

PERSPECTIVES

Keep the Cornwell

STAFF EDITORIAL

"Writing is a craft." The phrase is often tossed around in classrooms and writers' workshops, sometimes to the point of cliché. But that doesn't mean it's not true. Writing is a practice that's refined over time. It's both an art and an acquired skill.

Writing—and writing well—is also a tool. At a liberal arts college like Davidson, it's necessary to communicate ideas clearly and efficiently. If Davidson teaches us anything, it teaches us how invaluable communication skills are to expressing our unique and imaginative thought in day to day life.

Most of the writing we do at Davidson is academic in its nature. It exists within a scholarly bubble. Writing outside of the bubble of academia, however, is just as important as writing inside of it. While writing and communication skills are easily transferable from one field of study to the next, style and content don't follow as smoothly. When trying to bridge the gap between the different worlds of writing, creativity becomes an essential element of communication.

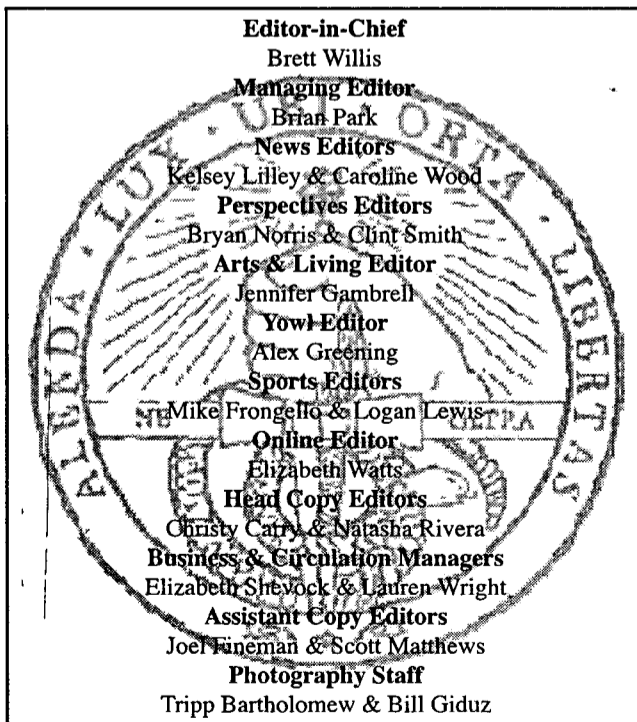
Creative writing is vital to maintaining a balance between scholarly discourse and practical expression. It is an exercise in harnessing free-flowing, inventive thought and conveying our ideas to others within a comprehensible context. If we cannot communicate creatively, then can we communicate our originality at all?

For this reason, it's disappointing to see Davidson scaling back its funding for the Patricia Cornwell Scholarship, the college's only creative writing scholarship. The Class of 2010 is the last class of two recipients. Due to budget constraints, the scholarship has now been reduced to a biannual award given to a single student. The Cornwell Scholarship seeks out not only aspiring poets and novelists, but also dramatists, screenwriters, science and technology writers and (dare we say) journalists. It recognizes that creative writing embraces multiple areas of interest and crosses many fields of study through a variety of approaches. It celebrates creative writing as a truly inter-disciplinary study—a concept central to the theme of a liberal arts education—which, like any craft, must be practiced, researched and honed.

This evening, the Vereen Bell Memorial Award for Creative Writing will be presented to a member of the sophomore, junior and senior classes. Novelist and poet Victoria Redel, who judged this year's competition, will hand out the prizes. In an interview with *The Davidsonian*, Redel appropriately said that the role of the writer is "to bear witness but also to imagine possibilities." Davidson must continue to encourage prospective and current students to pursue creative writing endeavors. Only with that skill can we express limitless possibilities of the imagination.

The Davidsonian

◆ ALLENDA LUX UBI ORTA LIBERTAS ◆



Editor-in-Chief
Brett Willis

Managing Editor
Brian Park

News Editors
Kelsey Lilley & Caroline Wood

Perspectives Editors
Bryan Norris & Clint Smith

Arts & Living Editor
Jennifer Gambrell

Yowl Editor
Alex Greening

Sports Editors
Mike Frongello & Logan Lewis

Online Editor
Elizabeth Watts

Head Copy Editors
Christy Caffy & Natascha Rivera

Business & Circulation Managers
Elizabeth Shevock & Lauren Wright

Assistant Copy Editors
Joel Fineman & Scott Matthews

Photography Staff
Tripp Bartholomew & Bill Giduz

The Davidsonian is published Wednesdays during the academic year by the students of Davidson College. Please address all correspondences to: The Davidsonian, P.O. Box 7182, Davidson, NC 28035-7182. E-mail Davidsonian@davidsion.edu. Our offices are located in Room 411 of the Alvarez College Union. Opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board of *The Davidsonian*. Only the staff editorial represent the views of *The Davidsonian* staff. Subscriptions cost \$55.00 per year, or \$30 per semester. Email Liz Shevock at elshevock@davidsion.edu for advertising inquiries.

Copyright is held by the Trustees of Davidson College.

Service central to education, outreach

DAVID SCHERMBECK

Guest Columnist

A life of leadership and service—the point of a Davidson education. This weekend helped me understand why. On Saturday, the Chidsey Center for Leadership Development hosted the Talent Search Leadership Conference. Talent Search is an organization whose mission is to place would-be first generation college students from Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools into four-year institutions. The day was filled with events that aimed to foster the strengths of students and motivate them to continue on their journey to college. I was lucky to be a part of it.

It was active community service. We extended our hands and were able to physically realize the impact of the day. For most, Davidson was the first college campus they have ever been on. It seemed surreal, and, of course, they were curious—but also motivated.

At lunch, I sat with Christopher and discussed school. Christopher is a poet who hopes to own a business one day. His passions were deep, but the lunchtime conversation showed that sometimes that may not be enough. The timidity with which he and other students shared their interests was almost worrisome. At moments, they seemed to pull back from their dreams to think "can I really do this?"—a question that brings with it self-doubt. It was hard to watch such talented students hesitate to express their dreams.

The perceived decline in America education seems to be squarely focused on the disabilities of those teaching our students. The visiting students agree. They talked about how very few teachers show an interest in them, only waiting for their monthly paycheck. But those that do, they say, are not only the best teachers but also the best mentors and coaches. Those who foster their poetic talents and desires to study marine-life instill a sense of worth and motivation to succeed. A teacher reading from a textbook does not.

After lunch, we gave tours of the campus, and I decided to ask Christopher about his poetry. What he said, when asked about sharing it with others, was something that I may never forget: "I'm scared to show it to anybody...nobody thinks a black kid from Charlotte can write poetry. It's a white thing to do." This student from an urban high school, whose dropout rates sometime reach one-half of an entering freshman class feels unable to pursue his talent because, well, society doesn't think he should. But on Saturday, where he had Davidson College students volunteering to spend time with him and share their own stories about high school and how they have achieved amazing things, Christopher realized that the real world doesn't have to mirror the Charlotte neighborhood he has grown up in.

The end of the tours completed the day. We Chidsey Fellows said our goodbye's and left, hoping that what we had just done would be useful in the lives of the students. Though, we knew they were headed back to schools and lives that, according to them, were broken.

The Davidson bubble is pertinent to all of our lives. Sometimes we enjoy it, but, other times, it seems stifling. Saturday was a chance to reach just outside of it and bring some worthy students into the life of a student here. It was an experience that writing a check or swiping a Catcard to donate money cannot match. It was one that directly benefited the community in which we live.

On Sunday morning, I got an email from Christopher: "David, I really enjoyed Saturday. Please share this with your group. You did a really good job. Thank you for telling me that I can write poetry and thank you for showing me Davidson. I learned a lot that I would have never learned at school...thank you."

No. Thank you, Christopher.

David Schermbeck '13 is undeclared. He is from Hobbs Springs, NC. Contact him at daschermbeck@davidson.edu.

A skeptic's thoughts on diversity

SAMUEL B. JOHNSON

Guest Columnist

As I write down these thoughts, I feel inundated by the rhetoric of diversity. Frankly, at this point, I don't want any of it, thank you very much, even though I am, as it is phrased these days, myself a minority. (That's the horrific shorthand for saying that I am a member of a group which makes up a minority of the relevant population, in this case, presumably, the U.S. population.)

I went to a dinner meeting recently of a business and professional group, of which I am a reluctant member, and the after-dinner speaker was the "director of supplier diversity" for his large company. What that meant was so obvious to him that he didn't even bother to explain it. I deduced that the term means that his company tries to diversify its suppliers of the goods and services with regard to the race, sex or other "minority" status of those suppliers. If I were an executive or a stockholder, I would want the company to choose its suppliers based on the quality, price and reliability of the goods and services they provide. I then came home from that meeting and found in the mail *The Davidson Journal*, the publication for alumni. In its pages, I found articles about Davidson and its wrestling with diversity.

It is relevant to these thoughts that the minority to which I belong is the LGBT population; I am gay. As a gay man I want two things: to be equal before the law, and to be evaluated in all contexts as an individual, not as a member of any of the various groups to which I statistically belong. I would be horrified if I found out that some staff person at some company had advised its board to hire me to do some work because they wanted to diversify their supplier base by having more gays represented. If I found out such I would get out of that engagement as rapidly and gracefully as possible. I hope that Davidson does not inquire into the sexual orientation of applicants for admission, and I hope that being LGBT would be irrelevant to an acceptance decision. If LGBT students want to have an organization on campus or organize a dance or invite a speaker, I trust that such a project would simply be equal before the college's rules and regulations.

I do not want to suggest that African-American people, or women, or Asians, or Jews, or Muslims, or wheelchair users should have corresponding positions about their situations. When I entered Davidson, it was all male and all white (actually, two African American freshmen entered with me). It pleases me that the campus is apparently now racially far more diverse. As far as the sexual diversity goes, as a gay man, I admit emotionally to a certain nostalgia and ambivalence;

part of me misses the all-male school. But my rational part recognizes sex/gender diversity as a good thing. I do believe that Davidson is far more socio-economically diverse than it was a few decades ago. Actually, in my ancient memory, Davidson admitted students regardless of their ability to pay and was committed to making it financially possible for an admitted student to attend. The current campaign is a reaffirmation, and an improvement on, that old principle, since as I understand it the same goal is to be achieved but now without any resulting post-graduation debt. All of this diversification is a good thing, I think. But I wonder how many people share my horror of being viewed "as" their membership in one of another classification. How important is it to most African Americans to say, "I am African American?" Do most say not say, "When you deal with me, I want you to remember that I am African American, and I want that to play a role in how you deal with me?" In the above, read "Hindu" for "woman" or "native American" or whatever, and I have the same questions.

As I ramble toward stopping, if not to an end, I realize that the history and situation of LGBT people, and especially of gay men, is very different from the other examples of "minorities." Most of us gay people have been free to be invisible whenever we chose. In general, we have not suffered economic discrimination. Because we are born unpredictable into all households, we have in a sense always been integrated. We have suffered from violence, e.g., Matthew Shepard, but one reason I insist absolutely on equality before the law is that I want the protection from violence provided by the police of the State. But LGBT people have nothing like the black horrific history of violence against African Americans since the Civil War. Frankly, we gay men have won tremendous battles since Stonewall, and we are continuing to win, and we are winning our battles in the hearts and minds of individuals, the only place truly worth winning. What I absolutely do not want, and what I think most LGBT people do not want, is to lose ground from backslash. No one in America is more likely to be a less qualified colleague was promoted for being LGBT.

That's my two cents. One sad irony is that, if this meditation is printed, it will more likely be because I fall into the category "gay alumnus" and thereby diversify the page rather than because the individual Samuel Johnson has something interesting to say. Thus, I will find myself identified by precisely the petard I wish to disavow.

Samuel B. Johnson '69 currently resides in Greensboro, NC. Contact him at sbjmath1@aol.com.

THE D
WEDNESDA
MARCH 31, 2010
Ob
On I
SCOTT M
strategy of
contentiou
forgot to d
necessary
for Democ
created a
Republican
of leadersh
the "chang
the politic
Republican
decades, an
the best po
Beyond
in the Hou
behavior of
despicable.
in the histo
followers a
of our capi
the Republ
in the face
tarnishes th
We are
so much h
Republican
in Novemb
for four hu
a united op
There is a d
The
sin c
BOBBY D
not to be-har
right to rewa
Exercisin
else. Your ri
citizen, you
not have the
as the printin
the right to f
a stage-micr
arms, but do
firearm. If
are violating
subjugation
immoral and
Today, w
instance, we
exists-and we
27,000 adults
a fundament
government l
order to crea
are rights tha
recipient, but
The governm
called rights.
I know) whe
America is d
right to work
America is c
pursuits, acti