

OPINION

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

SG officer choices refined by run-off

After the first round of Student Government elections, the *Old Gold and Black* editorial board would like to emphasize and clarify our support for candidates in the runoff elections. Previously, we were unable to make a clear distinction between the candidates for Student Government treasurer. However, we fully endorse junior Niki Lim as the more qualified and experienced candidate that would make a better SG treasurer than current front-runner Peter Ayoub, a freshman. Lim's year of service on SBAC really makes her stand out as the superior candidate ahead of Ayoub, who has had no previous experience on SBAC. SG treasurer is one of the most important positions on SG, and previous SBAC experience is vital for the treasurer to have a firm grasp of the enormity of the position's responsibility and importance on campus. Although Ayoub's enthusiasm and ideas are positive aspects of his candidacy, we feel that his lack of experience make his bid for treasurer problematic. Lim has the knowledge of the SBAC process that will make her a better treasurer than Ayoub.

We also continue to support junior Trip Chalk's bid for SG president. We feel that he is the best-qualified

candidate for the job, and his experience really puts him on top. His challenger, junior Mark Arinci, has some good ideas, but much of his platform is either already in place or are not particularly relevant. His idea for a book exchange is an excellent one, but it has already been implemented. Also, we feel that there are more pressing issues than his idea to get golf discounts for students.

In contrast, we think Chalk's ideas are well thought out and have a lot of potential. His ideas about focusing on short-term goals for immediate action and sending long-term goals to committees for further consideration are what SG needs. This promises to cut down tremendously on the wasted time that can sometimes bog down SG, and should allow Chalk to exercise his ability to get results.

For secretary, the *OGB* continues to endorse freshman Kristin Settlemyre. Settlemyre impresses us as a professional candidate who seems to demonstrate the ability to handle the various duties of SG secretary in a mature manner. Her ideas about reaching both the legislators and constituents are sound, and she promises to make communication between student government and the student body much more effective.

Health plan debate divisive, troubling

This week, the faculty senate committee on health care proposed a plan to tie health insurance premiums to employee salary. Though this may appear to be merely a restatement of problems that were central last spring, this is in fact potentially a much more important issue, given the recent freezing of faculty salaries and dwindling endowment.

The faculty senate's plan to tie premiums to salary means that those professors and administrators who earn more than \$85,000 per year will be expected to pay more of the faculty's collective burden, in order for the contributions for those faculty and staff members earning less than \$85,000 per year to decrease.

If this plan is implemented, the highest-paid faculty and staff members would pay a larger portion of the price of health care than they do now, and the lowest-paid members would pay less.

As demonstrated by the recent debate at the faculty senate forum on

March 30, this is plainly a very divisive issue. Because certain members of the faculty have very strong personal and philosophical opinions on the issue, the debate became quickly heated and polarized. We were disappointed to learn of the personal attacks, lack of respect and negative demeanor with which some members of the faculty chose to express viewpoints. Although we understand that given the political nature of the debate, we feel that perhaps some of the dialogue could have been conducted in a more civil manner.

The bottom line is that the university, in its commitment to provide equal opportunity employment and the motto *Pro Humanitate*, should make this issue a top priority. Not only should it be a university priority, but the university has a responsibility to resolve this issue with the input of faculty, staff and the administration.

While difficult, this issue is too important to be placed aside and ignored. It is crucial that the university work to reach some sort of solution.

Right idea, wrong ideology

Economic knowledge on target, but political savvy lacking.

Jacob Lyles knows his economics. But as an economist trying to talk politics, especially the implication of free trade in the realm of politics, he errs in assuming that free trade is the magical "cure-all" for the woes

By only understanding economics, Lyles' analysis is one dimensional and fails to consider the politics of the real-world situations in developing countries.

countries using the same economic bait.

Most Latin American leaders, such as Lula da Silva of Brazil and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, however, are not buying it. They know that they are somehow getting the short end of the stick.

Lula's main objection is that while the United States may talk free trade in the jargon of the free trade agreement, the fact remains that we continue agricultural subsidies that heavily protect American farmers – a measure that tips the scales disproportionately to hurt Latin American farmers struggling to compete with American protectionism.

So while free trade is a commendable goal that we should be working as a nation to establish globally, as Lyles stated in his column, the FTAA, as it currently stands, is a poor disguise for a real and equitable free trade agreement.

Moreover, what good is free trade in countries that don't have the necessary infrastructure to benefit from it? According to reports by researchers from the United Nations Development Program, trade-led growth alone isn't enough to build healthy economies: infrastructure, education, and access to public health services are all necessary for countries to even see the benefits of free trade.

So before we cross borders to spread the bountiful seed of free trade, we need an understanding of more than just economics. We need

to comprehend the sociopolitical context, culture, and goals of the nations with which we seek to establish trade relations.

I believe that the United States' approach needs to be encouraging and fostering sustainable development in Latin American countries. Because Latin America is a region rich and abundant with natural resources, the effects of free trade have a potential to be disastrous, as these developing nations continue to expand export markets through exploitation of natural resource industries where they have a comparative advantage.

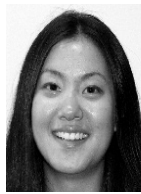
Currently, the FTAA has very weak environmental provisions and provides no infrastructure for Latin American countries to handle the pressures of development on the environment.

Growth needs to be formulated upon the principles of sustainable development – and not the economic benefits of free trade alone – to ensure that countries can meet the needs of the present without compromising the future.

Furthermore, free trade agreements in Latin America need minimum labor standards that meet the World Trade Organization's guidelines and more provisions to ensure that the negative effects of free trade, such as Lyles' mention of outsourcing (which has recently become a buzzword of democratic politicians of late) and the exploitation of cheap labor, won't widen the gap between the Americas.

Lyles doesn't point to any negative consequences of free trade, and I think it is dangerous to assume that there are none. Perhaps Lyles needs to step out of his haven in Calloway and Carswell Halls and pay a visit to the political science department in Tribble Hall before he speaks with authority on politics.

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Angel Hsu

EDITOR IN CHIEF

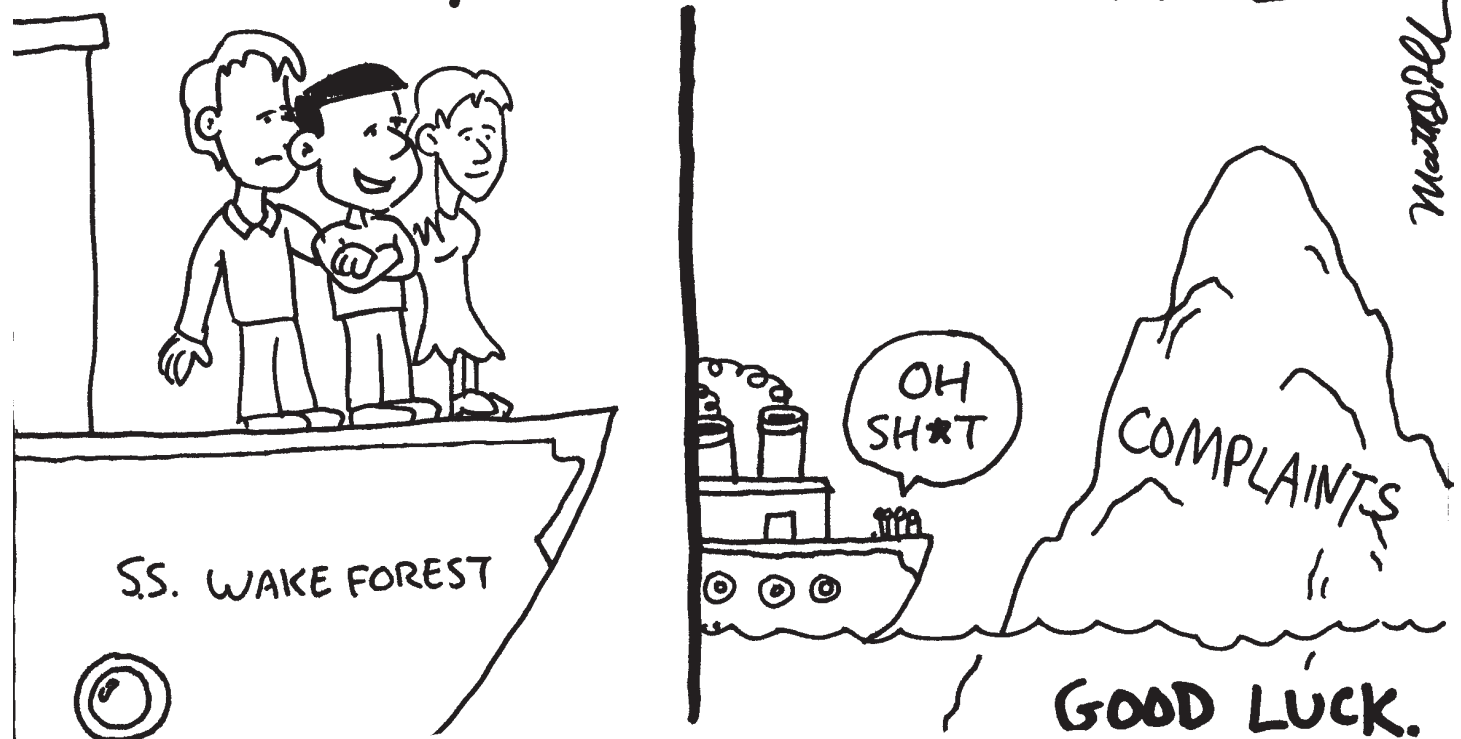
of developing countries. In simply nominal terms, "free trade" seems like a win-win situation, as Lyles argued in his editorial column last week ("Kerry: ignorant of economics?" March 25). He rightfully points to the economic benefits of free trade: economic growth, increased income, and more jobs.

Considering the current state of the economy, I think we'd all agree that these economic achievements of free trade are desirable goals. If this is the case, then why are so many Latin American leaders so opposed to the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA) agreement?

This is where Lyles' economic analysis falls short in determining the real implications of free trade. By only understanding economics, Lyles' analysis is one dimensional and fails to consider the politics of the real-world situations in developing countries.

However, Lyles is not alone in his logic: the United States, as the chief proponent of the FTAA, is trying to sell the FTAA to Latin American

NOW THAT THE NEW SG OFFICERS ARE COMING, THEY CAN TAKE CONTROL



Elections fail to satisfy senior

Student Government elections disillusion those who expect more.

Is there really any question about who would have won the election for Student Government president? I don't mean that I could predict before Wednesday who the top two finishes would be, though I managed to pick



Chris Plumblee

EDITORIALS EDITOR

both of them accurately.

I don't mean that I'll be able to predict who will win next week, though I expect to be able to pick the results of that election as well. I mean simply that the Student Government elections every year pit several candidates against one another, and they all make promises, and they all say they're for the students and everyone will be better off if they vote for them. Then once they get in office they realize how difficult it will be

to fulfill all those campaign promises, so they just hope that the electorate will forget about them, and by and large they do, and the cycle repeats.

I don't mean to say that I can pick the candidate who will win by name, but I do mean that, by and large, it might as well be any candidate, because they will all end up being swallowed by the enormity of their promises and fail to meet any of them.

Some of you, perhaps those who know me, will probably suspect that this is some sort of deep-seated vendetta against Student Government. I assure you that that is not the case. While it's true that it's been a while since Student Government did anything *for* me, by the same token it's been a lot longer since Student Government ever did anything *to* me, so I'm beyond some petty hatred.

At the same time, I don't think it's necessarily true that we should give up on Student Government ever doing anything meaningful with their existence. Though I don't necessarily get disappointed when some administration goes through their whole tenure without affecting any change, I do start every year with a modicum of enthusiasm that I cannot explain rationally.

In any case, when I say that I can predict who will win any given election, I really mean that I can predict what will happen as a result of the election, which is to say, nothing. Every year,

Student Government holds elections for offices that sound great on resumes, like president.

Every year, the candidates campaign and promise the world, and every year, the students vote for those candidates that they know the best or think look the best or saw last before they found their way to WIN to vote. That's not even mentioning the horrible voter turnout that usually characterizes any campus election.

In the end, I have to wonder if I really care too much about it. It's plain that there is a niche that Student Government can fill.

Most student administrations, however, do not have the power or autonomy to affect meaningful change, so instead they try to find issues that they *can* change and harp on them.

Sometimes that works, as in the case of the coffeehouse that, for better or worse, was a student initiative. Sometimes it doesn't, as demonstrated by the notable lack of success at student efforts to improve on-campus dining options and parking.

I wish I couldn't, but I think I can predict that the results for this election will be the same as the last few that I've witnessed, and some small part of me is sad.

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