

The Daily Tar Heel

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# The wild, fantasy world of Facebook

It may be true that Facebook is taking over the world — today, there are more than 500 million active Facebook users. T-Pain even got a Facebook tattoo recently.

And while it is now considered the norm to check Facebook daily, new research suggests that checking your friends' Facebook pages may make you feel inadequate.

A Stanford research team found that people are more likely to keep negative emotions more private or hidden than their positive emotions, leading others to underestimate the prevalence of negative emotions among their peers — even well-known peers.

According to the research team, this perception of a lower prevalence of negative emotions in friends can then lead to lower life satisfaction.

If the conclusions are correct, social networking sites like Facebook can add to our perception that our friends are happier than we are, since people tend to post only the best parts of their lives on Facebook.

The movie "The Social Network" captures this dynamic. In the movie, Facebook is portrayed as beginning in the spirit of comparing people — specifically photos of female college students. The character of Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg starts "Facemash", as it was originally called, to post pictures of all the girls at his university, giving people a place to publicly "rank" the photos against one another.

Naturally, Facebook has progressed from there, giving us a place to chat with each other and organize events. But it has also advanced by giving us a more sophisticated method of comparing ourselves to our friends. We can now compare each other based on our relationship statuses, how many wall posts we have, or even how often we get tagged in photos.

Facebook and other social networking sites have been accused of detaching people from each other and limiting real connection, replacing face-to-face social interactions with superficial, online connections.

If this is true, and real interactions have been replaced with fake ones, it follows that the fewer "real" things we know about our peers, the more room we have for making things up — like assuming they are happier than they actually are, and holding ourselves to this fantastical standard.

Women are especially at risk for developing complexes by comparing themselves to their friends on Facebook, since women, more often than men, tend to use social networking sites to demonstrate online affection, and share photos of friends and family.

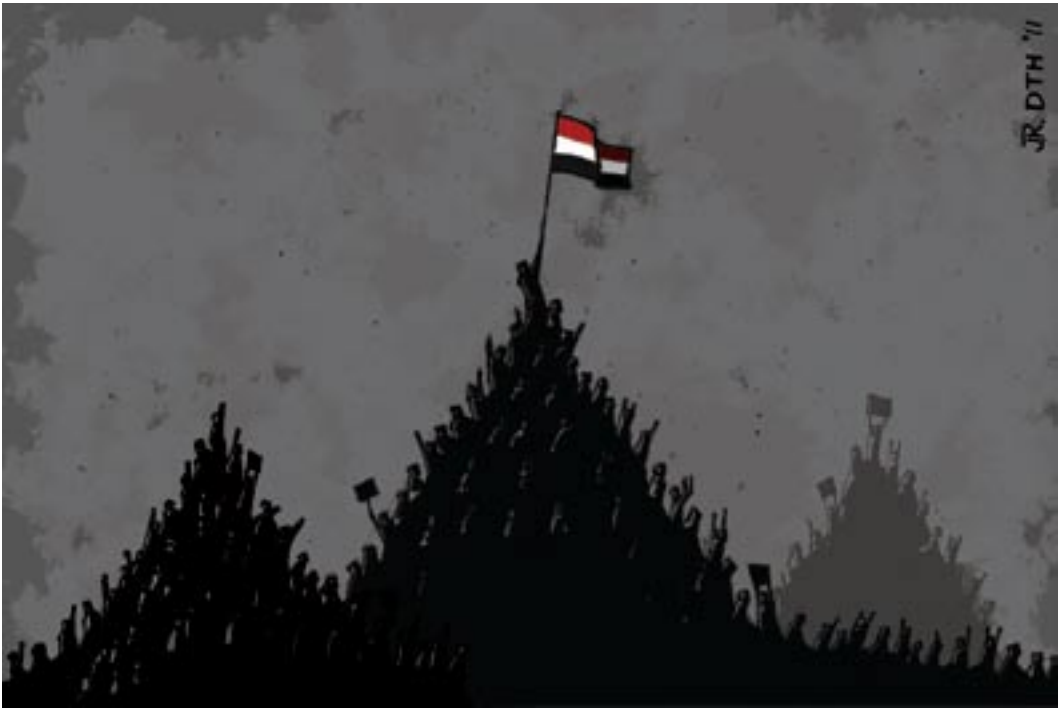
On the other hand, men tend to use social networking sites more functionally, for activities such as posting news, information and task-oriented content — practices which would not lead them to compare themselves to their friends.

However, women and men are equally likely to broadcast their relationship status — about 84 percent of users do so.

The important thing to remember? Even though your friends' lives may look perfect on their Facebook pages, don't immediately assume their lives are that much better than your own — for all you know, they could be marveling at your own fantastical life on Facebook.

**WEDNESDAY:**  
Taylor Fulton reflects on an infamous New York Times article, one year later.

**EDITORIAL CARTOON** By JR Fruto, bundok@email.unc.edu



# The power of positive payoffs

The lesson of North Carolina is that investment in education can, and will again, drive growth

Heading into the budget season, the incredible story of the Research Triangle seems overshadowed by the looming budget deficit — nearly \$4 billion. And in a time when everyone seems to be hurting, higher learning looks like a tempting luxury to cut.

The only way for our school and system to spare the quality of education here is for our leaders — students and administrators — to articulate a difficult message: Investment in higher education is likely a better deficit reduction tool than cutting.

Fortunately, North Carolina's story is especially conducive to this argument. It's one that N.C. State University professor Art Padilla made two days ago for the Chronicle of Higher Education when defending state investment in universities.

His argument that con-

tinued investment in education infrastructure during the tough times of the 1970s sowed the seeds of prosperity is especially salient to our current dilemma.

And indeed, Research Triangle Park stands as the ultimate symbol of the potential of public-private partnerships among the best in education and entrepreneurship. More than 50 years ago, it was mostly empty land and tobacco farms, and the state had the lowest per-capital income in the nation.

It's why a federal government grant to the N.C. State statistics department spawned the best company in America to work for (again): SAS. Imagine that.

But the argument hardly need be purely anecdotal. Empirical evidence also suggests positive returns.

The current crop of legislators likely subscribes to a theo-

ry of economics that views government spending multipliers unfavorably. Fine.

A 2009 economic impact study of the benefits of the UNC system showed an increase of \$9.65 in private income and \$1.37 in public revenue for every dollar spent on the system — before multiplier effects.

These positive returns flow purely from the activities of the institution, and they will be seriously weakened if adequate funding is abandoned.

Even the libertarian-leaning John Locke Foundation admits that higher education investment is a pro-growth strategy: "We can be fairly sure of some things: Having large numbers of smart young people study difficult and important subjects is good for the world and the economy."

To our advocates: The tools exist. But time is running low.

# Get concrete, Crisp

Specific plan for Greek system reform needed

The Greek system at UNC has been discussed frequently during the past couple of years. The Board of Trustees is still discussing changes to the system and how to promote a safer culture in the Greek houses. Winston Crisp, vice chancellor for student affairs, has also been considering reforms for Greeks.

But there's still much to be done. And specifics are sorely lacking.

Following the death of Courtland Smith in August 2009, and several particularly damaging drug convictions a month later, it became clear that the Greek system needed re-evaluation.

But the Greek system reform movement is in limbo

after a full year of heated debate and multiple proposed changes. In November, the Board of Trustees passed recommendations that would require houses to hold spring recruitment, but nothing substantive has happened since.

Crisp is a very capable administrator who can and will continue the very effective and productive relationship between the university and the Greek houses.

But thus far, Crisp has been very vague in expressing his ideas for reform.

His three-pronged plan for putting together a team to evaluate the Greeks, restructuring the office of fraternity and sorority life and applying reforms shows promise.

But without details, it's hard to evaluate what doesn't concretely exist.

The office of fraternity and sorority life will essentially become empty in the coming months. Jenny Levering has already left the University and Kayte Frye is preparing to leave as well. This is a problem that also presents an opportunity for Crisp to make a fresh start.

Reform should be coupled with hiring two competent and hardworking individuals to replace Levering and Frye. Crisp said in an interview that the timeline for these events will be February and March.

Greek life is integral to student life at UNC. It's time to see what's in store for it.

# A vote of no confidence

ASG tells students they don't deserve a BOG vote

The Association for Student Governments decided last weekend to delay a push for a vote on the UNC-system Board of Governors — a decision that was short-sighted and reflects ASG's ineptness.

On Saturday, an ASG council comprising student body presidents of the 17 UNC-system campuses tabled ASG president Atul Bhula's bill lobbying for a vote at system board meetings. Bhula attends and has the power to speak during the board meetings but currently does not have the power to vote on decisions.

Members of the council cited Bhula's inability to effectively lobby against legislators and board members at meetings as a reason to table the bill.

Since Bhula's position is temporary, to delay progress in efforts to get the ASG leader a vote is incredibly short-sighted. Future ASG presidents will be affected, and the fight for a student vote on the board has been ongoing since the 90s.

ASG members recognize that the organization isn't doing the best job serving student interests. But halting efforts to gain a student vote on the board will only make matters worse.

The president is an important liaison between the more than 200,000 students in the UNC system and administrators. Students also pay a \$1 fee annually to finance ASG. If ASG has minimal effect on how decisions are made at BOG meetings, one could question why students pay

for the association at all.

A vote at BOG meetings is more effective than no vote at all. And we agree that ASG needs to prove itself capable of using that vote wisely. But perhaps the vote would be a step toward true impact, giving ASG something it can take seriously.

The fact that student body presidents from across the UNC system voted down Bhula's bill for a vote speaks volumes on how much they think a student vote would mean. Yet the best way to correct glaring ineffectiveness is for the student body presidents to redouble efforts to give Bhula a sophisticated platform to advocate from.

Jettisoning a long-standing effort to give students greater voice is the wrong response.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY:

*"There was a lot of activity, a lot of fighting, horrible noises. She told me there were a lot of popping sounds happening."*

BARBARA JOST-CREEGAN, MOTHER OF STUDENT IN EGYPT

## FEATURED ONLINE READER COMMENT:

*"NOW where are we going to drink on Tuesday nights?"*

DRUNK FRESHMAN, ON THE CLOSING OF P.T.'S, AND THE LOSS OF 90s NIGHT

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Homosexuality, Christianity are diametrically opposed

TO THE EDITOR:

About Matt McNeill's letter (Jan. 28) headed "Burr's comments offensive to Christians, homosexuals," I am a Christian and the comments do not offend me at all.

I think Burr is quite right in implying that being homosexual and Christian is incongruous. It is clear that one who indulges in homosexual activities is going against Christianity. The Bible condemns homosexual acts many times, in both Old and New Testaments. Anyone who deliberately defies these condemnations can hardly be a real Christian. ("But, if it feels so good, how can it be a sin?")

McNeill says he doubts that Jesus would have turned His back on such a person. I think that, if Jesus had encountered a man taken in sodomy rather than the woman taken in adultery, He would have said the same thing: "Go, and sin no more." In these times, wealthy and influential homosexuals have influenced national organizations into removing homosexuality from lists of mental/emotional compulsive disorders. The kleptomaniacs, and others, have not been able to bring such influence to bear.

J. E. Williams  
Class of '50

### UCommons renovation is a student-driven effort

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to clarify a point of the editorial "Level the field." The editorial frames the UCommons marketing campaign as an administrative effort. While Union administrators have been involved in some of the organizing efforts, the UCommons campaign has been and continues to be driven by students. Students designed the marketing materials, students collected petition signatures, and most importantly, students were responsible for what makes up the renovation proposal. UCommons is not a top-down campaign or conspiracy to squeeze fees from students; rather, it is a response to what students have deemed the Union's greatest needs.

Students will be collecting petition signatures throughout campus and I encourage all students to sign to put this referendum on the Feb. 8 ballot.

Even if the referendum does not pass, the discussion taking place among students about UCommons shows that students have a vested interest in the project and deserve the opportunity to vote.

Michael Willis  
Senior  
Psychology

### TFA's recruitment drive is ineffectual, too aggressive

TO THE EDITOR:

While at UNC, I became well acquainted with the names attached to the deluge of Teach for America recruitment e-mails and Facebook event pages. Given the fact that Ms. Keziah ("Teach for America gives hope to the less fortunate, Jan. 28) has yet to even begin teacher training,

I found it strange that her letter to the editor sounded like a marketing pitch straight off the TFA website. I soon remembered that I had seen her name on the recruitment efforts I alluded to earlier. According to a TFA e-mail I received, Keziah's position as campus campaign coordinator is paid an hourly wage. She should have disclosed this compensation in her letter.

This raises a larger issue of the effect of TFA's highly aggressive recruiting. It is notorious for sending a torrent of personally addressed recruitment e-mails to students who are not interested (e.g. me).

The organization has done a good job of increasing its application numbers. However, I fear that its recruiting practices are crowding out students who are truly enthusiastic about teaching. It markets itself as an "option" (their word, not mine) to attract many applicants, and consequently they receive applications from students who consider the organization little more than an option. Often, these "option" students are highly accomplished and accepted over qualified applicants whose only goal is TFA. This strategy also drives down its admittance rate. Teach for America should recruit students who are wholly committed to the cause rather than seek prestige by recruiting many and accepting few.

Jahan Mohiuddin  
Class of 2010

### Choose your language to respect others' feelings

TO THE EDITOR:

In all of the debate surrounding gendered language, I'd like to offer a perspective shift away from focusing on the "badness" or "goodness" inherent in words themselves.

Words hurt not because of we detect a "wrong" property in the word, but because language is an expression of how we take others to be important. We all believe we deserve some level of consideration from other people.

When we address another person, choosing words carefully can show an appreciation for their agency, their individual personhood.

If I tell someone I'd rather not be referred to in a certain way and they deliberately go against that wish, I instinctively find it offensive that the person did not regard my desire as worth her attention.

In this sense, it isn't the property of the word, nor even the association of the word that seems to be offensive, but rather the motivation of the individual for not taking my wishes as important.

We shouldn't overly sensitize our language just for the sake of it, but we should realize that our words are a manifestation that shows how much we care about other people.

Choose your words carefully not because of some regard for an abstract system of "correctness," but because you want other people to feel that you take them worthy of your effort and consideration.

Michael Foote  
Senior  
Philosophy and Biology

## SPEAK OUT

### WRITING GUIDELINES:

- **Please type:** Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- **Sign and date:** No more than two people should sign letters.
- **Students:** Include your year, major and phone number.
- **Faculty/staff:** Include your

department and phone number.  
► **Edit:** The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

### SUBMISSION:

- **Drop-off:** at our office at 151 E. Rosemary Street.
- **E-mail:** opinion@dailytarheel.com
- **Send:** to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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