

OPINION

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

Lighting of Quad warms community

The university officially shifted into the holiday spirit this week when the second annual "Lighting of the Quad" ceremony illuminated the campus. The upstart tradition, which was initiated by a number of various student groups last year, saw the Quad buildings aglow and culminated with the lighting of a Christmas tree situated at the front door of Reynolda Hall. While last year's event left much to be desired, the ceremony held Wednesday evening succeeded in improving upon many of the previous disappointments. For starters, this year's tree was dramatically more festive than the struggling pine that stood in front of Wait Chapel last year. Its lights could actually be seen from across the Quad. Second, the sound system utilized at the event underwent a drastic improvement from last year. While in the past the various speakers were barely audible from only a short distance away, this year the participants' voices boomed from their positions on the Reynolda balcony. The hot chocolate and cookies provided by the organizers really hit the spot, as well. On such a cold evening, the refreshments truly served

as the icing on the cake by providing a bit of extra holiday cheer. One of the most important aspects of the ceremony was the fact that it was an interfaith event. The organizers worked hard to ensure that the various religions represented on campus were incorporated into the agenda. To this end, the "Lighting of the Quad" featured speakers and music, including messages from members of the university community representing Judaism, Islam and Baha'i. The more religiously inclusive such an event is, the more it is able to foster a genuine sense of community on campus, which was certainly an explicit goal of the event. Indeed, organizers of the "Lighting of the Quad" should be commended for their efforts at establishing an increased degree of community throughout the university. The way in which a variety of student groups participated in the ceremony is evidence that students are in fact interested in actively creating such a congenial environment on campus. While the university has yet to reach its ultimate goal in this area, Wednesday night's ceremony was certainly a step in the right direction.

Fibonacci and Phi a futuristic fusion

The university has recently succeeded in merging two of its disciplines that many may have thought to be just about as far removed from each other as night and day. Fibonacci and Phi, a multimedia modern dance production that will be held on campus Dec. 4-7, is revolutionary in that it utilizes the fields of both dance and computer science to create a work of art. Through applying mathematical sequences to dance choreography, Fibonacci and Phi is a perfect example of the way in which a liberal arts institution such as ours can enhance its academic offerings through the cooperation and integration of various disciplines. Recently, the university has been benefited by such actions as the creation of new fields of study for student concentration and the development of increased foreign language integration into the broader curriculum.

Fibonacci and Phi only contributes to the success that the semester has enjoyed in this regard. We encourage students to support the efforts of the dance and computer science departments by attending one of the productions. Given the fact that Fibonacci and Phi represents a monumental achievement in the integration of mathematics, computer science and the fine arts, all members of the campus community should take advantage of their proximity to such developments and be enthusiastic about their chance to participate. Students already involved have learned a great deal about technology and its practical implications for areas not generally associated with cutting edge developments, such as the fine arts. Everyone associated with the production should be commended for keeping the university at the forefront of academic progress and innovation.

Faculty lists unfairly target

Listing faculty by creed or belief smacks of McCarthyism.

A recent episode of ABC's *Nightline* (Nov. 25) featured a story about the proliferation, on American college campuses, of faculty "watch lists"—student-run

John Edward Martin

GUEST COLUMNIST

Web sites dedicated to profiling, "exposing," and ranking professors according to their political views, teaching methods, personalities or difficulty in grading. While most such sites are simply meant for the sharing of readily available information and preferences among students, many also carry the implicit threat of political surveillance, censorship of unpopular views and even student or administrative action against professors who supposedly "cross the line" in their expression of political views in the classroom. Such practices are disturbing, not only because of the disrespect that it reveals toward faculty, whose expertise and dedication to teaching are rarely highlighted in such lists, but also because of the assumptions that it makes about higher education, and the role of either students or administration in "overseeing" the activities of their faculty. Nowhere in the educational contract between students, faculty, and administration is there any promise of political agreement or sympathy; nor is there any promise to avoid challenging, questioning or even offending each other's personally held beliefs and opinions. Indeed, if faculty have any obligation towards students, it is to offer precisely such challenges and questions, by presenting

But respect is a two-way street, and there is something innately uncivil about the idea of professors being lined up like so many beauty pageant contestants and subjected to the likes, dislikes, and political preferences of a student body that is unprepared to evaluate them holistically ... Worse than that is the vaguely fascist threat of student or administrative "control" over faculty teaching and course content. Such control would be the death-knell of academic freedom and free inquiry as we know it, and would undermine the "value" of the education that students seem so anxious to preserve.

information and perspectives that may be unfamiliar, unpopular or even unacceptable to students whose limited experience and ideological exposure make them understandably resistant to new ideas. Political discussion can and will be a part of any academic area of study, and neither students nor administration should have "veto" power over the course content designed and approved by their faculty. College students, for all their newly-found freedom in making educational choices and decisions, are not yet qualified to determine what elements of their education should and should not be "allowed" in the classroom. But they should feel empowered enough by those freedoms to welcome the opportunity to learn from faculty whose expertise

and credentials have been well-earned and tested by rigorous study and debate within their respective fields. Whether in a political science course, an English composition course, or a biology course, students should come prepared to have their assumptions challenged and their previous understandings revised, whether toward or away from their instructor's position. Disagreement should not be an obstacle to learning, but a worthwhile challenge and intellectual stimulus. I've written previously to the *OGB* about the need for civil discourse between students and faculty, particularly in situations where students feel overwhelmed, bullied or intimidated by overzealous professors. I certainly feel that diverse political views and social perspectives should receive a respectful hearing in any classroom. But respect is a two-way street, and there's something innately uncivil about the idea of professors being lined up like so many beauty pageant contestants and subjected to the likes, dislikes, and political preferences of a student body that is unprepared to evaluate them holistically—as teachers, scholars, mentors, or even as ideological opponents. Worse than that is the vaguely fascist threat of student or administrative "control" over faculty teaching and course content. Such control would be the death-knell of academic freedom and free inquiry as we know it, and would undermine the "value" of the education that students seem so anxious to preserve. The keeping of McCarthy-esque "watch lists" is only the first step in silencing the unpopular voices that make a college education worthwhile. If students wish to be treated with the respect worthy of intelligent adults, then they should be prepared to extend the same courtesy to educators. *John Edward Martin is a visiting instructor of English.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The practical upshot of faculty prayer decision

In the spirit of the faculty's decision to abandon prayer, I would like to make a few suggestions: first, let's demolish Wait Chapel. After all, like prayer, the presence of sacred space is obviously offensive to atheist and agnostic members of the pluralistic Wake Forest community; and that noisy carillon is detrimental to many students' sleeping habits. In place of the Chapel, I think we should erect the Weinstein-AAUP *Centre* for Lazy Secular Perspectivism ("*Centre*" is better than the conventional English term "Center." The French "*Centre*" would add some much-needed diversity to the anglocentric building names on campus). Just imagine the wonderful possibilities!

I envision the Weinstein-AAUP *Centre* as a place where students and faculty can come together to admire each others' anthropocentric worldviews and compliment one another on promoting diversity – and perhaps there could even be a "yoga room" (right next to the obligatory Starbucks) just in case, God forbid, anyone feels the need to be spiritual! Maybe the *Centre* could also offer small informative seminars like "How to be Stupidly Iconoclastic" or "Why Oh Why Won't Christianity Just Go Away?" The possibilities are truly endless.

Second, the university ought to consider changing its motto. "*Pro Humanitate*" is offensive to the misanthropic. I suggest "*Pro Nihil*" – oh, but wait a minute, that might offend those who are "for something." Let's just drop the Latin and say, "We are for anything that is intellectually trendy" – such a motto would be more inclusive than "*Pro Humanitate*," and, therefore, qualitatively better. Third, Wake should stop touting its "Baptist heritage" – the Baptist presence at Wake is moribund, consisting of little more than a few taglines in various brochures. Such rhetoric is obsolete and, moreover, it is potentially offensive to non-Baptists.

When addressing its historical foundations, Wake should be clear that its Baptist beginnings have no real bearing on the current state of the University. Wake should develop a new, more forthcoming slogan about its heritage – something like: "Baptist past, typically secular present." In the end, there are many ways to make the University more inclusive (a merger with Duke?) in accordance with the secular post-modern ethos currently rampant in academia – I have presented only a few possibilities. The University might consider forming an *ad hoc* committee to assess the best way of becoming unreflectively secular, though such action is most likely unnecessary, since we seem to be well on our way as it is.

Adam Wells
Class of 2001

Christianity not as monolithic as Lyles says

Much has been made lately of religion and government, and good discussion has come from the topic, but the ideas presented in Jacob Lyles' last column ("Christian nation bad idea," Nov. 20) were unsubstantiated, rash, and closed-minded. I agree that people should be able to worship however they want to, dress the way they would like and live their lives as individuals. But when Lyles began quoting scripture to show examples of how bad Christian government could be, he crossed the line. By taking specific verses out of the Bible and using them out of context, he painted a dismal portrait of how our country would be if it were based on Christian values. In example after example, he twisted the teachings of the Bible so they backed his opinion. I agree that many conservative Christians take the Bible literally and use that for the basis behind legislation and/or causes. These people are outspoken, brash, and they

give caring, loving Christians a bad name. The majority of Christians are tolerant of others, and though they may not agree with others' opinions, they respect them. The pulpitting, hellfire and damnation preaching ultra-conservatives of this nation are not tolerant, and they use others' shortcomings to make themselves look better. Lyles stated that a modern tolerant society has little in common with a Christian nation.

He brought up the fact that we should be able to put what we want into our bodies or view Internet porn. Tolerance does not mean acceptance of actions that can lead to harm of another person. Certain conservatives do claim that they violate our Christian morality. That, however, is not the reason those actions are illegal. Possible harm of one's self or another person is more likely the reason behind those laws. Without morals and ethics, a government cannot function properly. Countries that are not considered Christian often share similar morals and ethics. In the United States, the Christian name is used to support these morals and ethics because the most powerful people in the country think that's the way it should be. However, the ideas presented by government officials often do not represent Christianity as a whole, and I hope that Mr. Lyles understands that. I agree that we cannot let the conservative powers in this country run rampant, but keeping true Christianity out of the government is a mistake.

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OLD GOLD & BLACK

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SINCE 1916

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The *Old Gold and Black* is published Thursdays during the school year, except during examinations, summer and holiday periods, by Times Enterprise Print Services of High Point, N.C. Send e-mail to comments@ogb.wfu.edu or mail to P.O. Box 7569, Winston-Salem, NC 27109. © 2003 WFU Publications Board. All rights reserved.

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