

OPINION

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

Reflecting on homecoming 2003

Now that the bonfire has burnt out, we commiserated over the loss to Georgia Tech and the homecoming queen(s) and king were announced, it's time to reflect on homecoming 2003.

Student Union deserves credit for putting together an interesting and unique program of events.

Reviving the bonfire was an excellent idea. Unfortunately the rain probably ended the fun prematurely, but the central location, music and presence of the football team and coaches promises to be a draw in future years.

The Harambe African Drum event, sponsored by Harbinger Corps on Wednesday, was a novel and welcome addition to the week's festivities.

Unfortunately, not very many students showed up at the pep rally Tuesday at Kentner Stadium, though. Maybe that event should happen on a Thursday or Friday night when more students are likely to have less to do or at least more time.

On that note, though we understand homecoming is planned far in advance, it would be nice if midterms and homecoming didn't occur at the same time.

Another suggestion to improve attendance at the pep rally and simultaneously encourage voting in the elections for homecoming representatives could be merging the two. If the candidates for king and queen were introduced at the rally and voting then took place immediately afterward, many students might be more inclined to take an active interest in both the pep rally and the election process.

We do have a few more comments about the election process, though. Last week we recommended that an outside party be present when ballots were counted, no candidate should man the election table and an objective individual should be consulted to ensure fairness when election decisions are made.

We still think that.

Senior guest columnist Mandy Reynolds writes in her column, "Columnist critiques newspaper," Oct. 16) that a student who has signed the honor code need not have an outside observer verify the accuracy of an election.

In all likelihood homecoming elections will be conducted on WIN in the future, and thus computer authentication will cut down on the need for observers to verify the results.

But we are not unique in suggesting an outside observer is necessary to ensure the accuracy of an election. According to the Federal Election Commission's Web site, many states require poll watchers or official observers to be present when ballots are counted and votes are tabulated.

It's not enough to simply expect accuracy and honesty, it's better to make absolutely sure.

That was a lesson Student Government learned all too well last week.

And though the coincidence that both seniors Courtney Barksdale and Suzie White had 158 votes and tied for queen was nothing more than a coincidence didn't stop students from questioning the legitimacy of the election.

Luckily, Harold Holmes, an associate vice president and dean of student services and junior Francesca Winkler, SG secretary, decided to release the election results and clear up any misconceptions.

Holmes said the numbers have not been released in the past, but these results should be a matter of public record.

For that matter, student trustee election results should be released publicly, but that's something we will delve into in the future.

SG plans to create new statutes to guide the homecoming election process and we hope they will keep our suggestions in mind.

Columnist critiques newspaper

Author questions newspaper and ethical standards.

I am by no means an expert on journalistic ethics. That being said, it is my understanding that a journalist should be in the business of reporting truths, whole truths,

Amanda Reynolds

GUEST COLUMNIST

complete truths, factual truths. I commend the *Old Gold and Black* for reporting the news of the day and informing the campus community of what is happening around them, but I cannot condone what I see as a lack of journalistic ethics. To me, an ethical journalist double checks her facts. Had the editorial board of the *OGB* done so last week, they would have realized that the chair of the Judicial Board of Investigators and Advisors is in fact the chair of the Judicial Branch of *Student Government*. It would seem that this person would boast "substantial ties" to Student Government.

And if we are measuring interest in the outcome of the election by virtue of having candidates nominated, as the *OGB* does in its editorial, then the Board of Investigators and Advisors would have had an equally vested interest, given that it also

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nominated two candidates. To me, an ethical journalist would not report unsubstantiated allegations without identifying them as such.

And to me, an ethical journalist would not presume that a student, who has taken an oath pledging herself "to the goals of furthering student welfare, the well-being of the undergraduate University community, and the traditional spirit of the University," not to mention having signed the Honor Code, should require an "outside party" to observe to ensure fairness. While I believe wholeheartedly in the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech, and I understand that it does not bind the press to report accurately, I also believe in the social contract that binds a society together.

This contract of which I write is between the governed and governing body of any community, and is built on a foundation of trust. The legitimacy of any governing body is dependent on a mandate from those it seeks to serve, dependent on the people trusting their government to promote the general welfare.

Here at Wake Forest, it is no different. Student welfare is promoted and upheld by the elected officials

that serve as SG. They have been elected, and thus given a mandate by the students to represent their voices to the university administration and beyond. However, just as in any society in which the media chooses to instill cynicism and doubt in the people, I fear the legitimacy of SG has been called into question. It has been called into question by the editorial board of the *OGB* who insist on reporting and editorializing from an angle that does not provide a critical analysis of the situation, but rather, cynically remarks on it. I believe that we must hold our elected officials to a high, if not higher, standard, and I believe that the *OGB* plays an important role in holding Student Government accountable for its actions, but there is a difference in being a watchdog and being an attack dog. And to that end, should we not also hold our press to similarly high standards?

This week, the Editorial Board of the *OGB* printed untruths, they printed unsubstantiated allegations and they printed accusations against several students' characters.

Once again, they have offered contemptuous commentary rather than constructive, informative, substantial journalism.

They have questioned the integrity of every member of SG, but more than that, they have undermined the legitimacy of an organization that seeks but to serve.

Amanda Reynolds is a senior political science major.

SG explains election process

Some can criticize through ignorance, but SG acted properly.

Congratulations to our 2003 Homecoming Royalty, Kevin Gamble, Courtney Barksdale and Suzie White. The winners clearly represent the spirit of Wake and deserve respect from the entire community. In response to the

Francesca Winkler

GUEST COLUMNIST

election process, the changes and the results, I hope to provide information assuring that this election was run with the utmost honesty and integrity.

The Homecoming elections have traditionally been the domain of Student Union. In the fall of 2002, the Student Government Secretary started administering the election online. Last year, there were ten candidates for King and Queen. This meant that the campus merely had to vote on King and Queen as every nominee was on the court. This year when approaching the homecoming election, SG anticipated using the same model.

However, this year there were 20 males nominated and 21 females. On Sept. 30, a group including administrators and students from SG, SU, and BSA were assembled when it was learned that precedent included a preliminary election. In keeping with precedent, a preliminary was necessary. It had to be run on Oct. 2-3. In the limited time available, I worked to create the ballot, and ensured that there were enough people and voting instruments available.

I took many precautions to prevent

The group of people was by no means perfect, but it was the group that could be assembled in an hour. In discussing the issue, we looked at what would be best for the Wake Forest community and for the integrity of the election.

tampering with the ballots. I asked Reggie Mathis, a member of the SG Judiciary and Elections Committee, to help count the paper ballots. I did make sure that we kept every single ballot in case anyone wanted to recount them.

On Oct. 6, Amanda Davis brought several issues to Dean Holmes. Dean Holmes, Reggie and I set aside the third one about the need for an outside ballot counter. This had not been part of the original plan, nor did we see a reason to add it as we were doing everything that we could to be fair in the process. The first complaint had to do with the honor sheets being signed as "Gary's Friend."

Reggie and I reviewed the honor sheets and could not find anywhere this had been done, although one person lacked a last name and their entry had been initialed. We called Gary, received this person's full name and dismissed this alleged impropriety.

The second point was the impetus for our decision—the voting on Friday had run past the prescribed deadline. In the first meeting Monday, we came up with three actions that could rectify the situation. The first was to keep the paper ballots announcing the court as the extra hour of voting seemed immaterial to the results, the alternative was to vote online with all candidates on the ballot. The online vote would decide the court and the King and Queen. We could also have

used the online votes to choose the court. The other option, and the one we ultimately adopted, was to run the election as it was done last year and allow each voter to choose one male and one female on the ballot. We decided to reconvene in an hour in order to bring more opinions to the table.

The group of people was by no means perfect, but it was the group that could be assembled in an hour. In discussing the issue, we looked at what would be best for the Wake Forest community and for the integrity of the election. When it came up that voters had been turned away before elections were extended, we as a group felt that there was no choice but to throw out the paper ballots. An online vote would give us the most integrity because it was tallied by the WIN software provided by Information Systems which would limit voters to one vote and would give everybody the same seventy-two hour voting window. We did not have the ability to send a broadcast e-mail and decided that those whose votes were being discarded were the most important to contact.

Voting took place from 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 7 to 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 9. During these three days, 1,419 votes were cast for King with Kevin Gamble receiving the majority. For Queen, 1,259 votes were cast with both Courtney Barksdale and Suzie White each receiving 158 votes. Dean Holmes and I verified the information before Saturday's coronation. If you have questions about the elections process, please feel free to contact us.

Francesca Winkler is a junior business major and SG Secretary. Dean Harold Holmes, associate vice president and dean of student services, and Kathy Arnette, assistant director of the Benson University Center and Student Union advisor, contributed to this column.

Increased tuition rates unfortunate

The board of trustees voted to raise tuition by 6.5 percent and establish a new \$100 student activity fee last week.

Next year tuition will be \$28,210. When housing and other costs are incorporated, the comprehensive price to attend this university is estimated at \$38,750.

Though the school plans to increase financial aid assistance next year, the

decrease in the federal Pell Grant recently and the poor economic situation of many American families are likely to leave many potential Wake Forest students high and dry.

Though the reasons behind the increase are complicated, the truth is that an increase will hurt current students and jeopardize the university's ability to recruit a diverse student body.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Agora: Greek for 'administration's delusions'

The *OGB* article of Oct. 2 ("Theme Year Event Lacked Substantial Student Attendance") decried the lack of student involvement in the campus-wide "agora" — an event in which several senior administrators shadowed a student for a day and then reported on their experiences. This was the so-called "kick-off" event for the theme year although in reality it was the fourth event that had been sponsored by the committee. The article generously estimated that "approximately 25 students" attended the agora — the actual number was

less than 10. I counted. The article offers several reasons for why the event was so poorly attended: student apathy, ingratitude, student anxiety over grades, etc. But I suspect a better reason was that the students saw the event for what it truly was — a thinly-disguised public relations non-event designed to provide photo-ops for the administration.

Other theme year events held before the official kick-off "agora" had attracted significant student involvement. The discussion of racism on campus attracted at least 300 participants, the Brams lectures around 75 students and the Moroccan film festival has been surprisingly well-attended. Senior administrators have been conspicuous in their

absence at these events. But, there is a silver lining to this situation. Students this year seem to be less gullible than their predecessors.

Hank Kennedy
Professor of Political Science

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