

## How to improve Resident Life Office here at Davidson College

*Bryce Bancroft*

Having indefinitely extended their application deadline, RLO has shown that for a second year in a row that it is struggling to recruit a capable group of students for its nearly eighty positions, especially its forty Hall Counselors. As a former Hall Counselor, I worry that RLO's inability to field staff members for current and future positions will diminish its overall capacity to support students at Davidson. While RAs play a vital role in the residential experience, Hall Counselors directly affect the success of a student's first year. With Freshmen Olympics, Freshmen Flickerball, and a host of other Davidson milestones, the first year of a Davidson student shapes the rest of his or her college career. RLO must address its low applicant and retention rate, and I hope that RLO will make constructive strides in improving two specific areas: distinguishing between the RA and Hall Counselor positions and maintaining a positive image in the eyes of Davidson students. RLO will either take significant action to address its current deficiencies or it will face continuing difficulties with recruitment and subsequently affect every student's Davidson experience.

RLO hires students for three separate positions: Resident Advisor (RA), Hall Counselor, and Building Manager (for returning senior staff members). Although Dean Perillo envisions the RA and Hall Counselors positions as differing only in name, the reality of the work is otherwise. While RAs and Hall Counselors sign separate contracts, they receive the same training and compensation even though the first-year residential experience requires significantly more involvement on the part of Hall Counselors. That RLO pairs two Hall Counselors for each hall says that their position inherently requires more work; similarly, it implies that large halls, like in Belk, involve the same amount of work as small halls, like in Watts. Furthermore, as a result of a dearth in hall counselor applicants, RLO has considered placing one hall counselor per individual hall with no additional compensation.

My first suggestion is to differentiate between the RA and Hall Counselor positions, which would improve the quality of both. At the most basic level, training the student staff members for their specific roles will improve the quality of their work. At a more applicable level, compensating the staff members appropriately will attract a larger range of applicants. RLO believes that compensation of its student staff members goes beyond the range of monetary benefits

in the form of experience. I agree that experience does offer a modicum of compensation, but RLO must understand that its system of benefits must go beyond its current offering: half off a double room, \$1000 stipend, and one meal a week at Commons. When compared with both peer and regional institutions, Davidson's Residence Life Office often falls to the bottom tier of benefits for student staff members. Additionally, RLO must understand that the differences in Hall Counselor and RA positions require different levels of compensation, and even though Dean Perillo and her professional staff do not believe the positions differ, the system of first-year activities and importance of Hall Counselors to the Davidson experience requires that RLO review its current compensation package for both positions separately.

The final issue RLO currently faces is its image. Many students feel RLO's image is marred by levels of incompetency, and although some of the beliefs are without merit, RLO must understand that it should function primarily as a resource for students. For example, additional efforts in making the housing selection process more efficient would benefit students more than purchasing several hundred 2010 Wildcat Welcome Week magnets. Also, telling student staff members that first-year housing was to undergo renovations (Little and Belk), and then placing said updates on hold in favor of redecorating the office of Residence Life seems to be a misuse of limited funding.

The issues are numerous, but for RLO to improve it must take action. Several possible solutions include: move the AC's (Area Coordinator) to off-campus housing to give them a break from the constant Davidson pressures rather than forcing them to live in the on-campus apartments under Watts, Irwin, and Ryburn; include parking spots for Residence Life student staff members or some additional forms of non-monetary compensation; create a fellowship position for one graduating senior to aid the incoming professional staff with a better understanding of Davidson campus life; and finally, for RLO to initiate a committee of current and former staff members to review and improve its financial compensation package. If RLO hopes to bolster its image and future recruitment efforts, they must begin a serious reappraisal of their current status as a supporting factor in the Davidson experience.

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## MARCH'S PERSPECTIVE: Sexual Orientation

Love, heartbreak, relationships...flip on the radio, watch a movie or tv show or read a novel and you are bound to find these things. We are sexual people. We have crushes, we fall in love. So, for this month's Perspectives, we want to look at sexual orientation. What does it mean to be attracted to someone? What does it mean to be attracted to a particular gender? Why is heterosexuality understood as better or more normal than homosexuality? Because you are a sexual creature, are you attracted to all people, or just some? Can someone make you fall in love with them? What does it mean that some people can get married and some people can't, based solely on their sexual orientation? That some people have job security and some don't based on their sexual orientation? Or that some can talk about crushes and significant others without a second thought while others are astutely aware of the people around them, the language they use and the potential for hurt and loss of relationships that may result by talking about their lives? Why are heterosexual couples predominantly protagonists in the media, while homosexual couples are not? What does it mean for a person to be attracted to all gen-

ders? Why do we use categories and labels like heterosexual, homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer? What constitutes a family? Who should be able to adopt? Does male/female divided housing presuppose heterosexual students? How does Davidson support people of all sexual orientations? Are students aware of whether and how their language or actions are inclusive or exclusive of people of particular orientations? The possibilities for thought and conversation are immense. Start pondering, and share your perspective on sexual orientation, how it affects you, your interactions, your relationships, your community.

Love,  
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## A battle worth fighting

*Aaron Jordan*

On December 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi doused himself with gasoline, started a match, and burned himself alive. His frustration with high unemployment and unspeakable corruption had reached its breaking point. Bouazizi could not sell his fruit and support his family without being robbed and beaten by police. The surprise for the rest of the world was that tens of millions of other Arabs had reached the same point. Within two months, Tunisia's Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak had been toppled. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi appeared to be the third domino, as protesters took over 80% of the country. But unlike his fellow leaders, Gaddafi refused to go quietly. Using a mercenary army and his small air force, Gaddafi swung the momentum and put the rebels on their back heels. All of which brings us to Saturday.

The allied air strikes which began this past weekend were essential and well timed. This was a Libyan uprising, not an American-led overthrow; it was important that the Arab world did not view American intervention the way it perceived the U.S.'s involvement in Iraq or Afghanistan. America did not start this conflict; it was thrust upon us. Moreover, President Obama needed time to drum up support amongst allies and get the necessary UN votes so America would not have to shoulder the entire burden of this risky operation. Already staring down two wars and long-term debt issues, America is not in the military or fiscal shape to attack unilaterally.

While the American public is right to question American intervention in Muslim countries after George Bush's recent debacles, allowing Gaddafi to stay in power is simply not an option. Neither Ben Ali nor Mubarak had the stomach to turn guns on their own people, and for that, if only that, they deserve credit. But Gaddafi's history of violence far outstrips the fairly tame record of his former counterparts. He rose to power in 1969, and has clung to power through the brutal persecution of his own people. Dissidents were normally killed, the lucky ones jailed. The West has broken off relations with Gaddafi before and with good reason. In Britain, his agents shot at ten anti-Gaddafi protesters, killing a British policewoman in the process, and in Berlin his decision to bomb a German nightclub led to three deaths and more than 230 injuries. Perhaps most tragically was the Lockerbie bombing, which took down Pan Am Flight 103, killing 270 people. The CEO of Volkswagen and more than 30 Syracuse students returning from a semester abroad in London were among the victims. The West should not act shocked that Gaddafi is now ready to "cleanse Libya, house by house."

Nonetheless, Gaddafi's atrocities are not the only reason the U.S. must intervene (or else they should have done so long ago). Allowing Gaddafi to stay in power would send a powerful, terrifying message to the rest of the world's dictators: the way to stay in power is not by making concessions to your people, like Ben Ali and Mubarak did, but to slaughter them in the street. The U.S., however, cannot repeat the cowboy politics of the Bush era. Obama must seek international cooperation (currently the UN is contributing to air strikes) and quickly begin developing a post-Qaddafi reconstruction plan. The timing of the exit plan is vital; the U.S. must ensure that Gaddafi is removed from power, but cannot afford to become bogged down rebuilding a third Muslim nation.

So far, President Obama has done an excellent job. But unlike his predecessor, he cannot declare "Mission Accomplished" too early.

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