

Condom machines exacerbate AIDS problem

Boyd Miller

Lately, Davidson College has posted petitions across campus bathrooms in search of support for the recent condom machine proposal. The idea calls for "placing condom machines in dorm bathrooms and/or other areas." Such a proposal stems primarily from the AIDS epidemic, which rightly concerns students, faculty, and administration.

Proponents of "condom mania" argue that rubbers are an effective tool against AIDS and that the goal of saving lives is an ideal well aligned with the college's principles. However, such a notion is actually ungrounded in reality and statistically non-viable. Progressive sex educators would have us believe that condoms and "safe sex" is Davidson's salvation from AIDS. As Dr. Kimmel warns us in *The Davidsonian*, "Condoms ought to be freely available to all students, because besides education, they are the only way to stop the AIDS virus from spreading." A variety of studies, however, show that condoms fail to prevent pregnancy in 10% of couples who rely on that method of birth control. Yet with AIDS, one also must note that the virus is many times smaller than human sperm and a woman is fertile only several days a month, whereas the AIDS virus is virulent 365 days a year. Thus, condoms not only fail to stop AIDS, but provide a false sense of security for those who use them.

School based condom machines not only would fail to stop AIDS, but would have a detrimental effect of increasing sexual promiscuity on campus. As local writer and lawyer Barrett Mosbacher notes about school based clinics, "for the past 17 years, the prescribed 'solution' to the teenage pregnancy problem [and now the AIDS problem] has consisted of sex education programs... and easy access to contraceptives. Yet despite 17 years of effort and the expenditure of more than \$2 billion, pregnancy and abortion rates continue to climb."

To students (especially incoming freshmen) at Davidson, the installation of condom machines would send the same message as the school based contraceptive

clinics: "You, like all college students, are expected to engage in sexual intercourse." This statement will be no surprise to those students who actively engage in promiscuous sex, nor should it deter those who fervently abstain; however, as this study shows, Davidson College condom machines would advertise the "everyone is doing it" notion and persuade a large number of uncertain students to take the risk. Thus, Davidson's rubber dispensers have the dual effect of replacing abstinence (100% effective against AIDS) with a less reliable and more dangerous condom.

In addition, condom machines take away a viable excuse for a woman to say "No" to sexual intercourse. In the past, women who wanted to refrain from intercourse could use the man's lack of protection as a valid excuse.

However, thanks to Davidson, the man need not a condom, just a quarter and your convenient hall bathroom.

However, some proponents of the machines prefer that the dispensers be "discreet." Yet, "discreet" is rather a euphemism for "remote" and indicates that the dispensers ought to be placed in the basements of dorms. Should the college endorse "discreet" machines, we rightly should question whether a student in the heat of passion will stop, run down several flights of stairs, and retrieve his extra-ribbed or lubricated package. Any more "discreetness" would lead one to look on an aisle at Cornwell Drug. Thus, the school based machines have a dual nature of advertising and institutionalizing sex, while simultaneously making the machines "discreet" enough to deter students from using them.

Finally, the machines promote irresponsibility on the part of the students and the administration. The dispensers condescendingly tell students that we are not mature enough to handle the obligations of our own personal decisions. The school, instead, feels the need to practically feed students the condoms. Yes, ultimately the student is still the one who decides, but along with this freedom, the student incurs the responsibility of walking to the drug store. Students ought to be insulted by the college's proposal.

If condom machines truly are not degrading to the maturity of students, then why not install them in the offices of single professors?

The installment of condom machines is not the needed solution, but rather will exacerbate the problem. When faced with a public concern as grave as this fatal plague, the answer lies not in simple pragmatic solutions, but rather calls for moral courage. Davidson College is a school founded upon truthful principles and grounded deeply in Judeo-Christian values and heritage. According to our college handbook, Davidson "was founded... to promote 'knowledge and virtue.'" Yet, this recent proposal abandons such ideals and asks the college to lower its principles in the face of a grave social problem. However, principles by nature are strongest and most meaningful when tested by adverse circumstances. Is our faith so weak, that we can not maintain this college's virtue, while fighting AIDS and caring for those who suffer from it? I believe Davidson College cannot uphold its principles while simultaneously institutionalizing sex in our dorm bathrooms or basements. Indeed, Davidson's standards of virtue ought not to be dictated by unscientific survey sheets in bathroom stalls, but rather by the principles of this college's heritage.

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Condom machines threaten our institutional integrity

Paul Renner

If the AIDS Action Committee's controversial new proposal for placing condom machines in the dormitories deserves student support, then its sponsors should at least be willing to consider the arguments against it. Unfortunately, their recent effort "to gauge student support" on the issue asked for our input only if we liked their idea. Apparently, there isn't enough time to consider opposing views. In the Feb. 20th *Davidsonian*, the proposal's advocates claimed that the "emergency" of the situation does not allow for their agenda "to travel through many time consuming channels before it gets approved..." (read: "serious discussion about the propriety of our solution is not wanted, thank you.")

Yet, the implications of the condom plan are so grave for our campus that this decision must be thoughtfully considered, not high-handedly rushed. Only a minute's thought reveals that their "emergency" is nothing more than a tactically contrived crisis, intended to mute debate over the plan and speed its approval. In fact, condoms are

readily available. From listening to them talk, however, one might imagine that Davidson is under siege by a group of militant Jesuits intent on denying any student access to a condom; a situation that now requires the college to obtain condom machines by any means (perhaps a parachute drop), in order to protect the student body from AIDS. In reality a casual walk or drive to Cornwell Drugs will enable any of us to purchase boxes and boxes of this useful product.

Nevertheless, the issue is not whether sexually active people should use condoms for protection--everyone should seek to prevent risk to themselves. Rather, the whole issue hinges on two separate questions. (1) Can Davidson College, which considers itself a Christian institution, justly facilitate what is clearly contrary to Christian teaching; and (2) are students ready to sacrifice their position as responsible adults, who can make necessary provisions for their own sexual activity, for the convenience of condom machines?

The appropriate basis for the college's decision is straightforward. Our Statement of Purpose tells us that "Davidson recognizes God as the source of all truth," and is "committed to the historic Christian faith..." Even the loosest interpretation of the Bible cannot yield anything

but definitive statements in the Old and New Testaments that God designs sex for married couples and considers it a sin in any other context. If the school wants to claim God's truth as its foundation, then how can it involve itself in something which scorns God's law? More specifically, if Davidson supposes its policies to be consistent with the Statement of Purpose, how can it logically say that God's policy on sex is obsolete, and then adopt a plan that facilitates what God prohibits? As I see it, the college as an institution has only two alternatives: it may choose to install the condom machines, and either abrogate or blatantly disregard its confessed purpose; or it may follow its expressed beliefs and refuse to become an accomplice to their violation.

The alternatives for the students are no less clear. Although the college must adhere to Christian ethics, it also acknowledges that college-aged adults should have authority over their own sexual activity. The AIDS Committee proposal raises a question about this authority: do we deserve it? If we want to claim sexual privileges, then we must assume adult duties. As married couples do, Davidson students should purchase condoms at the local drug store, using liberal estimates of future need. Making these public purchases might cause us embarrassment if we were young teenagers; but we are adults. Our claims to maturity, however, will be severely undermined if we allow the condom proposal to pass. To do so would require us to concede that our sex drive is more mature than we are; that we cannot handle the same responsibilities for our sexual lifestyles which our most recent graduates must assume; in short, we would no longer be able to call ourselves adults.

Our status as students and the stated purpose of our college will both be compromised if the plan is approved. If these costs seem too high, we should consider employing a prophylactic response of our own against the condom proposal: Let us reject it and prevent the dangerous consequences it would cause for our campus, choosing instead to reaffirm the moral integrity of the college and our own personal responsibility.

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- All submissions should deal with subjects of interest to the campus community.
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- All letters must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Sunday before the expected publication date.
- All commentaries must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Saturday before the expected publication date, except for those on diskette, which are due at 7:07 p.m. Sunday.
- All submissions must be signed. Writers must present the

editors with compelling reasons if they do not wish their names printed with their work.

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