

Staff Editorial

Elections overlooked most needed reform

SGA elections at Davidson too often turn into popularity contests between the candidates. Whoever has the most friends who vote for them ends up winning.

This year we saw SGA take some steps to prevent the campaigns from focusing on popularity. Not only did most candidates campaign on real issues, such as getting cable in dorm rooms and extending the Pass/Fail deadline, but SGA also took the long overdue measure of sending an email to students that contained brief statements from most candidates about why they should be elected. Students were finally able to compare candidates side by side based on their own words rather than simply voting for whatever name they recognized.

SGA should be commended for taking this much-needed step to focus the elections on issues rather than name recognition. Candidates, too, should be praised for running their clean, issue oriented campaigns, and we hope an expect they will try to fulfill their campaign promises.

However, the SGA elections are still far from perfect. Candidates for the Student Conduct Council and the Honor Council were prohibited from making statements about why they should be elected in this email.

To any student brought before the Honor Council, those selected to try and defend that student will quickly become the most important elected officials at Davidson. So why is it we are not allowed to know anything about the candidates for these positions, who they are, what they stand for and why we should vote for them over others?

Preventing these candidates from campaigning may be an attempt to keep these very important positions from becoming mere popularity contests, but disallowing any public statements whatsoever could actually lead to more of a popularity contest.

If students have no way of differentiating candidates for the Honor Council and Student Conduct Council other than their names, it is inevitable that those who have the most name recognition and the best reputation will win. Should we really force students to cast their ballots based solely on whether or not we recognize a name or have heard good things about that person?

If we truly value total anonymity in the election, representatives should be selected at random from the community to serve terms. Of course, that is absurd, but so is the present system.

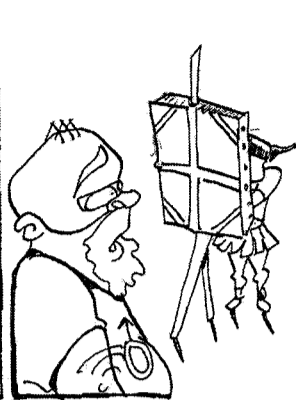
SGA should allow candidates for these positions the right to make a brief statement explaining their qualifications. A better-informed electorate is more likely to make better-informed choices, so why try to keep the student body in the dark.

Avoiding a popularity contest is the right idea, but SGA should reconsider whether or not their methods are making the problem better or worse.

Patent Sweater

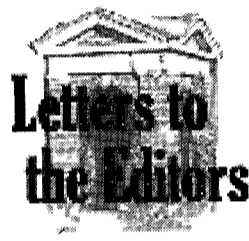


Ali Fitzgerald



Bush-bashing must remain 'respectful'

Leslie Smith's column of two weeks ago, in which she accuses President Bush of hatred, ignorance, and fear of homosexuals because of his stance against homosexual marriage lacks any rational argument. Worse, by simplifying this complex issue of morality and public policy to a test of tolerance versus hatred and ignorance, she implicates *all* who disagree with her with stupidity and hate. What a way to argue.



Recently posted signs attacking President Bush as an anti-homosexual, stupid dictator are more unfortunate products of this method of argument. That our President does not wait for the signal of an impotent and irrelevant international body to initiate action in our country's interests means that he is a dictator.

That he has come down in support of traditional marriage means he is a hater. That he is from Texas makes him a dumb monkey. What sort of dialogue do these signs intend to further?

Political argument is vital, insightful, and sometimes quite fun. Now, I am no paragon of political deference or non-partisanship, nor do I seek to force others to act in this way. But I have a suggestion, in light of the foregoing. When President Clinton was under fire in 1999, I truly loathed him. Yet I was proud to tell people that, if I were to meet him that day, I would shake his hand. I could respect him, for that moment. My hope is that some of Bush's most fiery opponents can come to acknowledge this man, and this office, with a modicum of respect and dignity. Perhaps such sentiments could incite reasonable and non-inflammatory debate.

Roland F. Foss '05

The facts on Teach for America

It may be true that Teach For America "sends recent college graduates with little or no teaching experience to some of the most challenging public school districts in the country," but there are certain facts about the organization that failed to make it into the recent Davidsonian article "Education prof critical of Teach For America." Here are the facts:

Teach For America applicants undergo a rigorous selection process thoughtfully designed to find those candidates who have proven their ability to take challenges head on.

It is no secret that the corps member experience is anything but a walk in the park, and it is for that reason that Teach For America selects only those candidates they are confident will go above and beyond to see their students succeed.

The rigorous Summer Institute is also a major part of the Teach For America experience. At the Institute, corps members learn about approaches used by successful teachers in low-income areas and student teach to gain invaluable classroom experience. It is because of the summer institute that, in a 2003 survey, Kane, Parsons & Associates found that 74 percent of principals regard Teach For America teachers as better than other beginning teachers and 9 out of 10 principals report that corps member training is at least as good as that of other beginning teachers.

When students commit to Teach For America, they are committing to much more than simply teaching for two years in a low-income public school. They are committing to dedicate their lives to the Teach For America mission that "one day all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education."

Though 60 percent of corps members do remain in the field of education, all members work as leaders in the movement to

end educational inequity, regardless of the field in which they chose to work.

Teach For America is much more than a "pit stop," it is a life-altering experience and, therefore, a lifelong commitment to our nation's children, and everyone involved with Teach For America takes that commitment very seriously. The Davidson community should be proud of the Davidson students who have applied to Teach For America and decided that they want to seriously commit themselves to such a noble and successful mission.

Elizabeth Devlin '04

Black Out Day gets varied response

Last Friday some Black students united to commemorate the contributions Blacks have made to America. In honor of Black History Month, organizers felt it important to remember the significant impact Black Americans have had on the development of this nation. Black-Out Day was a silent demonstration that lasted from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. Participating students wore black shirts and labels that read "Please Respect My Silence." The goal of the demonstration was to symbolize what America as well as what Davidson College would be like without the presence, thoughts, and contributions of Blacks. It was a commemoration of those who have come before us.

Responses to this day varied as well as participation. Some students readily participated and some decided to show their support by wearing black shirts. Others chose not to participate at all. On this day those participating, honored our ancestors who were silenced by fire hoses and dogs, silenced by mobs and lynching, and silenced by Jim Crow laws and an unfair justice system.

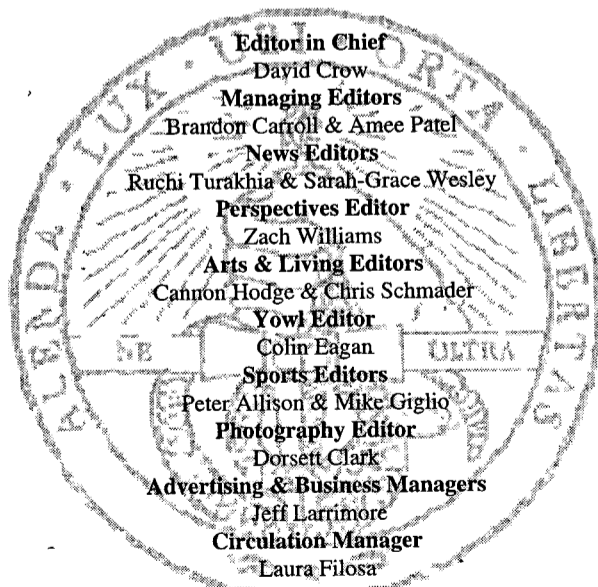
In general, students and faculty were respectful if not supportive of the day. However some participating students were greeted with unexpected hostility from several professors. In two cases students were threatened with a loss of participation points if they refused to talk in class. Other professors publicly questioned the validity of the cause.

One way to determine the success of this day is to ask yourself, did you notice? Even more importantly, did you care? Will you remember this Friday the 13th?

Vanessa Young '05

The Davidsonian

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