

PERSPECTIVES

Sports here and abroad

STAFF EDITORIAL

Last week, the 21st Winter Olympics opened amid cheers and jubilation. The thrill and enthusiastic response the Olympics generated is proof that sports are an integral part of world culture and have a transformative effect on people and global institutions.

We can vividly see the transformative power of sports in the Olympics. The games especially effect great change in the host city itself. A notable example of this is Atlanta, which hosted the 1996 games. Throughout the games, the city underwent a modernization process. To accommodate the huge crowds, the city renovated its airport and improved its infrastructure. Furthermore, the city made a \$10 million profit and was able to develop new public housing. Many analysts believe that the Olympics were crucial for Atlanta to become the modern metropolis it is today.

We also see the power of sports in another Southern city, New Orleans. A few weeks ago, the New Orleans Saints won their first ever Super Bowl. The ensuing scene in New Orleans was one of pure jubilation and ecstasy. People were outside hugging, dancing and cheering on their championship team. This image of New Orleans is a stark contrast from the image the world saw nearly five years ago. When Hurricane Katrina ravaged the city in 2005, we saw scenes of entire neighborhoods underwater, looters smashing store windows and people in desperate need of food and water. Such apocalyptic images were tied closely to post-Katrina New Orleans. Then, the Saints marched into Miami, Florida. A single game of football inspired a city still in recovery.

Davidson itself has been changed by sports. Five years ago Davidson was a liberal arts college not well known outside the South. Then, a young man named Stephen Curry enrolled. He subsequently led the Davidson Wildcats to the Elite Eight in the NCAA Basketball tournament. People all across the nation were seeing the 'Cats defeat traditional basketball giants like Gonzaga, Wisconsin and Georgetown. Many started to take notice of this small liberal arts school. Numerous potential applicants heard of Davidson through Curry, and because of him, the school was able to heighten its national profile.

The effect of sports on Davidson goes beyond simple name recognition. As with the millions of fans currently cheering in Vancouver, sports at Davidson, above all else, work to create unity. Hundreds of people, who might not see each other anywhere else in the school, cram together in Belk Arena for the sole reason of cheering on their team.

The Davidsonian

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Diversity issue requires careful thought

CHRISTOPHER MARSICANO

Guest Columnist

"Diversity" is quite a tough subject to tackle at Davidson. There are those who feel discriminated against, even on our relatively open and friendly campus. There are also those who feel that crying discrimination inside the confines of zip code 28035 is something akin to crying wolf. There are even those who share tired arguments about a "diversity of interest." In my four years at Davidson, I've heard these opinions time and time again, and I'm sure the SGA "voices" campaign will repeat all of them once more.

When it comes to racial diversity, Davidson finds itself in a very interesting place. Davidson ranks the lowest in percentage of students of color when looking at the US News' list of the top ten liberal arts colleges. Students of color make up 25 percent of Davidson's student body, compared to 37 percent at Williams or 39 percent at Amherst. However, Davidson looks a lot better when stacked up against Haverford's 29 percent or Carleton's 27 percent. On the other hand, when compared with our regional peers, we are unmatched in racial diversity. Our percentage overtakes Furman's 17 percent or Wake Forest's 16 percent. Davidson, as always, seems somewhere in the middle between elite liberal arts college and small, yet strong southern school.

Despite its racial diversity identity crisis, Davidson excels in one area in which both our academic and regional peers consistently fail: integration. While Duke, Pomona and Swarthmore may be diverse on paper, you'll be hard-pressed to find latino students sitting at the same dining hall tables as white or black students. Davidson avoids this problem to some extent; it is a place where students of different backgrounds spend time with one another. The A Team for Shades of Brown currently includes four white students. The Generals and Delilahs both have students of color in their organizations. We have the ACAA, BSC, OLAS, and GSA within the alphabet soup of organizations whose sole purpose is to raise awareness for diversity on this campus. They are tremendously successful at providing general debate on campus; however, organizations without that goal have similar success stories and, perhaps, have won the greater victory of effective integration. Without integration, "diversity" means nothing. Unless we integrate ourselves racially, we will not learn from our differences. Davidson students, unlike some of our peers, understand that.

Therefore, I propose three ways to improve the "diversity" of Davidson without harming our integration. First, we must not rely on "cultural awareness" associations, lectures, or SGA mandates. Those who agree with prevailing thoughts on the importance of racial diversity attend these programs, yet such programs only galvanize the naysayers against integration. While the voices campaign has the admirable goal of making sure everyone feels comfortable at Davidson, many people

have already tuned out and written it off as "another one of those diversity things." We already have so many wonderful diversity programs like STRIDE. We do not need new ones that will not reach those who do not want to be reached.

Second, we must bolster our admission office's ability to recruit the best students of color. We must provide more funding for the Davidson Trust. I firmly believe that has become the battlefield for colleges and universities. Those schools that can offer students the opportunity to graduate debt-free will win the war for the most qualified students, especially those who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We must continue to raise money for it and scholarships like the Charles scholarship or the newly-minted Alvarez scholars program that provides incentives for international students and students of color from the Chicago public school system to attend Davidson. More diversity programming will not draw minority students to Davidson, scholarship programs will.

Finally, we must revamp our cultural education at Davidson. The college created the cultural diversity requirement at a time when there was not that much cultural diversity at Davidson. We must continue that spirit within all academic life at Davidson. As the college moves more and more to interdisciplinary courses, we should continue in the same vein with our cultural diversity courses and consider partnering coursework in the classroom with organizations outside the classroom. Imagine a class on Colombian politics taught by a poli sci professor in conjunction with Colombian members of OLAS explaining public opinion in the country as they see it. If students have to take a cultural diversity class like those I have proposed, they will not be able to turn a deaf ear to diversity issues on campus. Furthermore, those who recognize the importance of racial diversity can learn more from a course-club partnership than any lecture series or Davidsonian campaign.

Now, my opinions may anger some and impassion others. "What does he know? He's a White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male who has never felt what it is like to be in the minority." That is true. However, I don't pretend to speak for the minority. I don't pretend to speak for the majority either. While I am a white southern male, those are only parts of my greater identity. I'm also redheaded. Most of all, right now, I'm a Davidson student. Davidson will face trials in the near future dealing with racial diversity. The Davidson student in me wants to help provide solutions to those problems, so that Davidson may transcend those issues and take its place as the exemplar of diversity among the elite of liberal arts colleges. We can only do so with informed debate and suggestions outside of the norm when dealing with race. These are mine. I look forward to hearing yours.

Chris Marsicano '10 is a political science major from Charlotte, NC. Contact him at chmarsicano@davidson.edu.

Attendance policy unfair to students

SEYI AYORINDE

Guest Columnist

I'm very happy with my Davidson College experience. I've gotten to receive a top-notch education from a world-class institution, while doing all the activities my limited schedule would allow me to. I am now in my senior spring, and I can honestly say that I have no regrets about being a member of this family. I have finished my major, as well as the core requirements. So now, I can relax and do what I want with this final semester.

Well, almost. There's one thing that still bothers me and disallows me to truly enjoy Davidson. It's this freakin' attendance policy. Now don't get me wrong: I love school; I love learning; and I even love class. But having this cruise missile of a failing grade pointed directly at your head is a little unsettling. It gives me the heebie-geebs.

The attendance policy reads: "A student who is absent from more than one-fourth of the course meetings scheduled by the instructor shall be assigned a grade of F, unless the instructor specifies a different policy at the beginning of the course." I understand that the policy demonstrates Davidson's emphasis on the importance of higher learning and that we should all really want to go to class and all that, but come on! You can learn the material without going to every class. It's true. I'm sorry. If I get class notes from a friend, read the book, go to office hours, and perform well on every review and homework assignment, I feel like I deserve a passing grade. If I get an 'A' on every assignment and review, I should probably get an 'A' in the class. Even if that means missing one class each week, or even less than that.

I know what you're thinking, one of two things. Either "Wow, this policy isn't fair at all. Seyi's right...and cute." Or, "Wow, Seyi's a slacker. What about participation in class? He's not even a real student...he sure is cute though." To those who think I'm a slacker, you might be right. I would argue, however, that I have paid my due, and that I have also (well, my parents have, also) paid for my education. Therefore, I should be able to do with it what I see fit.

"Then what, Seyi? Would you just skip a review? Or not turn in a homework assignment?" Of course not. That's what I'm graded on; silly goose. I'm saying that I should be able to do whatever I want to do in my classes and face the consequences of my actions, whatever they may be. I should be free to ruin my education and waste all of the money that my family has poured into this institution if I so choose. That's the American way.

"Well, class participation is graded! If you miss too many classes, then you miss out on that! BOOM! Beat that, slacker guy!" You win. I can't beat that. I should definitely lose that 10% of the class grade that is based class participation. If I did grade A work, give me a B. If I did D-grade work, fail me. But failing high achievement because the student seemingly didn't show the effort needed is preposterous, especially if the grade shows otherwise.

To sum it all up, I say this policy is full of (insert bad word here). If you want to fail a student for skipping too many classes, make class participation 40% of the grade. Otherwise, let students find their own ways to succeed.

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