

COLUMN



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Respect those 'useless' majors

As I head into my final year at UNC, questions about my plans for the future keep cropping up.

I have said, "I'm an English major," enough times by now to expect the response, "So are you going to teach?" No. I've never had any desire to become a teacher.

When I tell them I'm not planning on going to grad school right away either, they give me a blank stare and say, "So what are you going to do?" But what they really mean is, "What else can you do?"

According to Newsweek magazine's recent list of the "13 Most Useless College Majors," trying to find employment with a B.A. in English is like Tennyson's Ulysses trying to sail beyond the horizon. And if your major is remotely related to fine arts or humanities, you're in the same boat.

Newsweek's list ranks 13 degrees based on unemployment rate of recent and experienced graduates, earnings of those graduates and projected growth from 2010 through 2020.

With the national employment rate hovering at 8.2 percent, college grads are hungry for a means to a relatively seamless transition into the work force. Degrees in fields such as film arts (No. 3 on the list), philosophy (No. 6), English (No. 7) and history (No. 12) seem frivolous to a population driven by thrift and financial success.

The statistics are enough to make every hopeful humanities major pull an academic Sylvia Plath. Use value boils down to a distilled, impersonal assessment of monetary worth. In pursuing flashy resume boosters, we tend to neglect the cultivation of the more basic skills that are essential for any kind of success.

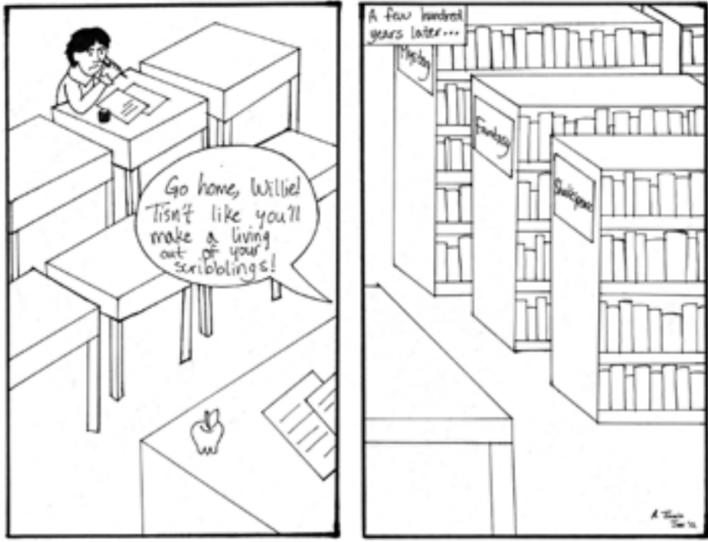
Every major on Newsweek's list nurtures interpersonal communication, strong writing and creative thinking. These universally important skills tend to be undervalued precisely because they are so basic. Why spend four years of college developing things that should have been mastered before high school?

Everyone should know how to correctly construct a sentence and efficiently interact with their colleagues, but this is not the case. I've learned since coming to college that some of the most brilliant people are incapable of expressing themselves. Intelligence isn't useful if it is made inaccessible by a communication barrier.

And let's not underestimate the passion and tenacity of those who study these "useless" subjects. There's a lot to be said for the tenderness with which a true literature lover handles a first edition of "Leaves of Grass" in Wilson Library; for the political science (No. 13) majors overseeing voter registration in the Pit, trying to amplify our generation's political voice; for musicians (No. 11), who fill in the blanks when verbal and written communication are insufficient.

These people can have an impact that will linger long after the economy has recovered. These future Mark Twains, Alfred Hitchcocks and Walter Cronkites have the ability to create something timeless. And that should be respected, not doubted.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Aneshia Tinnin, atinnin@live.unc.edu



EDITORIAL

Let's join the 21st century

A technology advisory committee would help Chapel Hill 2020 plan.

Proponents of Chapel Hill 2020 described the development plan as "a living document," conceived with the intention of reflecting "the values, aspirations, and ideas of the community" by making it a "people's plan, based on extensive public participation." That "living" nature is critical now, because while the vision for Chapel Hill 2020 is admirable, it remains unfulfilled.

It is not that Chapel Hill 2020 has failed to collect values and aspirations from the community. In fact, the plan lists six of them. But because the outreach process did not provide substantive alternatives to attending meetings in person, it inherently overlooked the input of community stakeholders whose jobs and family commitments took precedence.

The best way for the Chapel Hill Town Council to reconcile this document with its mission is to take seriously the objective of engaging in a sustained dialogue with town stakeholders. They must produce a

decision-making process that enables community members to articulate and refine their values and goals, one that provides a framework for weighing competing values.

To meet this challenge, the council should revive the town's Technology Advisory Committee, which will use software and social media in reaching out to residents and provide a virtual space for civic engagement when time and distance would interfere.

If this document is to be used in both budget discussion and land use planning, it is important that it accurately represents the interests of all town stakeholders and conveys a clear, coherent and usable vision. It is not apparent at this stage in the process that Chapel Hill 2020 meets these criteria.

As Chapel Hill 2020 moves into its next phase, a Technology Advisory Committee would provide important information and tools for engaging the public in a sustained way. Such tools include feedback software that utilizes user-submitted rankings and ideas, online forums and blog space for town staff and concerned residents to communicate regularly and publicly.

A simplified, coherent and

publicized website for the plan and more social media outreach would go a long way in reaching people outside the council chambers.

The plan also does not provide an overarching framework for navigating these themes, which often conflict and in some cases are mutually exclusive — such as transit and sustainability, two important themes of Chapel Hill 2020.

Developing online resources, which have historically been overlooked in Chapel Hill and in the 2020 visioning process, can help ease gaps created by lack of access to transportation or a busy schedule and provide creative alternative methods of engagement to make sure underrepresented stakeholders have opportunities to make their voices heard.

Chapel Hill needs a development plan that reflects the things we as a community value and the town we collectively aspire to be. As a living document, Chapel Hill 2020 can still be that plan. But for it to successfully honor and navigate the diverse and competing values of this community, policymakers must expand the horizons of resident engagement by incorporating online outreach.

EDITORIAL

Brave man talking

Finding the courage to speak up

This column is part of a summer series that will focus on college-aged men and women's perceptions of beauty and body image issues.



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Believe it or not, living at Chapel Ridge this summer has taught me something beyond how to play dizzy bat. I learned that the word "peacock" is a verb.

I turn the corner towards the gates of the pool during the mid-afternoon hours to see at least ten greasy juiceheads puffing their chests out in their own form of "peacocking," that is, trying to separate themselves from the crowd by ensuring that everyone is very much aware how much they look like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

It's time to swallow our pride and admit that, as guys, we care more about our own image than we're willing to let on.

An estimated 10 to 15 percent of people with anorexia or bulimia are male, but many are unwilling to admit they have these disorders because of the perception that they are "woman's diseases."

Us guys like to give off the impression that we're above things like this, that we don't care

about how we look. But in today's society, how can we not?

Walk into any clothing store, and you'll find that most of the men's shirts are carefully tailored, designed to fit leaner men. It seems that in order to succeed as a politician, a businessman or a lawyer, you need to be of a certain appearance.

And this creates a social pressure which can lead to various behaviors that turn into disorders — even before we're aware of it.

Take for example muscle dysmorphic disorder, a condition in which people — mostly men — become obsessed with building muscle tone and becoming bigger. It often starts as a desire to fix, say, one muscle group. But it can turn into compulsive exercising, abuse of steroids and other

performance-enhancing drugs. And before you know it, you've lost your friends, your job and your grip on a normal life.

A friend of mine on the men's crew team says that in addition to his training, he works out three to four hours a day to put on muscle. He spends more time at the SRC than he does with friends. There's a problem brewing there, and it's one I doubt he'll ever talk about.

I want to be clear: I claim no moral high ground here. None of this is foreign to me, except maybe the greasy hair part. I played football. I've been down the road of chasing creatine-fueled weight room battles with protein shakes and Gatorade bars more than just a couple times. And while I've been able to keep away from over-exercising, there have been times where I could've let myself take things too far.

As men, avoiding admitting our own struggles is often the rule rather than the exception. Break that mold. Talking about a problem with someone who can help is a more courageous act than staying quiet and letting your quality of life suffer.

These are supposed to be the best four years of your life. Don't spend them peacocking.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The only way I could defend against this charge is to present them with the receipt for a class that I took 40 years ago. I'll never be so cuckoo now that I leave them any money."

Pete Hinton, on receiving a bill for a class he took 40 years ago

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In response to the dual-language editorial

TO THE EDITOR:

I am not sure what "study" put out by the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools district your editorial "A difficult solution," references. There is a report and recommendation from an administrative team which sites several studies of dual-language programs, most of which are not in the Chapel Hill school district.

The gist of these studies is that children in dual-language programs perform better than their counterparts not in dual-language programs — regardless of their socioeconomic status or native language. The district also asked the author of these studies to present the data on dual-language programs in Chapel Hill. The results of this analysis is that dual-language students in the district do the same as non-dual-language students in the district (including comparisons of low achieving students in each program).

Your editorial contends "The transition to a magnet school will remedy this problem by expanding the Spanish dual-language program and allow low-achieving children to apply to a lottery system to attend the magnet school. Attending the magnet school may help them do better academically."

There are several problems with this: 1) There is no study to suggest that a magnet school will do this better than any other dual-language program (including the ones we have in the district right now).

2) The plan before the Board of Education to generate a magnet school will open access to dual-language programs to students throughout the district, not specifically to low achieving children.

Your editorial also suggests that FPG has been chosen for conversion to a magnet because it is most cost efficient place to

put it. There is no cost analysis presented to the public at any time comparing the cost of placing the magnet at FPG to any other site in the district. Can the writer of this actually provide a reason for this belief?

Data for 2010-2011 will show that FPG has the greatest reduction in achievement gap of any elementary school in the district for 2010-2011 regardless of whether the waiver is approved or not.

I understand that your editorial board may believe that turning FPG into a dual-language magnet is a good thing to do, this piece does little to inform the public why you believe that in its current state.

Alex Duncan
Parent
Frank Porter Graham
Elementary

Kvetching board™

kvetch:

v.1 (Yiddish) to complain

Thanks to Green Peace, I now feel seething disdain for anyone who owns a clipboard.

Is it just me, or is summer always better in the movies?

To the CTOPS girls who judged my friends and me for talking about going to Cherry Pie: I guess you haven't gotten to the part of orientation where they tell you what the female-to-male ratio is.

Venus's cosmic shenanigans AND a full moon? I knew it was a bad idea to leave my house.

To the girls singing Supernova Girl at the gym: I wish you'd zoom zoom off of those ellipticals and away from me.

Zombies zombies everywhere. Guess the world is going to end in December.

That awkward moment on Franklin Street when a homeless man starts running beside you.

Summer schoolers, why you no send kvetches?!

To the roommate who keeps stealing my food: your car's wheels should sell for enough to buy my meals for the summer.

Doc Watson died. That's mad sad.

Screw science, equality and reason. We're North Carolina, we do what we want.

Saw Snow White. Yep, Kristin Stewart's face always looks that way.

Send your one-to-two sentence entries to opinion@dailytarheel.com, subject line 'kvetch.'

CORRECTION

Due to a reporting error in Thursday's editorial "A difficult solution," the editorial should read that Glenwood Elementary offers a Chinese dual-language program. The decision to turn FPG into a magnet school came from teachers within the current program receiving inadequate support. FPG reduced its achievement gap to 28.5 percent.

The Daily Tar Heel apologizes for the error.

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

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Weekly QuickHits

Triple Crown Race

It's that time of year again, and after some promising races in the recent past, we're hoping for the first Triple Crown winner of our generation. Come on, I'll Have Another. Make history.

50 Shades of Grey

For the love of literature, people, the book's Twilight fanaticism. As if Edward Cullen and Bella Swan weren't bad enough, now we've got this on our hands. Put the book down and walk away. Now.

Tiger Woods

Tiger Woods tied Jack Nicholas's record for second-most wins of all time at Jack Nicholas's course and tournament. Great for the sport and TV. But we still don't forgive you, Tiger. We just can't.

N.C. legislature

Fracking. Amendment One. Criminalizing the use of science in predicting sea level increases. Let's just keep going backward, North Carolina. Because being progressive is so out of style these days.

