenario that led to Bush senior's loss in the 1992 election to the relatively

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Chase Horne

GUEST COLUMNIST

unknown Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. During the 1992 campaign, Clinton's bid for the Democratic nomination seemed hopeless; a year later he was sworn in as the 42nd President.

Senator John Edwards is a politician and according to James Carville, one of Clinton's lead strategists in 1992, the best campaigner and speaker that he has ever seen. While the election is 10 months away and the democratic nomination is still far from secure, the Edwards campaign has finally ignited the fire that the Bush campaign hoped would remain subdued.

With Edwards' strong second finish in the Iowa caucus, it has become clear that the Democratic Party finally realized the way into the White House is with a realistic alternative to Bush, someone who will appeal to the same group of "neutral" voters that Clinton was able to lure in the 1992 election. John Edwards fits this role

nicely and offers America a candidate to vote for without feeling as if they are completely betraying the current President and his policies.

In a primary race that has reminded me more of school-yard taunting than a race for President, Edwards has managed to distance himself from the trite and ridiculous finger-pointing; instead, he has remained poised and focused on his campaign. While others gained publicity from engaging in these childish tactics, Edwards relied upon his policies and ideas to get his name out to the people. Unfortunately, this has kept him from gaining the initial support of Democrats seeking a stark alternative to Bush. However, he is aware that this small minority will not win the White House or even the Democratic nomination. This has kept his campaign moving forward despite lackluster numbers in the early polls.

By not engaging in political bashing, Edwards may have hurt himself with early numbers. But early numbers do not decide elections and now his gamble is finally paying off. The American people regard Edwards with a similar type of enthusiasm

that gripped Clinton's run for the White House; even as a candidate he closely reminds many of the former President. *The Economist* believes that Edwards' candidacy "... offers a persuasive Clintonian mixture of southern moderation and boyish optimism."

Edwards is confident his message will be heard and will win him the nomination. He benefits from having the southern ties necessary to have a legitimate shot at stealing at least one, if not more, southern states from Bush in the election. In fact, if Edwards were to win the nomination, all he would have to do is capture the North Carolina electorate and hold the states Gore won in 2000 to give him a victory. For Howard Dean or John Kerry this task would be impossible, but since Edwards is currently a Senator from North Carolina he would have to be considered the favorite as a native son.

In a recent issue of *Time Magazine* it was noted that the fact that Edwards' campaign has not yet clicked with voters had proven to be "one of the biggest mysteries of the campaign" despite the fact that he brought "an upbeat message, a winning personality and innovative ideas." If Iowa was any sign, Edwards has now become the new comeback kid, the same title given to Clinton after coming out of nowhere in the 1992 primaries. The mystery has now disappeared and Edwards, like Clinton, has finally become a threat to not only take the Democratic nomination, but the White House as well.

Chase Horne is a sophomore.



Two reasons to expect a rebound

The men's basketball team is on a four-game losing streak. They've plunged from No. 3 in the nation to No. 17.

Some fans are questioning whether they will make the NCAA Tournament now.

But, while the Deacons won't make the tournament if they don't play better than they have of late, there are two particularly strong reasons to believe they will come back and play like they did in starting the season 11-0.

First, the obvious: Josh Howard Night. At a time when the Deacons are missing their former leader most, Howard will return to his former stomping grounds to

have his No. 5 jersey retired at the Deacs' game against Maryland.

Howard's mere presence ought to reinvigorate not only the fans, but also a team that has no scholarship seniors. A little advice from the reigning ACC Player of the Year and rookie starting forward for the Dallas Mavericks never hurts.

If Howard's return to campus isn't enough, the men could draw some inspiration from the women's team, which evened up its record at 9-9 with a shocking upset of No. 10 North Carolina.

If the women's team, still only 2-5 in conference play, can win such a big game, surely Chris Paul, Eric Williams and Co. can as well.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Removing government from marriage fallacious

Currently adorning the campus are a collection of signs in opposition to the proposed amendment defining marriage as "a union between a man and a woman." A growing trend in the debate over this topic (obviously one with high emotional consequences) is the abuse of politically-charged words to confuse an undecided public. These posters are a prime example of this trend, and I feel an etymological lecture is appropriate for those responsible.

"Keep the Government Out of It" is the slogan these posters scream at innocent bystanders, and it is rather convincing—unless you think about it. Let's analyze. From a first look, it would seem that the writers felt there was too much government presence in the issue of marriage, and that the only way to secure liberty in this freedom-loving nation is to "Keep the Government Out of It." A pretty self-explanatory slogan. So what's the problem? Maybe the government is too intrusive, and we need to protect ourselves from Big Brother! Ignoring

the fact that these people are probably Democrats (and we know how much they *hate* big government) those responsible are blatantly lying to the reader. Because of a little thing called *money*.

Let's step back for a second. What do government and marriage have to do with each other anyway? In America's culture, marriage has two aspects: legal and religious. The government doesn't *touch* the religious aspect of marriage; in fact, churches all over the place are marrying homosexual couples. The issue in question is the *legal* aspect of marriage. In this aspect, government plays a huge role. Essentially, marriage is whatever the government wants to pay for as a family structure. That payment is through medical and tax benefits, but it's basically money. The government pays for whatever it thinks "marriage" is.

What was the point of all that? To demonstrate the absurdity of the statement, "Keep the Government Out of It," when referring to marriage. That's roughly equivalent to telling your parents to keep out of your college decision, while simultaneously paying for it. They most likely will allow you to choose whatever college

you want within a certain spectrum. As long as the government is writing the check, it has absolute authority to determine what spectrum of sexual relationships it wants to define as "marriage."

In short, here's my advice to those responsible for the posters: revise your slogan to what you truly mean—"Keep the Government In It. And Let Homosexuals Join the Party." My reasons for disagreeing with this new and etymologically honest slogan I will leave for another day. But I can now sleep well knowing my fellow Deacons are given a fair opportunity to form opinions.

Ryan Trafford
Freshman

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