

*Staff Editorial**Evaluating course evals*

In the fall, a student signs up for courses that look interesting, failing to check her peers' wisdom at "RateMyProfessors.com." Spring term rolls around. The Add/Drop deadline passes. Suddenly, this once interesting course becomes a student's worst nightmare.

The professor begins to deviate from the syllabus. Grading seems inconsistent, and office hours disappear. The professor fails to prepare for class, or assign appropriate readings.

Concerned students fill out critical and harsh (but constructive) evaluations. Semesters later, other students are left to endure the same fate.

Sound far-fetched?

Unfortunately, variations on this theme do happen. While many professors use the freedom of tenure to pursue controversial academic ideas, a few may take advantage of their job security and neglect their teaching responsibilities. Students expecting a high-quality liberal arts education are at a loss for how to voice their concerns in a way that effects change.

As we report this week, Dean of Faculty Clark Ross encourages students to bring concerns directly to the professor. Should that fail, they should approach the department chair, and only as a last resort approach the dean.

From an administrator's perspective, this hierarchy is rational. From a student's perspective, it is unrealistic. Students who have criticisms of a professor, even well-intended ones, will be understandably hesitant to speak to him or her when grades may be on the line.

There should be institutionalized alternatives to this problem. We have two suggested courses of action, although we have confidence the faculty could design their own.

Professors should conduct anonymous midterm course evaluations to identify problems and to correct them before the end of the semester. The end-of-semester course evaluation should include a question that gauges how effectively a professor incorporated this feedback. Some professors already do this voluntarily, but we encourage all departments to adopt this policy.

Departments should also create a complaint form that students can fill out anonymously and submit to the departmental assistant. Copies would be sent to both the professor and department chair. If the chair thought the complaint was warranted, both professors could discuss solutions.

We emphasize that the clear majority of Davidson faculty are both competent and dedicated to their students. The reputation of the faculty and the academic experience of Davidson students should not be compromised by a few bad apples.

◆ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ◆

Alumnus responds to feminist professors

On a happenstance visit to Davidson to see my daughter, Haley, I am reminded that I actually never learned much at Davidson. I wondered why I did not ace my papers in religion and philosophy, but on rereading my thoughts decades later, I do not now understand why I passed either. A glance at *The Davidsonian* helped me to fill in the missing piece: your professors don't know much either.

They believe, or so they say:

"...we believe in the liberating power of education:

"...we believe the need for political, economic, and social equality, regardless of sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, disability, or creed.

"For these reasons, we are feminists." ("Faculty members speak out as feminists", *The Davidsonian*, Sept. 21, 2005)

As I said I didn't learn much, but I did learn self study and critical thinking. It is impossible to share or develop 30 years of reflection in a brief letter, but consider the following ideas:

Liberty and equality are competing and antagonistic concepts. Liberty begets inclusion. Equality demands exclusion. By definition diversity requires a focus on differences and not is not defined by similarities if present. By and large, those that champion both liberalism and equality unequally apply the concept of liberty in favor of their agendas and don't believe in liberal ideas in the classical sense.

Don't take my word or the word of your professors. Do your own self study. Begin your education for and about life. May I recommend what is now a brief classic: "The Road to Serfdom" by F. A. Hayek.

Tea Acuff '75

Sorority issue requires critical thought

I was a little disturbed when I read Marian Schembari's response to the past few weeks' sorority discussion ("Don't create sorority for one race", *The Davidsonian*, Oct. 5,

2005). Ms. Schembari states, "I thought we were trying to get rid of discrimination, not create an organization [a historically black sorority] that promotes it."

First and foremost I must say that I don't believe certain people fully understand this important issue. There has been an article written in *The Davidsonian* and a column written that both emphasize that a historically black sorority does not and will not discriminate against any race.

There are women of all races who are interested in bringing a different organization to this campus. Are we not reading these articles thoroughly?

Or are we instead sensationalizing an important issue that requires thoughtful consideration and extensive in-depth research.

Over the past few years I have noted the racial atmosphere on this campus.

Notice, I said years, not two months.

"Race" and "diversity" have always been hot topics for dialogue on this campus, but those who participate in these discussions rarely are fully informed when they fashion their witty observations about diversity or the lack thereof on this campus. Don't get me wrong: I love Davidson and the people that are here. But it makes me angry when some people overlook the underlying rationales of an initiative.

The goal of a historically black organization at Davidson is not to "create a sorority" to exclude white women or make "whites a minority in [a] sorority." By continuing to do the same things we've always done, we just remain where we started.

LeAndra Rice '07

The Davidsonian welcomes letters to the editor. Please e-mail submissions of no more than 250 words to davidsonian@davidson.edu by 6 p.m. on Sunday. We reserve the right to edit for content, brevity and grammar.

Davidson sororities? Look at it this way

BY THOMAS JOHNSON-BEAN
Guest Columnist

I have had a revelation. In light of the letter printed in *The Davidsonian* several weeks ago, I have realized that people in this school are quite possibly not as critical in their thoughts as the public would make us seem.

As a senior at Davidson College, I was witness to the chartering ceremony of my fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha. To my chagrin, some persons in the Davidson community, some of those in the administration of this institution, and the utter hypocrisy of both groups remain the same approaching a black Greek sorority as was the opposition the Alpha fraternal idea encountered in years past. In the aftermath of Barbara Bush's apathy, William Bennett's blatant prejudice, and Kanye West's extreme liberalism, I should not be surprised to believe that anything in this bubble environment should have progressed.

I was prompted to pick up *The Davidsonian* several weeks ago to read Mr. Clark's letter on the struggle several black women on this campus are undergoing for the right to have a comfortable college experience ("Sororities builds walls", *The Davidsonian*, Sept. 28, 2005). It is true enough that their strides and efforts have been discounted by many more than he; indeed, they have been mocked by those who do not even have the modicum of compassion and intellect it would take to see that segregation is not the issue here; equitability and sensibility, however, are what are at hand.

I digress to my revelation. The need for a historically black Greek sorority might hit home, at least to the majority of both the student body and our esteemed faculty, through examples. The BSC is enough of a minority organization to do all the diversity needed at Davidson so why do we need OLAS or DASA? The men's basketball team is enough of a sport to incorporate the athletic needs and competitiveness of all male athletes so why is there a football team? The Political Science Department is indicative of all basic principles of the world concerning politics, science, and people.

In fact, let's omit the other majors from the catalogue. Other people choosing majors different from my own promote academic segregation, and since my major is inclusive enough of a liberal arts education, no others are needed. Phi Delta Theta is a fraternity I enjoy, and I want to intimately know every other individual who wants to be in a fraternity so as to not have Greek segregation, so really there is only a need for one fraternity at all on Patterson Court.

Lastly, scores ago, this institution was all male and basically all white, for whatever reason should such perfection have ever been changed? The absurd idiocies of such examples seem to apply.

We, as the essence and composition of Davidson College are endowed with the ability to make our peers feel more comfortable and equal, and I submit that there is more that can be done to better Davidson and more to come that should be allowed without incessant criticism.

Mr. Clark and others, your argument is no different than those perpetuated since 1993 when Alpha Phi Alpha first wanted to be chartered here, and I pose to all: do you think now that we would all have been better without seeing and feeling the presence of this fraternal organization? Or OLAS? Or the Theatre Department? Or a football team?

As far as the women who are the pioneers of this movement to charter a sorority on this campus, Albert Einstein may have said it best when he wrote that "great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocre minds."

To the others not swayed by my argument or those who still want to have more opportunities to know people on this campus without division, wouldn't you all be more easily prompted to meet and greet when you have places, people, or organizations in place to support you and act as your comfort zones? The question is rhetorical because the majority of those opposing this idea already do.

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