

# OPINION

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

## Opportunity for talk, not censorship

If you picked up a copy of the 2002-03 edition of the *Howler* this past week and turned immediately to the Homecoming page, odds are it was not to discover who won the football game last fall, or to check out photos of students and alumni at the weekend's various activities.

Instead, you probably wanted to read the article that has been the talk of campus for the last two weeks.

"Continuing the Tradition," makes reference to the fact that for the past 12 years, the university's homecoming kings and queens have all been African-American.

Although the king and queen are elected by the student body, the *Howler* suggests that their race alone has made them undesirable representatives of the university, as only 11 percent of the student body is composed of minority students.

This misguided attempt at "question everything" missed the mark—by a lot.

Such a statement is offensive to the vast majority of the university community, and rightfully so.

To suggest that any person is less capable of acting as a representative for the university than another simply because of the color of his or her skin is not only a nonsensical claim, but it touches on an element of racism that has no place at this university, or anywhere else.

Students often joke about the ethnically homogenous nature of campus, and sadly the joke isn't that far off base.

The administration claims to be working toward increasing diversity on campus, and they probably are trying.

But the fact remains that this year's freshman class is less diverse than last year's.

The university should take this sad experience as one more reason to strive for a more diverse student body.

The university is composed of a variety of people representing not only different races and ethnicities, but also different countries, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The wonderful aspect of bringing a diverse group of people together within the walls of one institution is the resulting ability to look beyond these more superficial qualities and see that everyone represents the university in a unique manner through their personal combination of talents and abilities.

And these are the terms by which we should gauge the appropriateness and effectiveness not only of Homecoming kings and queens, but of anyone who takes the university's name outside of the boundaries of campus and serves as a dynamic symbol for the beliefs and values upon which the institution prides itself.

Whether a student is African-American, Hispanic, white, Asian or

of any other race, the color of his or her skin should not be entered into the equation when assessing the quality of representation that he or she provides.

As of now, no university administrator reviews any student publications such as the *Howler* or the *Old Gold and Black* before they go to press. Consequently, an important degree of autonomy is provided to students that allows them the freedom to express their opinions, even if they may run counter to the beliefs or wishes of the administration.

As a result of the *Howler* article, however, some on campus have called for new guidelines by which a university official would have to pre-approve student publications before they are made available to the public. Any such action would be a drastic mistake.

While such a reviewing process might alleviate fears that racist comments would appear in future student publications, the potential for abuse implicit in such an administrative power is great enough, and the subsequent consequences drastic enough, that the university would be better off not to open the door at all to any degree of censorship. The right of students and faculty to unfiltered information is a precious one. Nothing short of the freedom of the press is at stake.

Instead, the responsibility of correcting this matter, as well as preventing future occurrences, rests on the shoulders of the *Howler* staff itself. The *Old Gold and Black* knows this first hand, as it has experienced its share of unwittingly inciting controversy in the past.

When the newspaper inadvertently sold advertising space to the radical, anti-Semitic *Revisionist* group in the spring of 2000, many on campus were understandably outraged.

However, through a series of apologies and explanations, the campus weathered the storm, and the *Old Gold and Black* emerged a more responsible publication for it.

Likewise, the *Howler* will have to come to terms with shortcomings in its method of choosing articles and apparent carelessness with regard to editorial oversight. While statements of the like that were made in the Homecoming article should never have seen the printed page, a fairly straightforward process of strengthening the nature of the yearbook's editing should go a long way toward correcting the problem. This will preserve the students' right to free speech by maintaining a healthy distance between student publications and the administration, and simultaneously prevent offensive remarks from invading the pages of the yearbook again.

# Setting a dangerous precedent

Administrative control may lead to censorship if left unchecked.

In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, the government employs firemen, ironically, to create fires. Their job is to burn and destroy all books on the grounds that censorship preserves the happiness of the people. Most



Angel Hsu

MANAGING EDITOR

surprisingly, the government justifies censorship on the grounds of the people's unhappiness, and the fact that the ideas in the books offend "minorities," which includes everyone—regardless of ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

While this blatant form of censorship seems preposterous given the modern context of free speech and the liberties that we enjoy today, the recent controversy surrounding the *Howler* and the subsequent student, alumni, and faculty reactions have me worried about the future of free speech, the media and the administration on our campus.

First, I would like to make clear that I am extremely disappointed and outraged at what was published in the *Howler*. When I first entered the university two years ago and realized I, as an Asian-American woman, was a lonely face of diversity amongst a sea of homogeneity, I knew that I had to act to change and improve diversity and race relations on our campus. It seems that when I think that our university has made a stride in improving diversity—last year's freshman class had a record 14 percent minority students—and race relations—last year's aWake all night brought out a diverse crowd

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and promoted racial interactions—something happens and we are immediately thrust a thousand steps backwards. Sometimes I can't even believe that I attend a university that would allow an article such as the one on 2002 Homecoming to be published.

Students, both of the majority and the minority, have a legitimate right to be outraged. I, too, keep asking myself how the article was published; as managing editor of the *Old Gold & Black*, I know the rigorous editing and proofreading process each article should and does undergo. Students, alumni, parents, and faculty are now asking the administration to step up and take the matter into their hands. Questions are being raised as to why the administration failed to read through the *Howler* prior to its publication and release.

Although I agree that action should be taken, I do not agree that administration approval prior to a publication's release is the answer. This is, in fact, censorship. And while this censorship is not as extreme as book-burning, it might as well be. Student media, including the *OGB* and the *Howler*, serve an important function as "watchdogs," cliché as that may sound, of the administration. We are the channel of communication by which student opinions are relayed to the administration. Believe it or not, the administration does hear your voice through publications such as the *OGB*. Maybe I am a little biased, but I wholly believe in the power of words through the press, and I cannot even imagine what a nightmare it would be if Ken Zick or Kevin Cox (I am simply selecting random administrators, really) were staring over my shoulder as I edited the *OGB*.

I empathize with those who are hurt and angry. But we must remember that the purpose of an institution of higher learning is to

educate, and I believe that education cannot occur without the free and unlimited exchange of ideas. Student publications are the channels of free expression by which a university community thrives—without the means to freely impart student viewpoints ranging from campus events to university policies and administrative actions, the educational experience would suffer greatly. In line with philosopher John Stuart Mill's marketplace of ideas, the interference of the administration with student media would be detrimental to the exchange of dialogue and deliberation on the campus (not to mention the havoc censorship would wreak upon our beloved theme year, Fostering Dialogue).

Historically, we have evidence of government restriction and censorship of the press, such as the Sedition Act of 1798 in which the government, out of fear of treason, banned the publication of anything "false" or "malicious" against the government. The Sedition Act was short-lived, and thankfully so. We also have evidence of instances in which the press proved crucial to uncovering government wrongdoing and scandal, as in the Watergate scandal and the Pentagon Papers.

While the main purpose of student publications is not to dig up dirt on the administration and nor do we strive to do so, one can see how, through the lens of American history, how important free press has been to ensuring justice and rights to the people. In short, requiring the administration's approval prior to publication is a bad idea that creates a dangerous precedent regarding free speech and expression on campus in the future.

In Bradbury's words, we, as students, should "shake the tree and knock the great sloth on his ass" and rightfully stand up against injustice; however, we should keep in mind at what price we are willing to pay for justice.

Angel Hsu is a junior majoring in biology and political science.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Business ethics should not be neglected

As a faltering stock market hopefully is beginning to exhibit signs of recovery, the scandals of Enron, Worldcom, Tyco, etc. have unfortunately begun to dim and fade from memory.

Due to these repeated examples of the failure of business schools to train corporate executives to make appropriately ethical choices while holding positions of responsibility, critics and supporters of business schools alike have begun clamoring for more ethics training in business school curricula.

Unfortunately, as more time passes, the cries of foul play in omitting this in the MBA and undergraduate business schools across the country have moved from an odious roar to a near murmur. In an upper-tier, nationally respected university with a strong and stringent undergraduate business program, it seems a notable void that in the already loaded core curriculum for business school students here at Wake that there exists no mandatory ethics training.

As an undergraduate business student myself, I have experienced first hand this deficiency. Admittedly, each textbook attempts to address this "critical" issue, usually by devoting maybe a page or two to the notion of corporate ethics. Yet, does this address the core of the problem? Hardly, for while these short discussions are mentioned in the text, rarely are they covered in detail in class.

Instead, professors cover more overtly important topics. Students enter into the work place with a degree demonstrating competence in business skills, but utterly lacking a foundation to address the countless ethical issues that arise in the day-to-day functioning of any organization.

In an American business world emphasizing the bottom line, and a system of accounting procedures that treats employees as "salaries/wages payable" at best, the need for business leaders with strong commitments to ethical actions is pressing.

A commitment to more easily addressable and far more superficial matters, such as adding a mandatory \$38 fee for subscriptions to the *Wall Street Journal*, has relegated issues of substance to the back burner.

With a near continual erosion of morality in current corporate leaders and students stepping blindly into an environment hostile to any moral precommitments they may possess, the "Enrons" of the past are only the precursors of future and far greater corporate scandals. As the year of fostering dialogue commences and in name at least appears to mark a shift in the overall tone of the university, the plurality of issues needing much due discussion seems overwhelming, and no department is exempt from the need to analyze current practices and address notable discrepancies.

David C. Wells  
Junior

### University should worry about truth in diversity

I guess as a progressive alumni of Wake Forest University I should be shocked and dismayed by the recent *Howler* controversy. In reality, all I can do is shrug my shoulders in dismay.

What ought to be the real story is after years of hearing the administration drone on about their commitment to diversity, why does minority enrollment still hover in the 10-14 percent range? That is the real outrage.

Wake Forest should be ashamed of itself. By not taking concrete measures to increase minority enrollment, the administration has helped craft the environment where such drivels could be written. It should come as no surprise to anyone that our gated, overwhelmingly white and oppressively upper-class Wake Forest campus would foster a mentality conducive to such an absurd statement in a college yearbook.

As a baseline, Wake Forest's minority population should be representative of North Carolina's

diversity. According to the 2000 census, over 25 percent of North Carolinians are people of color. That Wake Forest's minority population is less than half of that is pathetic.

So how about this. Instead of the administration coming up with some patronizing little statement about how outraged they are about the *Howler* article, what about creating a five year plan that aggressively seeks to match North Carolina's minority percentage?

Jeremy Bishop  
Class of 2000

### University will lose alumni without diversity

As an alumnus, I am deeply saddened to read the article over the recent *Howler* controversy.

Instead of asking, 'Should Wake Forest continue its 12 year tradition of electing a homecoming king and queen that represent only a small portion of students, or will we change our ways and elect the male and female that best represent our school?' the author, Nancy Rinehart, should be asking why it is that after all the lip service WFU gives to diversity that the number of the student of color remains an abysmal 10-12 percent?

Frankly, there is no excuse for this. It is sad to hear that so little has changed in the nearly four years I graduated from WFU. As long as trends like these continue, this is one minority alumnus who will not be sending donations to her alma mater.

Kimberly Lo  
Class of 1999

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