LEFT-handed PUNCH!

If you’re a liberal at Carleton, you’re in the overwhelming majority – that’s nothing anyone didn’t know. But what does it mean for a balanced educational experience?

WELLS HARRELL/news

Of the 90 Carls responding to a random mailbox survey, 91 percent disapproved of President Bush’s job performance. Seventy-one percent identified themselves as Democrats. And 90 percent believed that gay marriages should be recognized as valid by the law. Also telling is the extent to which the same set of liberal responses was given; 66 percent of students had identical answers across all three questions.

Those expressing conservative views were few and far between. Only three percent of respondents approved of Bush’s job performance. Six percent identified themselves as Republicans, and four percent believed that gay marriage should not be legally valid. The results are similar to those of a survey conducted last year. The March 2004 study used identical sampling methodology, asked the same three questions and elicited 128 responses.

continued on pp. 8

“Context,” cuts and cultural groups

EVEN PAY/guest opinion

A careful analysis of the Carleton Student Association (CSA) spring allocations budget reveals a funding discrepancy between Cultural groups and other student groups on campus. Cultural groups made 16 percent of the funding requests at spring allocations, but were allocated only 6 percent of the total funds. This represents the largest disparity of any of the group types which received funding from the CSA.

In total, groups requested about $100,000 more than the Budget Committee (BC) could allocate. If they cut an equal percentage from all organizations on campus, each group would have received about 70 percent of their initial request. Cultural groups, however, received only 26 percent of the funding they requested – this represents less than half of an equal allocation.

continued on pp. 2

RELATED STORIES

4. WHERE BEING CONSERVATIVE CAN GET YOU EXPELLED.
5. IS THIS LIBERAL ARTS SCHOOL TOO LIBERAL?
8. FOUR YEARS AS A CONSERVATIVE.
9. A FATHER’S ADVICE: SPEAK YOUR MIND, EVEN WHEN OTHERS DON’T WANT TO LISTEN.
Funding discrepancies

continued from pp. 1

However, simply cutting an “equal” portion from each group’s budget is not a fiscally responsible or practical method of allocation: it overlooks differences in budget quality and groups’ relative success in implementing their programming in the past. Even so, students at large should be aware of such a glaring difference in the funding of cultural groups compared to other organizations.

During Monday night’s budget transparency debate, opponents to a freely accessible and re-printable budget repeatedly returned to the issue of “context.” President Cj Griffiths and Treasurer Laura Monn were joined by a number of senators in articulating the possibility that publications or groups would take the [budget] information out of context, and reprint parts of the budget as evidence of an unfair funding process.

In an attempt to provide “context,” two things come to mind: Either there is something wrong with the budgets submitted by cultural groups, or some component of the Spring Allocations process has a disproportionate impact on these groups.

If cultural groups tend to submit budgets that are less acceptable according to CSA guidelines, BC members should provide assistance to those groups with the budgeting process.

If the budgets are drafted acceptably, then BC’s funding guidelines have a disproportionate impact on Cultural groups. In order to balance the budget, BC restricted Spring Allocations, funding only $200 in food and limiting groups to a single trip to the Cities per term. Groups will be able to return for Special Allocations next year, but food funding is hotly debated during that process as well. I suspect that these limits contributed to funding discrepancies between cultural groups and other campus groups.

Are these guidelines discriminatory? Regardless of the cause, as a campus, we must decide what our priorities are.

The first step is to guarantee that CSA’s full budget is accessible to read, analyze, and reprint in any format at any time. Students can decide for themselves what sort of statistics they believe.

The second step is to do what the CSA and BC seem to be afraid of: analyze their budget decisions thoroughly and in context – and see what we as a student body are funding.

Finally, BC, as an institution, has a massive transparency problem. The monetary policies of this committee have broad effects on student organizations at Carleton, yet they are developed and implemented without public discussion. BC has free reign to decide what will be limited in Spring Allocations. The only check on their “recommendations” is Senate, and even then, BC recommendations require a 2/3 vote to overturn. In many instances, BC funding guidelines are taken as absolutes; when in fact, there was never any Senate or campus input on their implementation. In order to fully address budget transparency, the development of funding guidelines should be conducted in a public forum, inspiring debate and participation from all of campus.

Pay is the Secretary and Parliamentarian of the CSA Senate.

“Figures don’t lie, liars figure.”
–Mark Twain

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spring als
2005-06
(funds to student organizations)

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Bias should be open discussion

STAFF EDITORIAL

It has been noted several times that The Observer is on an “accountability crusade,” and has been for several months. Professors Louis Newman (Religion) and Kris Wedding (Physics) recently discussed journalistic accountability with the editors of The Observer.

Both professors were listed in the Campaign Donations story from April 8, 2005 as having donated money to a political organization in 2004. Throughout the course of the discussion, which was also attended by Doug Mork (Director of the Program for Ethical Reflection at Carleton), the professors expressed their disappointment in the editorial decision to publish the contributions.

At the conclusion, there were three facts that should have been better addressed prior to publication; first, the professors on the list should have been notified. Second, the methodology should have been clearer - the search parameters included only those giving “Carleton College” as their employer. Finally, the piece should have emphasized that there are more variables affecting professors’ conduct in class than their financial donations.

Professors must begin discussing their personal beliefs openly and frankly.

It is in the last concern that fruitful ground for dialogue is found. Most of the variables regarding political belief can be neither quantified nor directly observed. It is for that reason that professors must take a more direct role in addressing their own biases. Rather than worry about unintentionally discussing political issues, they must take responsibility for their beliefs.

The bias on campus is unambiguous and pervasive, which is why professors must begin discussing their personal beliefs frankly with their students. Rather than claim to be teaching undeniable truth in an unbiased way, professors must explain to their students that they hold political views that influence the academic direction and professional decorum of their classrooms. There is no sure way to prevent such influences.

As a publication dedicated to promoting a diversity of keen and insightful thought at Carleton, The Observer seeks to promote the ideals of ethical, responsible journalism. Often times this means tackling issues head-on, fighting against the system. Our earlier publication of the political contributions of Carleton faculty and staff and the 2003-04 CSA budget were two such issues.

An ad-hoc committee formed by the CSA Senate and chaired by Ben Egerman will be meeting this weekend in order to formally publish a budget endorsed by the CSA President, Vice-President, and Treasurer.

Email Senator Egerman. Come to the CSA Senate meeting Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. Tell the Senate that they have taken a phenom- enal step forward; it is time to complete their journey towards complete fiscal transparency and accountability.

The Carleton Student Association (CSA) Senate is to be commended for its recent decision to publish the CSA budget. Anticipating another delay, The Observer acquired and corroborated the budget information from multiple credible sources. While it is true that the Carleton Observer acquired and corroborated the budget information from multiple credible sources, it is also true that the Senate did not have the time or resources to thoroughly investigate the information before publication.

It is not only politics that influences teaching. Certainly politics is important, especially in Economics and Political Science, but research direction, educational background, even, as was suggested by Professor Newman, religious faith and observance all influence a professor in his or her classes. Every professor of every belief in every department has an obligation to the students of the school to teach them, to help them grow and learn. Seeking an open dialogue, free from obfuscation and indirect observations, is essential to a college that values education first and foremost.
Comprehensive fee surpasses $40,000

ANDREW NAVRATIL/news

Thirteen years after breaking $20,000, the Carleton Comprehensive Fee will more than double that amount, becoming $40,467 for the 2005–06 academic year. The fee will increase by more than nine percent, making it the largest percentage and absolute increase since the 1989–90 academic year. While the majority of the increase comes in the form of tuition, the cost of room is jumping by an uncharacteristically large 36 percent. At the same time wages for campus employment are not increasing to meet the rising cost of attendance.

Next academic year’s Comprehensive Fee will be as follows: tuition, $32,460; student activity fee, $189; room, $3738; board, $4080. Tuition is up around $2000 – the standard increase over the past four years. The student activity fee will be increased for the first time in several years to meet the costs of providing services to student organizations and individuals through the Carleton Student Association (CSA).

Room and board costs are increasing as well. According to Dan Berguson, Director of Auxiliary Services, board covers the costs of providing food service, including the food itself, the facilities, and administrative costs. The College charges for board and is then billed by Sodexho. “Board is generally more than what Sodexho charges so that the facilities can be kept up,” said Berguson.

Berguson explained that room coverage can be kept up, “said Berguson.

The cost of attending Carleton is – and has been for some time – growing. The 1992 fee of $20,900 adjusted for inflation would be $28,304 today, but the fee for next year is around $12,000 more. At the same time, earnings for campus employment, while steadily increasing, are not keeping up.

According to Mary Williams, Student Work Coordinator, the wage for student academic year employment next year will be $9.28. Students can work for a maximum of ten hours per week, for a total of 300 hours per academic year. All told, that amounts to a maximum of $2784 for any individual student’s wages. Disregarding all other aspects of the fee, this barely covers the increase in tuition. Williams further reported that for some students, a portion of this compensation for campus employment comes from the federal or State government, the College only covers the remainder.

Based upon the wage history data provided by Williams, the percentage of the fee that could be potentially paid for by campus employment has been decreasing every year since 1992–93 (with the exception of brief increases in 2001-02 and 2002-03). In the 2005-06 academic year, it is only 6.88 percent of the comprehensive fee. While the financial aid budget may be increasing – and Carleton is giving millions in grants to students – the cost of attendance is rising and the potential to pay for it by working is diminishing year by year.

when a POLARIZED CAMPUS is harmful

NICOLE KROGMAN/guest opinion

Krogman is a senior and co-chair of the College Republicans at Wells College in New York and an editor of The Cornell American. She will be appearing on Hannity and Colmes (Fox News) later this month.

The French philosopher Voltaire once said, “I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend, to the death, your right to say it.” Unfortunately, professors and administrators on today’s college campuses defend their right to stop students from disagreeing.

Today’s campuses are a breeding ground for liberal professors to spread their ideology to vulnerable, inexperienced and unsuspecting students. Should a conservative student be brave enough to challenge this liberal mantra, professors and administrators will do whatever they can to stop these students from speaking out and bringing conservativism to campus.

Two years ago a small group of students formed a college republicans club on a very liberal, all female campus in upstate New York. You would think that a school committed to diversity would welcome a group of students introducing different political and ideological views. Wrong. As these students were told, ideological diversity isn’t “real” diversity.

In attempting to establish their club as a full collegiate club and receive student government funding, they encountered fervent opposition from most of the campus, the collegiate officers and the administrators. It took a full year for these students to achieve club status.

Over the course of the 2004-2005 academic year the CRs increased their membership, outspokenness, and became a political force on campus. This made the liberal campus very unhappy because the CRs became a powerful opposition to their idea of the campus, the collegiate officers and the administrators. It took a full year for these students to achieve club status.

On May 6, 2005 the vocal co-chair (a senior) of the CRs at this liberal campus in Upstate, NY was suspended for the remainder of the 2005 Spring Semester. This meant that she wasn’t allowed to finish her last week of classes or take finals - she’s not being allowed to graduate. Even though she’s put in 4-years of school and completed all requirements except the last week of classes and finals, she has been prevented from graduating by the President of the College.

By suspending her, the college has continued on pp. 9
counterPOINT

IS CARLETON TOO LIBERAL?

MATT KIRBY/guest opinion

This school is my home. I’m not just talking about the number of yuppy, polo-shirted and well-groomed students that seems to be swelling. I’m talking about the many complaints I hear about how narrow-minded Carleton liberals are, the charge that Carleton kids latch onto “fake” causes such as Coca-Cola and cutting the number of working hours for dining hall employees. I’m talking about the accusations surrounding the Get-out-the-Vote campaign in October and the silly attacks on the MPIRG fee. I’m talking about the people that will call this article biased and full of generalizations but will remain silent when Dan Flynn gives a speech entitled “Why the Left Hates America.”

People, have we forgotten who we are? We’re the restless ones, the idealists, the youth of this country. Just because we’re a small isolated school doesn’t mean that issues here are “fake.” Severing our contract with Coca-Cola won’t bring the corporation to its knees and the Carleton filibuster won’t make a bit of difference when it comes to an actual vote in Congress. But both events got national media attention, raised awareness, and helped fight the much more dangerous Carleton epidemic — apathy.

Liberals today align themselves with progressive causes such as voting, women’s and gay rights, welfare and education. They live under the principle that things can always get better, so they work for progression, for change. Conservatives, by definition, tend not to want change. They tend to adopt much more individualistic, market-oriented approach to the world’s problems.

Our generation has lived in relatively peaceful time. We’ve come of age in a time of great prosperity. We’re the first generation to grow up with the Internet, and we’ve been raised with convenience as a lifestyle. Basically, we’ve led pampered lives. Consequently most people don’t see anything wrong with the ways things are — so why would they want to change? All around the country we see greatly increasing numbers of conservatives on college campuses for this very reason. But look around you. Millions of people out there don’t have the comfortable life that you have. World population is skyrocketing. Starvation and poverty are growing. Every ecosystem in the world is in decline. AIDS is decimating Africa. All the while, the Christian fundamentalists are taking over the country. We are not prospering; rather, we are slowly losing control.

This is not a world that we want to conserve as it is. Progressive causes are the only ones that address these issues. So you can be fiscally conservative, you can even agree with Bush on some of his ridiculous ideologies, but for the love of God be a progressive. Care about Carleton. Care about people. Care about the world.

AARON WEINER/opinion

Mr. Kirby’s call for more “progressive” advocacies on our campus and in our politics is, as a result of his confounding rhetoric and unsupported assumptions, an exemplar of how our institution has crippled itself intellectually by the overwhelming liberal bias on campus.

“Liberal” doesn’t mean “progressive,” and “conservative” doesn’t mean “opposed to change.” There are quite a lot of things that need to change in our nation and acknowledging it doesn’t mean I renounce my conservative ideology. Charlton Heston explained conservative ideology succinctly when he said, on February 16, 1999, that conservatives value individual rights and “disobey social protocol that stifles and stigmatizes personal freedom.”

But that’s not how Kirby, or Carleton, sees things. To many, “conservative” means big business and the military while “liberal” implies love and acceptance and everything good without ever justifying why. Carleton is too liberal because so many people, Kirby included, are never challenged in their fundamental assumptions of liberalism.

As a conservative, I have justified every belief I have held to friends, professors and The Observer’s readers. As a result of some of the subsequent discussions, I have rethought my opinions. That’s what an institution devoted to learning should do: Challenge our beliefs and make us justify them. It is because Carleton has stopped doing so that we have become too liberal. It is because “liberal” opinions are treated as gospel while “conservative” opinions are labeled as the ravings of “Christian fundamentalists” that this Jewish boy is appalled at the bias on campus.

I do not disagree with Kirby’s claim that there are many aspects of our world that need to change; to be the most privileged and, arguably, powerful nation on the planet carries with it great responsibility. Genocide, disease, poverty, oppression, these are the bights which it is our obligation to combat.

Conservatism, with its fundamental faith in individuals, is the most appropriate and effective way to address those concerns.

We should care about the world enough to allow free markets to address poverty and disease and eradicate them through innovation and resource allocation. We should care about people enough to use our military and economic strength to end oppression in every corner of the globe, regardless of whether the rest of the United Nations agrees with us.

We should care about Carleton enough to reject the rubber-stamped “liberal” opinions and rethink ourselves and our beliefs. Finally, we should care about ourselves enough to question what we are told, especially if everyone else around us seems to agree.

And, honestly, what’s wrong with being “well-groomed”?
**Why I am a Senator**

Why do I do this to myself? It’s 2 a.m. on Thursday morning and I have had one of the worst weeks in my time as a CSA Senator. Why do I do this to myself? I have asked myself that question several times in the past two years: during the Coca-Cola fiasco last spring and the MPRIRG debate last term, while debating increased funding for Spring Concert last month.

I care deeply about student governance and I always have. In high school I formed a committee to reform our student council because all they did was plan parties. I expected things to be different at Carleton and, in many ways, the CSA Senate is an effective, important body. But there is room for much improvement.

When I look at the Senate, sometimes I see a body full of problems. A body inefficient, disconnected from the students at-large, filled with large egos. But I also see a body with the potential to accomplish great things. This potential, this hope, this dream – it keeps me going. I serve on Senate because I want that dream to become a reality. I truly believe that one day the Senate will be the body the students of Carleton College need and deserve.

My duty as an elected representative is twofold: first, to directly convey student opinions and concerns; second, to exercise good judgment in making decisions. I make every effort to solicit the viewpoints of my constituents and bring them to the Senate. More than this, I take my responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the student body very seriously.

I am honored that the student body trusts me enough to allow me to make decisions on their behalf. I take into account the feedback I hear from students on controversial issues, but Senators are elected to make decisions on behalf of students and I could never put aside my better judgment. To do so would be to betray the trust of those whom I serve.

I believe that part of that trust involves ensuring Senate follows its own rules. As any of my fellow Senators will tell you, I am a stickler for the Bylaws and Constitution. I often find myself on the losing side of Senate battles while defending the only just course of action; I can think of no cause nobler than demanding Senate follow the procedures established by the student body.

So why do I do this to myself? There once was a dream that was student governance. I believe that dream can be realized on this campus and I am honored to be part of that process. I will always do my best to serve that dream by exercising good judgment and demanding Senate accountability. Should I ever fail in my duties, should I ever become part of the problem rather than the solution to good student governance, I ask you to call me out.

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open questions to carleton’s multicultural groups

RAWDON BERGQUIST, JEREMY SAIRISINGH (opinion)

1. Do your groups detract from minorities being incorporated into the broader campus community? Why fight for separate but equal, when all men are created equal? Do you all not just reinforce difference?

2. When should a person’s ancestry count as a check for or against them in the admissions process? If we don’t object to this, is there a basis for objecting to hereditary wealth? Isn’t there an equal standard for work? What happened to being judged by the content of your character?

3. Multi means many. Doesn’t multicultural imply “many cultures?” People talk about “Black culture,” “Latino culture,” “Asian American culture.” Most of the people in this country are white. Since “white culture” is a culture, even if people think it’s evil, shouldn’t white culture be put under the umbrella of multiculturalism?

4. We have organizations for men and women of “color.” Does that mean that everyone else is “colorless?” Shouldn’t we have an organization for this colorless group of people, or does this type of group classification exist to prevent a tyranny of the majority?

5. Why do “minority students” need special, race-based organizations to be comfortable on this campus? “Men and Women of Color?” For some groups, membership is based on being “black” or “Asian.” Why do they need a “culturally-comfortable space?” Why do we reinforce the attitudes of racial division with student groups on the basis of skin color?

“Americanism is a question of principle, of purpose, of idealism, of character. Not a matter of birthplace, of creed or line of descent.... There is no place for the hyphen in our citizenship.... We must treat every good American as on a full and exact equality with every other good American.... To discriminate in any way is a base infamy from the personal standpoint, and from the public standpoint, is utterly un-American, and profoundly unpatriotic.”

—Theodore Roosevelt
discovered last week from an alum that 20 years ago The Observer looked a lot more like The Carleton Progressive and there were few to zero outspoken conservatives here. Although I do not know when The Observer was co-opted by the CCU, it has at the very least traveled a strange route over the last four years to arrive in your hands today.

Seniors may remember a minor controversy their freshman year over The Observer’s publication of now-departed philosophy professor Jennifer Manion’s email “preparing” her students for an upcoming guest lecture by the self-styled “conservative feminist” Christina Hoff-Summers. Manion was accused of trying to sour her students to conservative arguments before their spokesperson had a chance to defend them, thus damaging the quality of intellectual discourse. The Collective for Women’s Issues (CWI) wrote a response accusing The Observer particularly its editor, Dan MacDonald ’04 – of invading Manions’s personal privacy by publishing her email without consent and launching a libelous attack against her professionalism. They demanded a retraction, a demotion, and an apology. MacDonald, wishing neither to apologize nor to remain in the spotlight of a scandal, resigned, and The Observer, after just three small issues, fell into dormancy.

The Observer came back to life last fall under the leadership of me and my colleagues, Adam Sunderland ’05, Rawdon Bergquist ’07 and Andrew Navratil ’07. Working on a shoestring special allocations budget and an amateurish, finicky Microsoft Word layout (we even used clip-art!), we hammered out five issues and earned The Observer a $1095 budget for 2004-05.

More importantly, though, we greatly expanded its ambition. Four years ago, The Observer was a 4-6-page, hastily-thrown-together newsletter distributed in a small box on the floor in Sayles. Last year it reached 8-12-pages and became known, despite its explicitly non-partisan orientation, as Carleton’s most important venue for homegrown conservative thought. Perhaps most importantly, it dealt in many articles quite consciously with the very issue of defining and articulating just what it means to be “conservative,” an important topic on which I believe many Carls possess limited knowledge and which, like the meaning of the term “liberal,” deserves constant comment and analysis.

In fall of 2004 The Observer achieved further upgrades, switching to a more sophisticated Adobe In-Design-powered layout and cardstock paper. It also began to receive more submissions from non-conservative writers, whom it began to more actively recruit. Cool fonts, text boxes, and fun quotations from people like Adam Smith and Martin Luther King, Jr., began to adorn its pages and the circulation reached 600. It became almost what we had envisioned it being: an open forum for discussing ideas and facts with participation from many different sides – the only problem being its still-boring design.

This current issue is the third of the latest, and in our opinion, most effective and appropriate incarnation of The Observer this generation of Carleton students has seen. This term we added a talented design editor, Anna Duchon ’08, as well as section editors Wells Harrell ’06, Aaron Weiner ’06 and Peter Fritz ’08. Even the mission statement has changed once again and the U.S. flag image may disappear (to my chagrin, but I am no longer an editor). The one continuous piece? Our Seneca quote: “Truth is the most sacred virtue of the human heart.” Because you can’t go wrong with a little Roman wisdom. And because the virtue of truth must constantly be upheld, especially where its nature under question.
looking back on four years

JAMES MAGNUSON/opinion

Well, it’s been a nice run. I was thinking about going out with a bang - burning out with a Coulter-esque vituperative diatribe, ripping my enemies to shreds. But then I realized, especially after the Dan Flynn speech the other night, that there’s really neither a need nor a justification for such an article on Carleton. So this is my thanks to the Carleton community for four great years as a conservative.

I thought, going into my freshman year, that it would be difficult. I’d heard the horror stories and I still hear them from students at other institutions. Conservative students being reprimanded, student newspapers being taken away... I’d even heard of conservative students experiencing negative effects on their grades simply for stating their views. However, my Carleton experience has been remarkably free from all of these problems and I’m grateful for it.

Certainly the College is not without its flaws. This is not to say that there is no bias against conservatives on campus, or that there aren’t some confrontational moments on occasion. It’s easy for Carleton students to put themselves on the back as the torchbearers of political and social enlightenment. And, after all, this shouldn’t necessarily be such a big issue. Tolerance should be the norm, but sadly it’s isn’t always diligently observed.

However, even when I’ve faced opposition, it’s been respectful for the most part. I did attend one chili night where the debate was a little out of hand, but I couldn’t blame anyone. I understood going into it how divisive the issue under discussion was and no ill will carried over from that night, certainly not on my part. I have had many strong arguments on campus and I’ve had quizzical looks from people who hear that I’m a conservative and a Christian. I’ve even gotten into arguments with professors, but never have I felt that it was negatively affecting my grades, or any other part of my college experience.

Hearing Dan Flynn speak hammered the point home to me. It was obvious to me that Mr. Flynn expected a debate. He mentioned attacks on his person perpetrated at various other college venues. There were no such incidents at this talk. Some people asked tough but fair questions and then everyone went home. That’s something I’m proud of and grateful for. When I talk to other conservatives, and they hear which college I attend, the inevitable question is, “Isn’t that a hard place to be conservative?” My answer is, happily, “No.” It’s easy to have your own point of view at Carleton. Certainly I’ve been challenged in my beliefs and opinions and I’m grateful for that as well. The unexamined life is not worth living and unexamined principles aren’t worth holding. So, anyway, I thought I’d get serious for this final piece, and just say thank you.

Carleton’s liberal bias

These two surveys suggest that liberal views are now held more widely by Carls than they were last year. The percent disapproving of Bush rose slightly (85 percent in 2004 to 91 percent in 2005), as did the percent of those identifying themselves as Democrats (68 percent to 71 percent) and approving of gay marriage (87 percent to 90 percent).

“There’s no surprise here,” said one Carleton professor, speaking on the condition of anonymity. “This has been a characteristic of the College for decades, from what I can see. ‘Diversity’ at Carleton means liberal homogeneity. It’s easy to be a dumb liberal here.”

The professor, who has taught at Carleton for several decades, argues that the problem is less about indoctrination and more about self-selection. “Carleton attracts students from particular ideological, cultural, and social situations,” he said. “It draws very strongly from a certain segment of society and not at all from other parts of society.” Liberal high school graduates are more likely to come to Carleton because they find the left-leaning campus environment attractive, while conservatives are less likely to apply.

According to the professor, the dominance of liberal political views extends well beyond our campus: “Carleton is representative of a large number of elite liberal arts colleges, the large majority of which are strongly liberal in their campus communities, faculty and students.” While a homogeneous community may have appeal, “liberal students actually suffer in a school like this,” the professor said, “because they never have their views challenged and their argumentative abilities atrophy.” The professor holds that learning to think critically is an integral part of a liberal arts education, and students’ critical thinking skills do not develop as well when the are not given ample opportunity to defend their viewpoints and adopt new perspectives.

New evidence suggests that this homogeneity in academia is not limited to students. Doctors Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte randomly surveyed 1643 faculty members from 183 four-year colleges and found that professors are far more likely to be liberal than conservative. Seventy-two percent of all faculty surveyed described themselves as liberal, while only 15 percent described themselves as conservative. They also found that conservatives tended to teach at lower quality schools than did liberals.

In light of these findings, what is to be done? The professor quoted above believes that Carleton, and indeed other academic institutions, must better embrace true diversity of thought. “Nothing but good can result from bringing up and challenging the conventional wisdom because there is so much more diversity of attitude, opinion, and belief in American society than there is at a small college campus like this.”
My father’s advice

I’ve learned more from my father than 40, let alone four, years at Carleton could ever hope to teach me. He grew up in a generation of one-line advice and pithy observations; Dad says things like: “That dog won’t hunt,” “A man’s gotta know his limits,” and “No scales on that fish,” to name a few. Some of his words of wisdom came from his father, some from Clint Eastwood and John Wayne, and a few of them he made up himself. Even though the quips sometimes seem trivial, at the core of each lies a nugget of truth.

The one I’ve heard the most is, “Don’t put anything into writing you don’t want the whole word to see.” That gem came straight from my grandfather and is, as far as I know, a Weiner family original. Grandpa was a businessman, a politician, a philanthropist and a philanderer, so he knew what he was talking about. Until recently, I never really understood the ramifications of a world that produced that sentiment; I certainly never knew that would be the most important piece of advice I’d need in my junior year of college.

At first glance, it seems like common sense, but, as we all know, “common sense isn’t.” When Dad first told me about putting things into writing, I was in middle school. As a lot of kids did at that time, I had a difficult time adjusting and wrote some stupid things – I stopped rather quickly.

I remember thinking that the admonition was a self-censorship – the same principle as never asking a woman what she weighs. It seemed to be a reasonable interpretation because there are some things that shouldn’t be communicated, be they rude or just ill-informed. But, as I now know, that’s not really what Grandpa and Dad meant. The reason some things aren’t written isn’t because they shouldn’t be communicated. It isn’t because they’re rude or misguided, it’s because the vast majority of people who may see those things are.

Two weeks ago, I said that the knee-jerk liberal activism and activism displayed by a significant portion of the student body was a plea to be lied to by people in power. I meant it as a scorching condemnation, but I don’t think many people are taking it as such. From what I’ve seen around campus, and in the world in general, most of the people want to be fooled most of the time.

I don’t understand that mentality. I detest liars. I’m not talking about the “those jeans look great on you” lies we all live with; this isn’t the episode of Care Bears where we all learn that even little white lies are hurtful. But, when there’s something important, something necessary, something big going on, I cannot abide by people who lie about it. I usually do something about it.

That thread ties all of this seemingly unorganized rant together because doing something about the lies people tell isn’t a popular thing. People like being lied to. People respect others who lie to them. The vast majority of our campus, our nation, our world is happy to be told exactly what it wants to hear; the truth is secondary. I’ve noticed it several times right on our own campus. Look at our CSA campaign platforms, look at your own student organizations, people make outlandish promises they do not intend to keep... and they win the hearts and votes of almost everybody.

Heaven forbid you call them on it. Do not broadcast the truth because you will be reviled for it, “Don’t put anything into writing you don’t want the whole world to see.” Not because what you say is wrong, rude, ill-informed or unnecessary, but because the whole world doesn’t want to see it. My father hasn’t been telling me to be cautious about communicating my beliefs; he’s been warning me that most people don’t want to hear them. Most people are afraid of the truth and will run from it the first chance they get. I was informed rather harshly of this when some of the students I have worked with, and had an enormous amount of respect for, demonstrated exactly such a mentality.

For every Tim Russert in the world, there are dozens of Michael Moores and Rush Limbaughs. For every person willing to tell people the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, there are dozens of people who would rather be told “Don’t worry, authority has it taken care of, just relax and let your friends in power make all your troubles go away.” I don’t want a buddy or a next-door neighbor to be making decisions for me. I want an honest human being, someone who is willing to tell me the cold, harsh truth to represent me; why settle for anything less?

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effectively shown the other CR members that it is not okay to speak out against the liberal mantra taught in classes; that it is not ok to think differently; it is not ok to be an outspoken conservative on a liberal campus. This is the basic tenet of a totalitarian regime: Remove all ideological opposition to your reign.

Does a liberal bias exist on campus? Yes, it does. The above story took place at Wells College, and it happened to me. Don’t think that cases such as this occur randomly. I was the third conservative student to be suspended/expelled in the state of New York during the 2005 spring semester. Professor bias and administrative support of these professors are problems that occur on campuses both large and small, from coast to coast.

Conservative students need to take heart and know that they’re not alone in the fight they face daily on their campuses. They’re joined by conservatives from across the country and their fight is for the future. It’s about defending the rights of future conservatives to stand-up and demand fair treatment and a “fair and balanced” education.

College is about learning. One cannot learn if one is not allowed to challenge the beliefs of others. One cannot learn if one’s beliefs are never challenged. One cannot learn without
[response]

We reserve the right to edit and print responses sent in any form.

MPIRG

I am generally left-leaning in my political views, but I also usually enjoy and gain a lot of insight from reading The Observer. However, I was immensely offended by your “Dear MPIRG” piece, not so much for it’s stance against the MPIRG fee but for its blatant belittling of the issue of women’s rights.

First of all, the assertion that women’s rights are human rights is an important claim, and it is not one that is supported in our current legislature. Second, the Vagina Monologues is not just about “what a vagina thinks.” If you had ever been to the event, you might know that the show gives voice to an otherwise silenced half of the population, telling stories of abuse, rape, and discrimination as well as uplifting and empowering stories of celebration. In addition to raising awareness through the show itself and giving hope to the many women who attend, it also raises thousands of dollars for local women’s shelters. Would you argue that this is not a worthy cause? Take Back the Night similarly gives voice, strength, and hope to victims of rape and domestic abuse, raises awareness, and raises money. Both events bring Carleton women together with women around the country holding similar events.

So while you scoff at the assertion that women’s rights are human rights, it seems you do not have a sense of this simple claim yourself, since you show no respect for the work that is done to maintain those rights. Give MPIRG a little credit. I welcome your response (and apology).

—Sarah Gilberg, ’06

Coca-Cola

I just wanted to commend the authors and editors for an excellent article in today’s [5/6/05] Observer. “Coca-Cola: One Year Later” was quite the zinger, and exactly what the campus needs in terms of motivation. I was recently thinking about this very same issue, and becoming very discouraged at the lack of activism that took place after the Senate vote – I’m glad this very same issue, and becoming very discouraged at the needs in terms of motivation. I was recently thinking about Year Later” was quite the zinger, and exactly what the campus

—C.J. Griffiths, ’06

General

You are to be commended for creating a professional, informative and thought provoking publication.

—Kerry Raadt, College Relations

The Observer has been on quite an accountability crusade recently – publishing the CSA budget, revealing professor’s political contributions, and chastising The Carletonian for their shallow comments on the filibuster. The “Editor’s Note” this issue claims that The Observer “strive[s] to meet or surpass the journalistic integrity demanded of us by educated, thoughtful readers.” I was disappointed to find, therefore, that an article in this issue suggesting that CSA Senate officers be paid fails to mention that author and editor Andrew Navratil is, in fact, a senator. Knowing that Mr. Navratil is a senator significantly changes my interpretation of his article. I hope that the omission of this fact was just editorial oversight and that The Observer editors will hold themselves to the same standards of accountability that they demand from others.

—Andy Wills, ’05

ANWR

I read the comments about ANWR in The Observer [5/6/05]. Just wanted to convey that I enjoyed reading it and to praise [Anna Duchon’s] willingness to express [her] views. I agree with her idea. In fact I think it is environmental racism to think that drilling in the Middle East and its consequent pollution for that region is no problem, but pollution here is immoral when we continue to consume oil that we want to be extracted overseas. This is racist hypocrisy in the name of care for environment.

—Nader Saiedi, Sociology and Anthropology
plain sans 45,000 acres for Interior Secretary Norton to lease to oil and gas exploration rights at her discretion.

Duchon also sites Prudhoe Bay, a "site almost identical to the Coastal Plain region" where the "caribou population has grown in size since drilling began" due to wildlife programs. But caribou don't properly reflect the actual environmental consequences of drilling and there is more accurate picture of Prudhoe Bay: A thousand acres of fragile tundra ecosystem have been turned into a waste site. It is now covered over with 1500 miles of roads and pipelines, 1400 wells, three jetports, mounds of waste, scrap metal, sludge and 60 contaminated waste sites filled with, and leaking, acids, pesticides, lead, solvents and diesel fluid.

Drilling proponents say that under the refuge lies approximately 16 billion barrels of oil. That may be true; however, the amount of oil that can be profitably extracted and sold is significantly smaller. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates it to be slightly less than would be required for one year of U.S. energy demands. No oil would reach our market for ten years. Even when oil production would be at its peak in the refuge (2027), it would only produce 1-2 percent of America's daily consumption at any given time.

Most experts agree that the global peak of oil production will be sooner rather than later, probably around or before 2010. After that, there will be a growing disparity between oil demand, which rises a few percent each year, and oil production, which will decrease. At the current rate of growth, oil demand is expected to rise by 50 percent by 2025, meaning that, most likely, almost half of the world's energy needs will not be met by oil. And this is two years before the refuge's supply is even supposed to peak. Basically, the amount of oil available from the refuge is so paltry that even to consider drilling for it would be foolhardy in the face of an economy which needs to switch its energy base as soon as possible.

To support drilling in ANWR is to be either greedy (Big Oil lobbyists and Congress) or ignorant (many Americans). Please do all you can to stop this atrocity before it occurs. It will leave a vital biological center truly devastated for relatively little gain. Call your representatives here and in your home states to let them know how you feel. While the budget may have already passed, Congress must still pass reconciliation instructions that include specific revenues for drilling. The fight's not over yet.

-Matt Kirby, '07

I would like to compliment Andrew Weiner on his most recent submission to The Observer, “Not all of us are the same,” from the 5/6/05 issue. Mr. Weiner’s astute observation about how putting all members of the class of 2006 with the last name Weiner and a first name that starts with the letter “A” and who also happen to be conservative and who also happen to write for The Observer into a individualistically limiting box by the “vast majority of Carleton liberals” (most of whom I am sure Mr. Weiner knows and talked to in doing the research for this article) is unacceptable. Those darn liberals, at it again!

I am sure that the fact that Mr. Andrew Weiner and Mr. Aaron Weiner sometimes get mixed up is only because you are conservatives and has nothing to do with having similar names. I mean, this never happens to Seth Cooper and Seth Cooper, even though they have the SAME name. Why? They're not conservatives. Also, Beth Freeman and Katie Freeman I am sure are never mixed up, even though they are identical twins. Why? They're not conservatives.

How right you are to point out the liberal bias of the Business Office, who maliciously tried to give you money. What gall they had to expect you to return the money without even thanking you, assuming that any decent person, liberal or conservative, would not need thanks for such a simple action. I can just see Robbie at the front desk, laughing maliciously as you left the office. “We've fooled those conservatives again,” I bet she said. The Business Office obviously reads The Observer regularly and therefore has mixed up Mr. Andrew Weiner and Mr. Aaron Weiner because they think all conservatives are the same. The similar names thing was only an excuse.

Thank you for exposing the vast left-wing conspiracy at this school that is out to make out all Carleton conservatives to be the same.

-Amanda McRae, ’05

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having the opportunity to say something that others do not believe and having to defend their beliefs. There is a history professor at Wells who says she enjoys when students say something in class that challenges her ideas because she has something new to think about. Everyone should approach new ideas this way. Learning is not sitting in class, listening to a rant from a soapboxe and calling it “knowledge.”

Knowledge is not simply knowing the facts; knowledge is understanding facts and applying them critically. But students cannot use knowledge in class when they fear saying something in contrast to what the majority believes. No student should ever think silence necessary in the classroom. No student should ever be afraid to speak up in class and say, “excuse me, but I don’t believe that.”

Abraham Lincoln once said, “I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crises. The great point is to bring them the real facts.” Professors must start trusting their students to handle the facts; students must do the same for their peers. The classroom must once again be made safe for any student to speak on any relevant subject without fear. If just given the facts, students have the ability to decide for themselves what they believe.

The world will not cease to turn if a classroom discussion becomes an actual discussion, with more than one side of an issue. Students, too, must learn that a difference in opinion does not warrant personal attacks. Being able to safely debate ideas and issues is the most important aspect of learning. On many campuses throughout the country, that aspect of learning does not exists for all.
Finding race within the United States

JOYCE KONADU FOKUO/guest feature

Growing up in Ghana, the idea of race was as foreign to me as the intricacies of tribalism are to the average American. The idea that there was in fact a Black race that had the ability “to merge” all ethnic groups into one seamless whole was too complex and far too abstract for my six-year mind to fully grasp. When my family moved to the Highland area of Louisville, Kentucky the rich predominantly White neighborhood forced me to embark on a racial journey of self-identification.

The first week of elementary school was both a social and academic struggle. I realized that I had been placed in the first grade, when in fact I was coming onto the third grade even though I was only about to turn seven. I complained to my parents. Their complaints in turn caught the attention of the school’s officials. The school’s solution to the problem was for me to prove my past academic achievements. They instituted a two-day series of examinations. The exams included consensual skills to assess my level of proficiency in English (which I thought was funny because Ghana was a British colony), and my reading, writing and arithmetic skills. On the last day of the testing, I was given a form to fill out my personal information which included the typical questions of age, race, nationality etc. I was puzzled by what to write in the space of race. Eventually I wrote under race, “I have never been in a race.”

I returned home upset that day. I could not fathom why I was Black when days earlier I had been bluntly told that I was not Black but “African” by a Black American student on the playground. I did not how I could be told to see myself as Black by a White adult when I was not considered Black by my fellow Black students. There was very little my parents could say to console me. Their explanations were too technical for my understanding. By the time they were done I concluded that regardless of my continental background, within America I am seen as a Black American by all who see my dark hue. They explained that this misconception provided both good and bad attributes. Although my true tribal/national identity was stripped away, I benefited from a network of individuals with an intense history of love for one another.

That was the problem though, I was not benefiting from a network of love. My place within my school, this supposed socialization agency, was that of an outsider. Unlike my older brother, who was in his senior year of high school where Black students were not so quick to find the distinguishing qualities of between an African and an African-American, and unlike my sister, whose quick speech smothered her Ghanaian accent, I was in a grade where internalized negative notions of Whiteness and Blackness were not corrected by educators or parents. What was my place as an African immigrant, in a community where White students said, “I don’t like you because you don’t look like me” and Black students told me, “I don’t like you because you don’t sound like me?” Unlike my siblings, I could not belong. By the end of third grade, at the onset of my summer vacation, I had resolved to change at least one distinctive figure. I couldn’t look White but I could learn to sound Black. I could lose my accent.

At the age of eight I had come to realize that I could manipulate the American culture of assimilation. I stopped talking to my family in my native language especially in public. I stopped associating myself with anything that could remotely be considered African. I engrossed myself in African-American history and quenched my literary thirst with African-American authors and poets. I asked my parents to stop telling me “Ananse” stories and rather American bed-time stories. By the start of my fourth grade career I was prepared; I knew the history and culture of Black Americans and, although I knew I did not belong to that ethnicity, I knew I could pass as an African-American. My personal training was a success. I was able to pass, I was accepted; I made a lot of friends that year, both White and Black, due to the fact that this façade had boosted my self-esteem and self-acceptance.

My assimilation came at a great cost. I discarded my national identity as a Ghanaian and my tribal identity as an Ashanti in order to adapt to a hyphenated American status. By the time I returned to Ghana at the onset of my freshmen year of middle school, I was ashamed that I could not speak my native language fluently, I was ashamed of my inability to savor the richness of African literature or African music. I was embarrassed to see the influence of Western culture in Ghana; to see the African man trying to be an African-American in Africa.

My journey to find my race was, in fact, an exhausting lap around a track field. I am proud to be a member of the Black race. I take no offense in the misconception of my ethnicity. I hold my skin complexion and hair texture in high esteem, but I am not a Black American. Although I love the culture of this ethnicity it is not mine and sometimes it is frustrating when it is assumed by all Americans and non-African immigrants that I am supposed to know and understand the history of this ethnicity. Yet, the common American ignores my culture, my history and my society.

Becoming comfortable with the idea of race in the United States for me was becoming comfortable with my first identity. I am: an Ashanti, a Ghanaian, an African, a member of the Black race. The last of this list is my most visible spirit but the first and second are my heart and soul.