

## Embrace diversity

MARIAN SCHEMBARI  
Guest Columnist

A story has been floating around campus concerning an unfortunate incident involving a tour, a guide and an unhappy parent. Not too long ago, said parent sent tour coordinator Dave Mabe '04 an email essentially tearing the program a new one.

This parent was offended by the mention of Elise Elrod, the transgendered reverend who recently spoke here. She was not only offended by Elrod but also had a problem with her tour guide showing pride in our school's level of acceptance.

That is where the problem arises. I respect people's differences and I understand that we all come from different walks of life. I find it absolutely disgusting, though, that having a transgendered speaker on campus would be considered "unattractive" (her word, not mine). Do you know what's unattractive? Ignorance. Whatever her opinions are, hatred is never something I will respect. And, I will never NOT be proud of the steps our school has taken to create a more tolerant atmosphere.

Of course, this placed the tour program in an incredibly inconvenient situation. Mabe wrote a response email to his guides, saying that "there really isn't a 'right way' or a 'wrong way' to approach the world around you. And college, especially Davidson, should be about fostering interaction between different kinds of people. Because of the validity of difference, please treat everyone on your tours with respect. And approach your job with a certain humble accuracy."

Unfortunately, Davidson has the stereotype of being a little bit too white and a little bit too conservative. The thing I love about Davidson, though, is that we're trying to fix these issues. The new loan policy is a perfect example of the attempts our college is making to broaden the diversity of the Davidson student body.

Furthermore, bringing someone like Elrod onto our campus is something we would not have done as a school ten years ago. But what kind of example are we setting if we shrink away from our attempts to be accepting? Davidson made the choice to bring Elrod here and in doing so has faced the inevitable "sensitivity" issues a Presbyterian college must face.

But I am proud that our school would take that step. Someone is bound to find that unappealing, but if some parent or prospective student has a problem with that, well, we don't want them. We don't need to make Davidson "look good," as Davidson is already nationally recognized. We have no need to placate ignorance when we should be using our power as a school to stop it.

We don't need to be vague about what we do; we need to celebrate it. I can promise you that with that one parent's distaste, there were five other students who decided right then and there that Davidson was the school for them. We do not want people to come here if they feel uncomfortable.

Let's suppose that from now on, tour guides glossed over anything "unseemly" and we, instead of being special and strong, turned vague and ordinary. Maybe that unfortunate high school student would have applied if Elrod was left out of the tour. But after his acceptance he might experience Davidson's diverse programs and question his choice of school. He, of course, is an extreme example, but it is unnecessary to pretend we're something we're not.

We should be recruiting high school students who will continue and improve upon this continuing legacy of acceptance. Davidson has a history of homophobia and racism. But we're working on it. We have a slowly diminishing problem with keeping people who are different on campus. But we're working on it. President Vagt, though sadly leaving, is confident that we will continue to progress: "We will move forward!" he recently wrote me. We absolutely should not be avoiding subjects that might seem odd so that some parents won't get offended. We don't want anyone here promoting hatred.

Elise Elrod is a societal outlier, but that's okay. She's special, not inappropriate. She is a lesson brought to Davidson and should not be treated as a burden. Fifty years ago no campus would even have considered recruiting someone like Elrod to speak.

But they wouldn't have considered inviting a black speaker either. If some parent wrote a letter saying that they were uncomfortable that we have a black campus police chief, would we avoid that topic too?

Think about what type of atmosphere we are trying to create, and promote it.

Marian Schembari '09 is a sociology major from Old Greenwich, Ct. Contact her at [maschembari@davidson.edu](mailto:maschembari@davidson.edu).

## Media coverage of Greek life justified, necessary



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LAURA VAN OUDENAREN

resent the chapter.

While specifically asserting that he does not support the actions of the sorority, Reed criticizes the press, college and students who are "shocked and appalled" by the action on the grounds that Greek life is notorious for hazing, discrimination and dividing student bodies. According to Reed, while the DePauw incident might be wrong, "it's the way things are on today's college campuses."

Unfortunately, Reed's arguments run on the ghastly and dangerous assumptions that some things are better left unchanged and that stereotypes against Greek organizations can be adhered to. They suggest that if the administration chooses to support Greek life, they should turn a blind eye towards sorority- and fraternity-related conflicts because that is what Greek organizations are known to do.

To refute Reed's claims, it is not enough to offer the fundamental argument that Greek organizations, because of their involvement in service-related activities, are more than just a breeding ground for keg parties.

Although there is much more to Greek life than drinking and sex, it is a well-known fact that each year these organizations struggle with issues relating to alcohol, hazing and discrimination.

The fact is that hazing does occur. It is associated with pledging, and most likely it will never stop. However, thanks to increased attention by the media and colleges, hazing-

In last week's article "Stop acting surprised by Greek antics," Joe Reed criticized institutions that sponsor Greek life and then censure its actions, citing the Delta Zeta sorority as an example.

Concerned with the image of the sorority, the national leadership of Delta Zeta allegedly removed 23 "unattractive" girls from the DePauw University chapter in an attempt to improve their image, leaving fewer than 10 members on campus to represent the chapter.

related deaths have fallen dramatically over the past decades. According to research conducted by Hank Nuwer, in 1980, seven hazing-related deaths occurred in fraternities alone across the nation. By 2005, that number fell to just two. And even those two might not have occurred if administrators and media had paid more attention to the abuse.

Under Reed's rationalization, colleges would tactfully ignore occurrences such as the removal of 23 "ugly" girls, the hospitalization of pledges and other incidents. However, without recognition of the dangers of hazing, it would run rampant.

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And, as history shows, rampant hazing leads to student deaths. While universities and colleges can never put a complete stop to hazing, increased attention to the problem and informational events like the Bean Bag Series here at Davidson help to lower the detrimental effects of Greek life.

Fortunately, hazing is at a minimum at Davidson, undoubtedly due in part to administration involvement. Reed is justified when he calls attention to the recent Sig Ep incident. While college parties and alcohol abuse go hand-in-hand, hazing does not necessarily always play a role.

Although the College will hopefully take this into account when disciplining the fraternity, the media cannot be criticized for calling attention to the incident. Media attention, administrative involvement and widespread criticism have helped to curb hazing deaths in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

Laura Van Oudenaren '10 is from Bethesda, Md. Contact her at [lavanoudenaren@davidson.edu](mailto:lavanoudenaren@davidson.edu).

## Davidson musicians: support Wildcats pep band

JARRED TAYLOR  
Guest Columnist

Imagine with me for a moment. It's the opening home game of the 2007-08 basketball season. Belk Arena is packed with students, fans and journalists—all aware that if last year was impressive, this year is going to be explosive. 7:42 on the clock in the second half. Curry sinks a three. Max steals the ball, dribbles down the court unopposed, then tosses it behind his back to Lovedale for a crushing dunk. There's not a closed mouth in the house.

Media timeout. The pep band starts to carry the crowd into a deafening rendition of "Sweet Caroline," but a sudden, awkward silence descends when the cheerleaders take the floor.

The fans are puzzled that, although they recognize a Davidson student or two in the squad, the rest seem to be high schoolers. "You mean Davidson has to outsource to local high schools?" whisper fans of the opposing team as the 15- and 16-year-olds toss out t-shirts. "Surely after a few games they'll have more college students! Who could pass up the chance to cheer for this team?" ponders a resident from the Pines. Several months later, as the team prepares to head to New Orleans for the first round of the 2008 NCAA Tournament, the athletics department has no choice but to hire professionals to allow the cheerleaders to build a decent pyramid.

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Sound crazy? Don't worry, all the cheerleaders are and will continue to be Davidson students. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Davidson Wildcat Pep Band. Despite heavy recruiting attempts, the pep band has been able to count on only a couple of Davidson students per game. Students from Mooresville High School compose the remainder. For the Southern Conference and NCAA tournaments this year, as in the past, the band has had to resort to hiring professionals to complement the handful of Davidson students who volunteered to play.

As outgoing president of the pep band, and as someone who has played in the pep band since his freshman year, I find this to be a terribly frustrating situation. This campus is saturated with instrumentalists.

Look at the talent displayed in the orchestra and jazz band, at Battle of the Bands and at Live Thursdays. Don't get me wrong; I know these student musicians have both heavy rehearsal schedules and the same academic workload as any other Davidson student.

*I call on all campus musicians to seriously consider accepting the privilege of supporting our basketball teams next season.*

What I do regret, however, is that campus musicians do not seem to find the pep band enticing enough for even a half-commitment. Lots of trumpet, trombone and sax players come to the home games anyway—why don't they bring their instruments and play with the band once in a while?

It is perhaps due to a failure to communicate the pep band's philosophy effectively. If so, I hope this column will rectify that. The Pep Band is not a music department ensemble. We hold two pre-season rehearsals and after that the only obligations are home games and tournaments. There are no attendance requirements; you are welcome to play when you are able and to skip games when you are not. The gig offers not only courtside seats and a cool T-shirt but also free pizza and drinks at every home game. Tack on free transportation, free lodging and a generous food allowance for the tournaments, and one wonders why more student musicians aren't jumping at this opportunity.

I call on all campus musicians to seriously consider accepting the privilege of supporting our basketball teams next season. Not only is it fun, but the contribution the band makes to player (and fan) morale and energy is truly game-changing. Let's make the Wildcat Pep Band worthy of its name—a band not only supporting Wildcats but full of them too.

Jarred Taylor '07 is a political science and french major from Birmingham, Al. Contact him at [jataylor@davidson.edu](mailto:jataylor@davidson.edu).