Athletic fee criticized as hidden, excessive

Steven Nelson  
News Editor

One thousand one hundred fifty-two dollars is the amount paid by every William and Mary student each year for athletics at the College, primarily for sports such as football and basketball. An athletic fee is charged at all public colleges in Virginia, though most colleges’ fees are “hidden,” as English Professor Terry Meyers puts it, from those paying tuition bills.

“It’s not just tuition that is driving up the price of an education. It is also fees—and more villainously, because they are so often hidden,” Mr. Meyers asserted in an editorial in National Crosswalk.

According to a report compiled by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, William and Mary’s annual athletic fee paid by both in-state and out-of-state students was $1,153 for 2007-2008, an increase of over 8 percent from the previous year’s fee.

The athletic fee at Virginia Tech is $232 per year and is $607 per year at the University of Virginia. The “Student Assembly contacted Mr. Meyers for his thoughts. “My thinking was that once people saw how much they were paying for something that, really, not many of our students are very interested in, pressure would develop to contain the fee,” he said.

“I am not sure I am so opposed to a mandatory fee per se, inasmuch a lot of what goes on at a college needs support of some sort from fees, but I do think the William and Mary fee is too high, way too high.”

Bills paid by students and their parents do not include a breakdown of all fees being paid. According to Mr. Meyers, there are “a substantial amount of the total tuition and fees, which parents and students always assume consist of fees that are largely nickel and dime stuff, which they aren’t.”

William and Mary’s financial operations Web site seems to confirm this, as it does not detail athletic fees. The site lists fees by semester paid by both in-state and out-of-state students. They include: a $26 tech fee, a $2.50 Student Assembly fee, a $163.50 facility fee, and a $1,600 general fee. The athletic fee is presumably included in the undefined general fee. Though a $2.50 fee warranted mention on the site, the vastly larger athletic fee was not identified.

Mr. Meyers, in his editorial, suggested that schools should print their approximately 36 fees directly on invoices. According to Mr. Meyers, “In a fetching outburst of frankness, [Vice President for Finance Sam Jones] recently claimed to a student reporter that ‘people simply want to know what they need to pay and don’t want a whole list of fees.’ He added, ‘bottom line,’ that ‘the parents are paying the bill and students simply aren’t concerned.’”

One option suggested by Mr. Meyers, which was enacted on a smaller scale under former college President Timothy Sullivan, is to shift some of the athletic fee to academics. “If you shift $100 per student, that would represent a relatively modest cut in funding for athletics and yet add up to something close to $750,000 for academics. And I’m pretty sure private donors would step up pretty quickly to make up the difference to athletics.”

Editor’s note: Athletic Director Driscoll and Football Coach Laycock were contacted several times for this story, but were unwilling to comment. Their point of view is welcome for a follow-up.

Admissions chart undercuts college’s high SAT scores to prospective students

Steven Nelson  
News Editor

Last year the admissions office distributed a ‘viewbook’ to prospective students, attempting to woo them with impressive statistics and interesting information about William and Mary. Among the facts were the College’s proud historic record and a number of interesting details that many current students would be surprised to learn, aside from accidentally eavesdropping on a tour guide showing visitors around. Within the compilation is a pie chart detailing the SAT scores for students admitted in 2006. Based on the older 1600-point scale, SAT scores read: 1500-1600 (18%), 1400-1499 (33%), 1300-1399 (27%), 1200-1299 (13%), and so on.

Surprisingly, the chart displays the slice allocated to the 1400 range, 33%, significantly smaller than that of the 1300 range, 27%. Furthermore, the 1500-1600 range, 18%, appears visibly smaller than the slice of the 1200 range, 13%.

The pie’s contradicting percentages and slice sizes provide an indisputably ambiguous presentation of the SAT scores represented in the true population of students admitted in 2006. Confounded by the discrepancy, the Informer contacted Dean of Admissions Henry Broaddus. Mr. Broaddus affirmed that all stated scores to prospective students, aiming to present a disparity on page sixteen.

The Williamsburg City Council “Student Issues” Debate

Tomorrow, April 10th at 8 PM in the Great Hall of the Wren Building

Sponsored by the William & Mary Student Assembly  
More information on page sixteen

Want to get every issue of The Informer in the mail? E-mail editor@vainformer.com with your name and address, and we will send you an order form and your first issue FREE!
**Breaking ground:** The Business School is safe from the College's uncertain capital outlay plan, unlike the planned School of Education and the renovation of Tucker Hall.

As for undergraduate tuition for in-state students, the General Assembly provides incentives for the College to keep the tuition increase for 2010 at 4 percent or below, because of the inclusion of a $610,000 Tuition Moderation Fund. Moreover, research funding, the amount of which had not yet been decided in February when the conference committee issued its recommendations, will be $75,000 for biomedical and biomaterials research.

The College holds “Potato Drop” to fight hunger.

For the tenth year in a row, the College hosted its annual “Potato Drop,” where over 20 tons of potatoes, shipped from Maine, are re-bagged and donated to area food banks. This year’s event was delayed nearly 12 hours as the truck was delayed during the DC Cherry Blossom Festival, but the event, which raises awareness about global hunger, poverty and threats to the environment, was successful.

**College’s marketing program ranked second in the nation**

The College of William and Mary’s Mason School of Business is one of the best schools in the country for marketing, according to BusinessWeek’s 2008 undergraduate business program rankings. The program has strong ties to the health care industry, including microeconomics, accounting, financial management, business law, corporate strategy and ethics. BusinessWeek released an overall ranking in March which placed the College of William and Mary in the top ten of public US business schools and 29th among all US business schools.

**General Assembly approves Commonwealth’s 2008-2010 budget**

**Violette Robinet**

Staff Writer

In an e-mail sent to the William and Mary Community on March 14, interim President Taylor Reveley announced the approval of the General Assembly’s conference committee’s recommendations amending the Commonwealth’s 2008-2010 budget. The day before, the House of Delegates and Senate’s vote had put an end to what Mr. Reveley referred to as a “difficult 65-day General Assembly session. Attached to the president’s e-mail was a memorandum by Vice President of Finance Sam Jones detailing the key amendments to the biennial budget as introduced by Governor Tim Kaine in December 2007.

The first major change to the budget is a 2 percent faculty and staff salary increase, which will become effective on November 25, 2008 and November 25, 2009, respectively. This raise should enable the College of William and Mary to remain competitive relative to its peer universities. Indeed, Mr. Kaine’s original biennial budget proposal had not increased salaries for faculty and staff until fiscal year 2009-2010 had caused anxiety amongst administrators who feared that William and Mary might lose ground compared to other institutions of higher learning, whose faculty salaries increase every year.

Mr. Reveley, who with the help of Mr. Jones and those students participating in the Marsh Road to Richmond has done a great deal of lobbying for the College in the state capital, declared himself “delighted to report that the budget includes raises for small ones—for faculty and staff.” However, there was less happy news as well. The General Assembly also decided to reduce by half the $559,000 fund for core operations, which had been recommended by Mr. Kaine to complement the $3 million reduction in spending implemented last fall and will be carried forward as a permanent annual base reduction for 2008-2010. Therefore, the net reduction that Mr. Kaine proposed amounted to approximately $2.45 million, whereas the General Assembly’s decision to reduce by half the annual operations amounts to a net reduction of $2.7 million.

Mr. Kaine’s initial proposal to increase undergraduate financial aid by $74,059 for Fiscal Year 2009 was not modified.

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**William and Mary professor helps draft Kosovo’s constitution**

Christie S. Warren, senior lecturer in law and director of Marshall-Wythe’s comparative legal studies and post-conflict justice program here at the College, was one of three US advisors to provide counsel and guidance to Kosovo leaders during the constitution drafting process over the past year, and will be present when the constitution is signed April 7 in Pristina, Kosovo. A William and Mary alumnus, Ryan Igbanol (“07), also assisted in the constitution drafting process; he compiled and organized all material and information relating to the drafting process to preserve it for historical purposes. The advisors were invited to participate in the constitution signing ceremonies by the US government and the members of the Kosovo drafting team, most of whom are part of the new government of Kosovo.

**Mission Statement**

The Virginia Informer is an independent, non-partisan, student run publication dedicated to reporting news to the William and Mary community. We exist to provide an alternative to school sponsored news sources. We do not, and never will, receive any financial support from the College of William and Mary. We will not shy away from controversy or be afraid to challenge the norm. We strive to inform and engage our readers via responsible journalism and in-depth reporting, while framing and giving voice to opinions that are often shut out by the campus establishment.

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Plan proposed to reform the Honor Code

Nick Hoelker  
Online Editor

William and Mary’s Honor Code is one of its many long standing traditions, but as with many traditions, it is molded by the College’s ever-changing student body. For the past several years, students have sought to reform the honor code, which was last amended in 1997. It is only after these many years of reflection that a new draft is finally being created. The Council of Chairs, the governing body of Honor Systems of all parts of the college, the college and undergraduate schools, requested in 2007 that the William and Mary School of Law review their honor code.

The undergraduate school has followed suit and a committee chaired by Judd Kennedy ’08’ is already in the process of drafting the changes. This, of course, does not mean that the pledge students take in the Wren Building when they arrive at the College will be altered. Rather, the changes will affect the code beyond the pledge. Broadly, the code is being revisited to make it easier for the general public to understand, to make definitions of lying, cheating, and stealing more succinct, and to make changes to the amendment process.

The proposed layout for the code begins with the familiar statement of purpose and history of the code. It then, unlike the current code, includes the College’s honor pledge and the most basic form of the code. “Students of the William and Mary community pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal.” The code’s format will also include subsections in the code. By creating more divisions, the committee hopes to make the document easier to read and follow.

The language of the code will also be changed. For example, the former definition of lying is “expression of a material untruth made with the intent to mislead another or with reckless disregard for the truth of the matter asserted.” The newly proposed definition for lying is “a deliberate expression of a material untruth made with the intent to mislead another. Lying includes, but is not limited to, forgery or the use of false identification.” Even though these reformulated definitions may be easier to understand, some students worry that making definitions too succinct might make them less forceful when they are strictly interpreted.

The amendment process found in section 8 of the honor code will be expanded under the new plan. The existing code stipulates that any enrolled student may propose an amendment by appealing to the Council of Chairs, where it then goes under review of the Council and the President of the College. The proposed changes to this protocol include different types of amendments: general, procedural and supplemental. General and procedural amendments may be proposed by any member of the student body and are approved by the Council of Chairs and the President of the College. Supplemental changes, however, are proposed by the Honor Council to create program specific procedural rules as needed in line with the honor code.

The committee hosted its first of two Q&A sessions on March 23rd. There were about six students not of the Honor Council who showed up with their inquiries at this meeting. A second session has not yet been scheduled. Once the reform is completed it will be brought before the entire student body for approval as a referendum and must then be approved by the Attorney General of Virginia’s Office. Finally, the newly revised code will be signed into action by the President of the College.

Stay up to date on future Q&A sessions and the proposed changes at: http://www.wm.edu/deanofstudents/honorsystem.

Admissions Office defends use of racial and ethnicity statistics in “prospective cards”

Kristin Coyner  
Opinion Editor

Spring marks a time when many high school students descend upon college campuses. William and Mary maintains high campus visitation rates and employs intensive marketing literature in order to attract college-bound students. Approximately 25,000 students and parents annually attend information sessions and campus tours offered by the College. The month of April has the highest volume of campus tours, as the admitted high school seniors visits often overlap with those of rising juniors. Attendance and tours, prospective students receive a wealth of information about the College. In turn, students can themselves choose to give information back to the College by means of “prospective cards.” According to Dean of Admissions Henry Broaddus, the majority of students actually choose not to fill these cards out. For those students who do offer up their information prior to applying, prospective cards can involve more than offering up helpful information, such as home address and birth date. The W&M prospective card also contains an optional ethnicity selection. Dean Broaddus noted that a declining number of students are filling out this selection saying “the unknown group has grown.” Actual figures on the number of students who leave the ethnicity option blank are not compiled by the Admissions' Office.

For those students who do fill out this section, what use does the Admissions Office have for prospective’s personal information? “We do sort based on how a student self-identifies. There are times of year where admissions programs necessitate data entry or prioritization for targeted outreach. This could be for race and ethnicity or other factors” Dean Broaddus said. Programs aimed at enhancing College diversity often involve using backlog prospective’s data as obtained through ethnic self-identification.

The College, like many other universities, also purchases information from the College Board, which can obtain students’ ethnic information. Ultimately, when a student offers up their information to the College Board or even to William and Mary itself, he or she consents to become the target for sophisticated marketing techniques. These techniques often aim to structure an incoming class using factors unrelated to academic achievement, including geographical location, student class year, and yes, ethnicity.

Dean Broaddus contended that students who do not fill out specific elements of prospective cards are not necessarily treated any differently than if they had provided all of the information asked for. In fact, these students effectively remove themselves from being subjected to the marketing techniques associated with ethnically targeted campaigns.
Prominent conservative advocate Bay Buchanan urges students to become campus leaders

Violette Robinet  
Staff Writer

At first glance, the legacy left by the Founding Fathers might seem obvious to any American college student. The names of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin immediately evoke the images of leaders who founded the country and built the legislative frame that would shape the future of the nation.

Yet, in a lecture titled “How do the principles of the Founders operate on a campus like William and Mary?”, delivered at the UC Commonwealth on March 31, prominent conservative pundit Angela “Bay” Buchanan addressed the question against the backdrop of the current economic crisis.

Ms. Buchanan, who is currently the president of the educational conservative foundation The American Cause, began her political career as treasurer of the United States under Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1983. She managed her brother, Pat Buchanan’s, 1992, 1996, and 2000 campaigns for president of the United States and has also served as a political analyst and anchor on the radio and TV, notably on CNN.

Ms. Buchanan started her lecture with a diatribe against a campaign of intimidation that she thinks has been underway in Washington for the last 20 to 30 years. Whether you want to close the borders, you’re called a xenophobe,” she said. “Washington’s political and press and subject to pressure from their peers, she said that many modern-day politicians “have no guts.” She added, “Washington is a ‘closed club’ society.”

According to Mr. Buchanan, several bold politicians, once in power, worry about nothing but their own political survival and refuse to do anything controversial. “They toss their principles to keep their titles,” she explained. However, in doing so, politicians not only betray the on the principles that the American legacy of the Founding Fathers. Ms. Buchanan warned that, contrary to the founders, who always spoke up for their principles, there is no leader today “fighting tooth and nail for our values.” She went on to say, “we are losing this country.”

The example Ms. Buchanan picked to illustrate her argument was what happened last February, when senator and presidential candidate John McCain denounced the comments of the Republican radio talk show host Bill O’Reilly, who had just endorsed his candidacy. During the show, Mr. Cunningham had repeatedly referred to Senator Obama as Barack Hussein Obama, emphasizing Mr. Obama’s Middle Eastern sounding middle name. By willing to remain politically correct to get good press, Mr. McCain had, in Ms. Buchanan’s view, “thrown everything under the bus” and given up the value of loyalty.

However, Ms. Buchanan did not only warn to do anything controversial. “If not now, when? If not us, who?”

One might well ask, “how can I take action?” For Ms. Buchanan getting involved starts with speaking up and standing up for your values. She admits it takes a little boldness, but profoundly believes that it is worth it.

Ms. Buchanan further emphasized the need for students to influence people’s views and decisions. For instance, Ms. Buchanan stated that “what it takes to be a pro-life is to speak up, whenever you can.” You never know who might be receptive to your arguments. Ms. Buchanan acknowledged that people who were listening to you might have heard nothing apart from pro-choice arguments her entire life, and what you say might change her point of view. What is more, if is ever confronted with an unexpected pregnancy, she might even think twice before potentially aborting.

Before leaving, she repeated one last time: “Ignore all the names you’re called, you just need to know what is in your heart.”

A new Iraq: Scowcroft advisor Matt Sherman lectures on Iraqi future

Joe Luppino-Esposito  
Editor in Chief Emeritus

Matt Sherman, senior advisor to The Scowcroft Group, gave a speech entitled “Iraq: Assessment of the Surge and Prospects of Reconstruction” on April 2 to a crowd of students and community members.

Mr. Sherman outlined one of the key strategies of creating a “perception of force” as one of the main reasons that “the surge” has been working. Joint command stations that housed US soldiers, Iraqi police and Iraqi soldiers were set up throughout Baghdad. The men there would stay for 10 days to up to two weeks, so that proximity made the extra 30,000 troops appear to be much larger.

Mr. Sherman also believes that much of the peace has come from the Shia-faction of the country. Many Shia Muslims, who had been oppressed under Saddam Hussein, have now taken control of the government, as they make up the majority of the country. With this strength, the need to rebuild the government has declined. However, that has not always been the case.

Muqaddas al-Sadat, a Shia cleric and one of the most important leaders amongst the insurgency, has declared a ceasefire since August 2007 when there was an inordinate amount of Shia infighting. Mr. Sherman said he was able to sneak into one of the cleric’s sermons and observe the “zombie-like behavior” in which many Shia follow him.

Mr. Sherman was also clear that the conflict in Iraq has many other factors involved in it, not only the influence of Iran in the southern region. Mr. Sherman credits the Iraqi intervention into the internal Shia politics to be another primarily reason for a slow down of violence in the south.

One of the biggest risk the Iraqis and Americans are taking is involving the hiring of nearly 90,000 Sunni fighters to be a part of their forces. Mr. Sherman sees this as a “bottom-up” strategy to save off any unrest amongst the Sunnis who have not accepted their election from power.

As for the future of the conflict, Mr. Sherman worries that the political directions that Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) will take in 2009. Mr. Sherman believes Mr. Obama will be the nominee for the Democrats. “Regardless of who wins, who you’re going to have in Iraq, generally, is a force of between 30 to 40 thousand soldiers for the indefinite future,” said Mr. Sherman. Mr. Sherman added that the “complexities” of the situation will be a surprise to Mr. Obama and that the strain the soldiers will be equally shocking to Mr. McCain. Yet he does see the debate as a healthy one, and he is glad that the war in Iraq will likely be a major campaign issue.

Mr. Sherman also asked questions for over 30 minutes, most of which addressed the failures in Iraq and speculation about the future, as well as his experiences there. He ended by saying that he hopes the future of the United States leaves the country.

Army colonel discusses Afghan insurgency

Nick Hoelker  
Staff Writer

On March 26, Colonel Patrick Donahue spoke to a group of students and faculty on “Combating a Modern Insurgency in Afghanistan.”

Mr. Donahue was introduced by Government Professor Rani Mullen who explained that Mr. Donahue had served two tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Donahue was most recently in Afghanistan from May 2005 through March 2006 and commanded a 5,800-man brigade in a mountaintop portion of the eastern part of the country, roughly the size of North Carolina. This means that about one-seventh of the troops currently stationed in Afghanistan were under his command.

He started his account of the deadliest battle he had been in, the first in 2003 and the second in 2005-2006—was that the army did not understand the Afghan people the first time around. Mr. Donahue said that during his first tour, the army underestimated the power of Pashtunwali, the Pashtun way of life.

Pashtunwali encompasses seven elements: hospitality, justice and revenge, asylum, nation, honor of tribe, land and the honor of women. Mr. Donahue provided several examples of the importance of Pashtunwali in Afghanistan. One story involved four navy SEALs who were attacked, three of whom died. The surviving soldier asked a tribal elder for asylum which was quickly granted. When one of the attempted killers asked the elder to hand over the navy SEAL, the elder refused to do so.

The colonel also told of a male United States soldier who entered a compound that only contained women. Even though the serviceeman was only inside the space for five minutes, there was so much outrage at his perceived desecrating of women that Mr. Donahue had to spend two months appeasing local Afghans. News of the scandal eventually made it all the way to President Hamid Karzai’s office.

Mr. Donahue then explained how working more with the Afghans has helped to advance the war effort. He explained that Americans now employ Afghan cuenta para so traffickers in compounds of suspected enemies. The colonel stated that doing so has led to voluntary compliance for entry into 90 percent of the time. He also added that the Americans have been training Afghan soldiers to be their replacements once the United States leaves the country.

Mr. Donahue also touched on a range of other issues including an explanation of how few Afghan Americans have combined with weather can make fighting difficult, details about the difficulty of bringing together Afghans and Pakistanis to cooperate in sharing resources and a discussion of the importance of non-military government agents in Afghanistan.

The colonel ended his lecture by reminding the audience that the average age of a United States soldier in Afghanistan was 21 and that as college students should do whatever we can to support our troops.
W&M SFL holds annual benefit concert

Eileen Bartolozzi
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, April 2 in Lodge 1, the William and Mary Chapter of Students for Life hosted their annual benefit concert, which was entitled “In Support of Women.” The evening comprised various musical talents and testimonials and was intended to raise funds for the local pregnancy resource centers Catholic Charities and Care Net. These two organizations provide women with resources to make an educated decision when faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

Testimonies presented by several members were interspersed with occasional comments from the MCs. However, the central entertainment was of the musical variety, beginning with performers Ryan Laney and Kenny Merut. Their act was followed by the melodic harmonies of the male Christian a capella group, One Accord. The grand finale of the event was the string and vocal combo Dan Paris and Raymond Lai, both members of the band String Theory. The pair preformed several songs before closing the event by leading the entire assembly in the alma mater.

New SA settles in, expresses outrage at stolen ping-pong ball machine

Ian Kirkpatrick
Staff Writer

Student Assembly President-elect Valerie Hopkins (‘09) had mentioned, prior to the selection of her cabinet, that cabinet level positions have been “revamped,” and that a much-debated pilot test of a coeducational sexual assault prevention program will be held Wednesday, April 2.

Theft on campus was decried by senators, including Walter McClean (‘09), who said he was “pretty upset” about the ping-pong ball machine that was only in the UC for 10 days before it was stolen, encouraged an investigation. Another senator mentioned that a trash compactor had been stolen last year.

The housing selection process may become easier for rising juniors and sophomores. Many get bumped but are often reinstated, some as late as July, making it difficult for them to get off-campus housing. Students who do not get housing often then require a car to reach campus. In addition to this they pay the same fee for a parking decal ($275) that students who voluntarily live off campus pay. This issue was addressed by the Senate, with a recommendation to lessen the charge to such students.

Senators Michael Douglass (‘11) and Ben Brown (‘11) are co-sponsoring legislation to make the SA more transparent, mandating senators to provide biweekly reports, suggesting that failure to do so be an impeachable offense. Also proposed is the distribution of their contact info to the students they represent via CSU boxes.

In the executive-level Public Affairs Committee, a questionnaire for the six candidates running for Williamsburg City Council is being compiled. The Student Assembly is also hosting a first-ever student issues debate on campus prior to the May 6 election, with issues including nightlife and housing to be addressed by candidates.

The Student Assembly has in recent years provided blue test booklets, and will continue to do so. Students have used over 40,000 SA-provided exam booklets since they were introduced, and 5,000 will be appropriated for the 08-09 academic year.

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Outgoing Student Assembly President Zach Pilchen (‘09) introduced four bills in the last session, addressing the Queen’s Guard, student drinking and the school mascot. The Queen’s Guard Act would bring back an old tradition that ranked with the Yule Log in popularity, where at the Queen’s Ball the color guard would perform with demilitarized rifles. Due to safety concerns the tradition was ended.

Mr. Pinsker’s proposes to move the color guard outside during the event to avoid injury. He also introduced the Mascot Recommendation Act and the Kegs Act, which would try to make student drinking more environmentally friendly by reducing littered cans and bottles.

Inauguration for the new Student Assembly officers will take place 3:30 pm on April 8 in the historic Wren Chapel.
Taking it to the streets: Mayer finds a range of emotions in refugee camp, from bitterness and hostility to curiosity.

After the discussion, we were given a short tour of the school, including stops in several classrooms. The Palestinian girls that we encountered—the equivalent of junior high students in the US—were excited to see Americans, smiling and waving as they stood along the halls.

The Wihdat refugee camp—officially known as the “Wihdat New Camp”—is the second-largest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan and home to more than 50,000 displaced persons.

The Wihdat camp I visited bears little resemblance to the typical American image of a “refugee camp.” There were no walls, no gates, no guards—the camp is essentially just another neighborhood in Amman. The boundary between the camp and the rest of the city was imperceptible.

Still, walls lined the streets, leaving little room for our vans to squeeze through. The single-story buildings, though somewhat shabbier, were hard to distinguish from any other structures in downtown Amman.

At the end of the street, we arrived at a UNRWA-run all-girls elementary school. Spray painted Arabic graffiti covered the dirty white-washed exterior walls and bright blue-hung doors.

We were quickly herded inside where we met with older Palestinian refugees in the school’s modest library. The refugees told us about their experiences as well as life in the camp. The area director for UNRWA—himself a refugee—discussed the UN’s role at the camp, which includes the provision of education for 220,000 Palestinian children for the first ten years of schooling. After this period, the children are then transferred to Jordanian public schools.

For every two hours of science homework and studying I had, I would set aside two hours for poetry, literature, etc. It was important to me to have that balance in my life.

For over 30 years, Mr. Fisher has continued his career in the sciences, Mr. Fisher further narrowed his subject field through graduate school, ultimately studying atomic and molecular spectra at Johns Hopkins University. “The further I went, the more specific and narrow the topics became,” he said.

While working in New York, Mr. Fisher began taking undergraduate level classes in the social sciences, which ultimately convinced him to leave the field of chemistry and begin writing and researching.

For over 30 years, Mr. Fisher has written several articles. Mr. Fisher also regularly contributes to books and several hundred articles, an association with it. He then began working for the Law Library of Congress, where he is currently employed. Mr. Fisher commented that “CRS is still a good place, but things have tightened up.”

When asked what he is working on currently, Mr. Fisher revealed that he is putting the finishing touches on a new book entitled The Constitution and 9/11: Recurring Threats to American Freedom and is, as always, in the middle of writing several articles. Mr. Fisher also regularly teaches classes at the Marshall-Wythe School of Law, where he teaches a single one-week course per semester.
Swimming off the deep end
Are we funny? We report, you decide

Breaking the sorority stigma
Ilsa Tinkelman
Staff Writer

Greek organizations have always been controversially associated with drinking, but do these social brotherhoods and sisterhoods really deserve their reputations? Students who share this view cite rowdy frat parties and "unofficial" traditions such as roasts and frat parties as the root of their drinking habits. "These organizations are not just focused on the social side of things, but also on the drinking," said a junior majoring in biology.

Not everyone agrees. "There is a big difference between what we call "social brotherhoods" and the ones that are dedicated to reducing the amount of high-risk drinking that occurs on college campuses," said a senior majoring in biology.

There are two sides to every story. After all, there is no question that high-risk drinking seems acceptable, but do these social brotherhoods and sisterhoods really deserve their reputations?

College's Chancellor O'Connor launches new programs at Georgetown and Arizona State
Nick Hoelker
Staff Writer

In an article in Parade magazine, William and Mary Chancellor and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor criticized the growing influence of interest groups trying to influence the judicial system. She blamed this on partisan elections which often lead to millions of dollars being spent on single race. Ms. O'Connor expressed doubt about whether or not these elected judges could remain objective in spite of millions of dollars being spent on single race. She also criticized the influence of campaign contributions. She proposed doing away with judicial elections and instead having a commission of independent citizens recommend judicial candidates to the governor who then selects one of the candidates. For states that have judicial elections, Ms. O'Connor recommended that citizens learn all they can about judicial candidates and that they not worry about campaign promises to a rule a certain way on a case.

Ms. O'Connor also stated that she had been working with Georgetown University and Arizona State University to help better legal understanding. One of these programs is for children and named Our Courts. It also allows children to participate in an on-site simulation where they play the role of a judge. The other is named the Sandra Day O'Connor Project on the State of the Judiciary and creates a dialogue between experts and lawyers on how to safeguard the role of the court system. Ms. O'Connor did not reference any such programs for William and Mary in her article. Inquires made to Ms. O'Connor's office through William and Mary University Relations were not returned by press time of this article.

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Are we funny? We report, you decide

Nick Hoelker

Once again, we are forced to ascend our lofty rostrum in an attempt to clear up some recent misunderstandings between ourselves and the oft-mentioned but little seen e-zine The Pillory. On April 1—today—best known for a heavy occurrence of less-than-witty "pranks" and "shenanigans"—an article on The Pillory's Web site was posted, which told the story of freshman Zeke McCarthy. Apparently, Mr. McCarthy is the only person on campus to unironically enjoy reading our humor column.

Excited by our 50% gain in readership, we attempted to contact Mr. McCarthy for a combination interview / pig roast inside Lodge 1. According to The Pillory, they were unable to get in touch with Mr. McCarthy for any comments regarding his enjoyment of "Swimming off the deep end." But true to our hard hitting, investigative style here at The Informer, we went beyond where The Pillory would normally stop—no, not this past week's Skiffy meeting, as most of their staffers already sit on its sisterhood gatherings or parties that are not affiliated with their sorority may face repercussions from their dearer chapter and national authorities as well as those outlined by the college. In lieu of these and other possible consequences, sisters are generally forbidden to wear their representative letter apparel when attending any such event, with the understanding that individuals who drink irresponsibly are doing so of their own accord and not in association with their sisterhood. Some sororities even require all of their new members to take an alcohol education program before being initiated. Sororities understand that they have acquired a bad reputation for themselves, and whether or not they deserve it, they are actively fighting its cause. The Genesis group, for instance, is an organization made up of 42 national and international Greek organizations that are dedicated to reducing the amount of high-risk drinking that occurs on college campuses. Hopefully, with the help of programs like these, sororities and fraternities can finally be seen as the honorable societies that their creeds, mottoes and mission statements make them out to be.
Williamsburg's strangest park:
A look inside President's Park

Aimee Forsythe and Kristin Coyner
Staff Writer and Opinion Editor

Are you a connoisseur of presidential trivia? Well, you’re in luck. A short trip down Route 199 will bring you to the only park in the world that features the heads of all 42 American presidents.

Over the course of just five years, architect David Adickes and his crew constructed 42 statues to pay tribute to our country's presidents. The statues were then transported to Williamsburg, Virginia and erected in what is now President's Park, which opened four years ago in March 2004.

Each statue bust is accompanied by biographical information including weight, height, education level, previous jobs, religion, family, quotas, salaries and accomplishments. In addition to taking in pertinent facts about US history one can also read up on some fun, obscure and largely useless presidential trivia. For example, our 11th President, James Polk, had a gall bladder operation without anesthesia. Thomas Jefferson, in addition to being the author of the Declaration of Independence, introduced spaghetti and ice cream to the US. Think you are a standout trivia enthusiast? John Quincy Adams, who had a pet alligator, negotiated a treaty in addition to being the author of the Declaration of Independence.

You might be a bit disappointed by the few that are broken. The tour lasts a little over an hour. If you get tired, there are benches throughout the park and a drink shack halfway through the tour. To complete your visit, climb aboard the Air Force One replica and get your picture taken in the oval office located in the gift shop.
Untangling the jurisdiction of local police forces

Aimee Forsythe
Staff Writer

The several police forces at work in Williamsburg are the William and Mary Police Department, the Williamsburg City Police, James City County Police and York County Police. The WMPD has jurisdiction on the College campus and on roads with college property on either side. Since the College campus is located within the City of Williamsburg, it is also within the jurisdiction of the Williamsburg police. It is therefore possible for both the Williamsburg police and WMPD to patrol in the same area.

While James City and York Counties are located close to the campus, their police only come to campus when called on for extra support. According to WMPD Chief Don Challis, there is a mutual aide agreement in place, by which the WMPD can call upon Williamsburg for additional support in emergencies and for preplanned special events. The Williamsburg police may also call upon the James City County and York County police for supplementary backup. Besides these two instances, these two county police forces do not patrol campus.

The WMPD is fully accredited by Virginia and offers all the standard services of a police force, as well as additional services to the College. The department offers includes unlocking rooms on scheduled requests, providing fingerprinting for employment or testing purposes, as well as a host of other programs. WMPD’s headquarters is located on Ukrop Way at the parking deck.

Criminal Offenses

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Student leader who opposed Nichol has dorm room vandalized

Andrew Blasi, Jr.
Editorial Chief

Joe Luppino-Esposito, editor in chief emeritus of The Virginia Informer, the independent campus newspaper at the College of William and Mary, had the front door of his dorm room heavily vandalized early in the morning of April 1 between 4:00-4:30AM.

“I thought it was the sound of water running, so I got up to make sure we didn’t have a flood on our hands,” said Luppino-Esposito, a senior at the College.

Instead, he opened the door and heard someone quickly run away. But Luppino-Esposito could not see who was at his door; it was covered in shaving cream—the can being the source of the mysterious sound—and glitter, and the doorway was blocked with several copies of The Informer duct-taped together to form a wall. The issue used included the cover story of Nichol’s resignation.

“The message was not lost on me. I know that people on this campus think the newspaper and I are responsible for Gene Nichol quitting, and vandalism is the way they like to express their anger about it,” said Luppino-Esposito.

Immediately following the resignation of Nichol, some of the former President’s supporters spray-painted obscene gestures and other messages aimed towards the Board of Visitors on several campus buildings, including the historic Wren Building, the oldest academic building in continuous use in the United States.

“I’m just worried about what will come next for students who dare to speak up and stand up for what they believe in,” said Andrew B. Blasi, the newly-named editor in chief of The Virginia Informer. Blasi said that the newspaper would be following up on the story in the coming days. “The sixty members of The Virginia Informer and I expect a statement from the university regarding this incident that includes what they plan to do to deter these types of personal attacks against students.”

“Year after year the school talks about diversity,” said Luppino-Esposito. “But what about intellectual diversity? What about getting some protection for students who, after seeing incidents like this, will be intimidated to exercise their rights?”

It’s time for William and Mary to tackle these issues, because they are becoming enormous problems. Conservatives need a safe haven on campus from radical students who want to silence them.”

Luppino-Esposito also said that Campus Police responded quickly and were investigating the incident.

“I know I’m not afraid of these cowards, and no one else should be either,” he said. “I’m just afraid many will be intimidated enough to stay quiet and refuse to question the environment around them, and that’s very bad for the future of free speech on this campus.”
Mary Washington police armed with M4s

Ian Kirkpatrick
Staff Writer

Not long after a Student Assembly referendum found that a majority of William and Mary’s students perceive campus police unfavorably, rumors emerged that police at nearby Mary Washington University were buying automatic weapons.

The Informer contacted Mary Washington Police Chief James C. Snipes. He explained that they have recently acquired M4s, the civilian model of the AR-15, within the family of weapons which includes the M16 and other military weapons.

“I’ve been chief for five years, and I’ve been asking since the first day,” said Mr. Snipes. “It was a question of funding,” he said. The police force recently “had the option of swapping their old shot guns for new rifles,” and did so. They did so in part to synchronize their equipment with local Fredericksburg police.

Mary Washington student Jason Walsh cites this action as an example of “the rampant militarization of our police forces in the country over the past 30 years.” Mr. Walsh quoted Mr. Snipes as saying that the M4 “is a more aggressive looking weapon ... It is a military looking weapon.” He asserts this quote is evidence that such weapons serve as a psychological intimidation tactic against citizens, not for safety.

SAT SCORES MISSREPRESENTED:
Admissions Office makes editorial error on SAT pie chart

continued from page one

percentages were accurate, but that “the pie chart is not an accurate visual representation of the data.”

“This is attributable to a miscommunication and an editorial oversight by which the data was updated, but the graphic was not. Although the graphical error is regrettable, the substance of the information remains accurate,” says Mr. Broaddus.

The chart may not have been a convincing indicator to prospective students of the top SAT scores earned by William and Mary students, as the higher ranges were disproportionately small compared to the over-enlarged lower ranges.

According to Mr. Broaddus, the informational booklet containing the SAT pie chart was distributed to approximately 75,000 prospective students last year.

Mr. Broaddus, who recently oversaw another year of record undergraduate applications to the College, notes that a few of the promotional booklets may still be available in the lobby of the new admissions building on Jamestown Road.
Movie Review:

Run, Fatboy, Run is a comedic surprise for first time director Schwimmer

Patrick Macaluso
Staff Writer

Run, Fatboy, Run. At first, I thought it was a spoof of one of my favorite films, Run Lola Run. Although the opening scene was unusual, I was rather at a loss for what to think of the bulk of the film was far from it. That's not to discourage you from seeing the film, but naturally a comedic of this nature lacks real substance. This one certainly attempts inject some meaning into the laughs, but the message is often lost in the heavy comedic undertow. The film follows Dennis (Simon Pegg) and his attempts to win back his ex-fiancée Libby (Thandie Newton), who left him at the altar five years previous. Dennis is definitely worth a laugh, but we've seen it elsewhere. Honor is critical in the play. These misunderstandings and the Moor and Christian characters to clash between cultures rung the loss of one's reputation, drives both the Moor and Christian characters to tragic overreaction. The acting was enjoyable and quite authentic to their characters. The props were minimal but had a good impact on the audience. The use of Moroccan music and of Othello's knife, exquisitely curved in the Oriental style, enhanced the experience of viewing this play. The lighting was quite soft on the eyes. The costumes were used to full effect, and I think we can expect some pretty great things in the years to come.

Othello reinterprets tragedy as class between cultures

Swetha Sivaram
Staff Writer

In Shakespeare in the Dark's competition play, the opening scene was unique. The costumes were used to full effect, and I think we can expect some pretty great things in the years to come.

Othello: The Shakespearian drama was reset in religious terms.

The play opens with a festive wedding featuring Desdemona and Othello as religious in nature, the play seeks to exhilarate and to thrill. It is a dramatic clash between cultures. The viewpoint of Iago, played by Zan Gilles, is portrayed not only as a humorous perspective...is that a novel concept? Of course not; we've seen it several times before in several other films. The acting was enjoyable and quite authentic to their characters. The efforts of the master villain Iago doom the two newlyweds, the Moor and Christian characters. These misunderstandings and the Moor and Christian characters to clash between cultures rung the loss of one's reputation, drives both the Moor and Christian characters to tragic overreaction. The acting was enjoyable and quite authentic to their characters. The props were minimal but had a good impact on the audience. The use of Moroccan music and of Othello's knife, exquisitely curved in the Oriental style, enhanced the experience of viewing this play. The lighting was quite soft on the eyes. The costumes were used to full effect, and I think we can expect some pretty great things in the years to come.

Gym Class Heroes show brings eclectic music to Matoaka

Brian O'Donnell
Staff Writer

Most William and Mary students would probably be studying on a Tuesday night but when UCAB's spring concert event featuring Gym Class Heroes arrived last week, school books were cast aside. Many students may only know them through their hit single "Cupid's Chokehold" from last summer, but the group displayed its diverse musical talents on April 2 at Lake Matoaka.

Opening first was Tiga, a young rapper and cousin of Gym Class Heroes singer Travis McCoy who remixed Plain White T's summer hit "Hey There Delilah" into his own hip-hop beat. Kilk in the Hall, a lyrical rap/DJ duo who met each other at the University of Pennsylvania, followed suit with another high-energy performance. They were backed by Tim William, a mohawked keyboardist and singer with 80s musical influences. To the delight of the crowd, William broke out his Keytar, a guitar and keyboard hybrid. Next was I Am The Avalanche, a head-banging, black-clad punk band from Brooklyn who won some in the audience into a moshing frenzy.

The variety of styles fitly set the stage for the headline's unique blend of alternative rap, rock and pop hooks. The show stumbled to a start when Mr. McCoy mistakenly greeted the crowd with, "What's good West Virginia?!" but then he smoothly corrected himself and the band picked up with "Shoot Down The Stars." Gym Class Heroes: Popular band performed hit single "Cupid's Chokehold," among others to the College.

Highlights included "Peace Sign," a new song from the band's upcoming album during which audience members were encouraged to give alternating hand gestures. During "Clothes Off!!", a cover of a 1986 Jermaine Stewart song, the crowd enthusiastically threw various articles of clothing on stage to donate to Goodwill. Of course, the radio-friendly smash hit "Cupid's Chokehold" was also featured.

The encore was "New Friend Request," a song in which Mr. McCoy ponders his experience with confusing online relationships on MySpace. He surprised the audience by secretly walking to the middle of the amphitheater. Surrounded by fans, he performed the impressive finale to a show that only disappointed those who expected a typical MTV pop band.
College Cook: Students of any level of cooking proficiency are welcome to join the new Culinary Club.

**Get your taste buds tingling with the Culinary Club**

Megan Locke  
Arts and Culture Editor

Devotees of the Food Network and students who are simply sick of Caf food can sink their teeth into this: a new Culinary Club is starting up at the College. Co-founders Justine di Giovanni (’11) and Isabelle Thibau (’11) are both eager to share their love of cooking and their secrets to avoiding bad college food.

Living on a meal plan during their freshmen year made both Ms. di Giovanni and Ms. Thibau realize how much they missed home-cooked meals and whipping up their own culinary creations. For Ms. Thibau, “cooking isn’t just about preparing foods, it’s also about learning different cuisines, being artistic, understanding basic chemistry and just exploring gastronomy in general.” Since learning about foods is very important to her, Ms. Thibau believes that others at the College are probably interested in exploring cooking as well. She approached Ms. di Giovanni about starting a culinary club, who happily agreed to help her.

The club welcomes cooks at all levels of skill and experience. “I believe with a little instruction anyone can learn most of the fundamental cooking elements, and a really experienced cook won’t suffer from reviewing the basics from time to time either,” said Ms. di Giovanni. Much of the focus will be on food that can be prepared in a dorm kitchen, which should appeal to a wide range of students. Over time, Ms. di Giovanni and Ms. Thibau plan to adjust the Culinary Club’s activities to fit the needs and goals of its members. As Ms. Thibau reiterated, “This club is geared simply to anyone who appreciates food and wants to know more.”

She is excited to introduce dishes from many different types of cuisines to club members. She has created several recipes that she plans to prepare during future club meetings. All of her recipes will be easy to make, in light of the limited resources and space that most college students have available. “Of my favorites for summer is a simplified salade Nicoise that is easy, appetizing, and healthy,” she said.

Ms. di Giovanni’s specialty is comfort food. “I make a really simple chicken alfredo pasta dish that I made, in light of the limited resources and space that most college students have to work with. “One of my favorites is chicken and white beans in a tomato sauce with fresh tomatoes and onions. I like whipping up my own pasta and using fresh basil and garlic.” For Ms. Thibau, “I love using fresh, natural ingredients in my cooking. She also loves using fresh, natural ingredients in her cooking.

The club held an interest meeting on March 31 to discuss plans for next semester, when club activities are planned to take place and seniors are set to leave. All of her recipes will be easy to make, in light of the limited resources and space that most college students have to work with. “One of my favorites for summer is a simplified salade Nicoise that is easy, appetizing, and healthy,” she said. Ms. Thibau encourages anyone who loves food to check out the Culinary Club. “There’s something about making your own meal or a meal for others that is extremely satisfying. I know what’s in it and I know it took a lot of skill and art to make it,” she said. Students who want to be on the listers to receive more news about the Culinary Club should email Ms. di Giovanni at jadigiovanni@wm.edu.
Besançon recounts Nazism and communism ideologies

A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah, written by Alain Besançon and translated from French by Ralph Hancock and Nathaniel Hancock, recounts two great horrors of the 20th century and the differences in how each is remembered. According to Mr. Besançon, the world properly recalls the horrors of Nazism with revulsion, whereas communism is remembered with a certain amount of detachment and a sense of irony. Mr. Besançon focuses upon the moral, political, and economic. He regards communism as the worst evil, since it is far more insidious and tends to corrupt more thoroughly. It also has more widespread support due to its somewhat universalist promises (although to qualify, communism only preaches salvation for the chosen, not all people). The rest of the book attempts to help the reader understand just how these horrors managed to thrive among otherwise normal people. Well-written, well-argued and well-thought, A Century of Horrors offers several points of consideration for any topic concerning Nazism, communism and the Holocaust. Mr. Besançon’s book suffers at points from his apparently limited knowledge of economics and his philosophic bent away from theoretical understanding. However, in the better parts of his book, he becomes a fantastic philosopher and social analyst.
**Staff Editorial:**

**Enough is enough**

**College community must take action against streak of crimes**

William and Mary has long been known as a relatively safe place. Further, it purports to be a tolerant and welcoming institution. However, over the past few years and particularly the past few weeks a number of outrages have taken place that call this perception into question. The Virginia Informer urges our college community to objectively evaluate the following instances in a very serious manner before relying on this status quo mentality. In February 2006, a female student was physically assaulted while participating in a Students for Life sponsored event. Exercising her right to distribute literature that denounced abortions, she was intentionally struck in the face by an unknown individual. While it is easy to condemn such a crime, regardless of one’s personal views, it takes more than words to rectify the situation. To date, the assailant has not been caught.

In February 2008, a group of unidentified students spray painted obscenities on a number of locations across campus, including the historic Wren building. Costing over $500 in repairs, drawing a number of questions from prospective students and creating more unnecessary bad press for the College, this behavior is not becoming of students at a “public ivy.” It has been almost two months since this crime was committed. To date, the vandals have not been caught.

Just last week, on April 1, this streak of cowardly acts hit home for our organization Editor in Chief Emeritus of The Virginia Informer Joe Luppinio-Exposito was the target of a late night strike against his dorm room. While this event was well reported in the campus and local press, little has been done to address the crime.

Have we now arrived at the point where the College community has become accustomed to these misdeeds? It appears that the College community does not understand that tolerance is intended for and required of all people on all ends of the political spectrum. There is no doubt that had these types of incidents been carried out against a student or an organization that did not conform to the majority opinion on campus, the response would be markedly different. Liberal tolerance is not a one way street in theory, but it is another story in practice.

We have gone through many task forces, committees, focus groups and a Bias Incident Reporting System to address issues of perceived discrimination. Yet there have been no roundtable discussions, debates or studies on how to stave off these attacks of actual discrimination against groups and individuals for their beliefs and actions. The hypocrisy is apparent in the response, or lack thereof.

There is a chilling effect on free speech among William and Mary when students may fear retribution for speaking up and expressing an opinion. We need to return to a civil discourse and abandon the quick unthinking lashing attacks. These acts are not funny. They are criminal.

Students need to be aware of these situations and aggressively and actively condemn them. As a community, we need to discourage others that may think that this form of behavior is acceptable.

Furthermore, The Informer demands a statement from the College regarding the most recent incident that includes a plan for deterring these types of personal attacks against students and organizations.

The College’s history proves that we are above such acts of intolerance. It is time that the William and Mary community stands up and says that enough is enough.

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**Rethinking the athletics fee**

Nick Hoelker
Staff Writer

Recent events have shown that William and Mary students can get excited about athletics. The buzz at the College was incredible when the men’s basketball team made their run to the CAA championship game earlier this year and when the football team reached the Division I-AA national semifinals in 2004.

Nevertheless, these flashes of athletic success have come at a price. As reported in this issue of The Virginia Informer, every student, regardless of whether they are from in-state or out-of-state, pay $1,153 a year in athletic fees. This fee is nearly five times as much as Virginia Tech’s fee and nearly double the fee at UVA—two schools that have perennially strong basketball and football programs. If the athletics department decides that it can use this exorbitant fee to make our basketball and football team contenders year after year instead of Cinderella teams once every several years, then they should try to do so. The hints of student enthusiasm that the school has seen so far when our teams are competitive show that the student body can be enthusiastic when our teams are of a high-quality, and support for winning teams is certainly an asset to the school.

However, it is very doubtful that our football and basketball teams can be successful on an annual basis. As such, most of the $1,153 athletics fee could be much better spent at the school. Since William and Mary has already been hit with a $3 million budget cut from the state as well as the withdrawal of a $12 million donation – and must continue to fund new initiatives like Gateway Program and many sources of fund to the health of the College. Additionally, when William and Mary’s football and basketball teams are not successful, student attendance at these games is sparse at best. Therefore, most of the students do not receive much, if any, personal benefit from their astronomical fee.

One way to lower the athletic fee would be for William and Mary to move down from Division I to Division III. In doing so, we would save money by not being allowed to give out sports scholarships. The money saved on scholarships could be revented to fund academic or merit scholarships. Also, since Division III is weaker than Division I, the College could be competitive in a number of sports without needing to increase talent. Some may contend that having well-funded teams helps the college receive donations. This may be true, but most of these donations do not benefit the College as a whole, and instead go towards the athletics department, thus only benefiting the sports teams themselves. The most glaring example of this is the recent construction of the $12 million Laycock Football Center.

If the William and Mary athletics department cannot make better use of the $1,153 athletics fee, then the school should put it to better use by improving the school or even giving it back to the students through a Students for Life sponsored event. Exercising her right to distribute literature that denounced abortions, she was intentionally struck in the face by an unknown individual. While it is easy to condemn such a crime, regardless of one’s personal views, it takes more than words to rectify the situation. To date, the assailant has not been caught.

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Informer

Regardless of professors or peers, we should be thinking feel safe in voicing their opinion on campus. This assertion is absurd, as the incident will outside of the mainstream. Mr. Luppino-Esposito had his was vandalized in a clear signal against activism conducted past Tuesday, April 1, Editor in Chief Emeritus of voicing your ideas. My challenge is to the latent element of independent atmosphere. After all, what prominent member of a liberal arts institution, ostensibly possessing a sound mind, would actually engage in such behavior, all in a reaction to mere words? It is interesting how those who are to act as the guardians of "openness" at the College, professors, have been shown to contribute in small and great ways toward subverting truly open thought. In a very prominent way, we recently saw many of our professors fail to teach, often in a blatant disregard for those students who held a divergent opinion on the matter of Mr. Nichol's resignation and non-renewal. Free thought is hindered in smaller ways too, as when course readings and assignments incorporate only certain worldviews. It would seem that there is an insidious aspect to the call for the supremacy of diversity at the William and Mary. If, despite all of our external differences, we ultimately end up thinking alike, having an internal sameness after all our time here, that would be a great tragedy. I have been greatly failed in our liberal arts education.

At the College, the vigorous exchange of thought is also hindered by those students who are too timid to place their views out into the marketplace of ideas, possibly for fear of being described by a standard collection of meaningless labels. I must admit to being susceptible to this form of self-expression at times, holding my tongue in conversation and in the classroom. However, this should not be so in a free society, let alone in the university setting, as the outcome is an unhealthy one. My challenge is to the latent element of independent thinkers on the campus of William and Mary: dive into the intellectual dialogue and butt heads in debate if necessary, even if you and others may not feel uncomfortable, such a statement can cause a tenured professor to take near physical action against an undergraduate student. Modern languages Professor Bruce Campbell, boldly engaged in accosting other Informer staffers for their lack of "decently," overheard my comment. This prompted him to rush over, show his index finger in my face and loudly shout "You know what…!"

In reminding Mr. Campbell of his problems with depth perception and other general distance issues, the situation quickly diffused. Nevertheless, it serves to illustrate the fragile condition of the College's intellectual atmosphere. After all, what prominent member of a liberal arts institution, ostensibly possessing a sound mind, would actually engage in such behavior, all in a reaction to mere words? It is interesting how those who are to act as the guardians of "openness" at the College, professors, have been shown to contribute in small and great ways toward subverting truly open thought. In a very prominent way, we recently saw many of our professors fail to teach, often in a blatant disregard for those students who held a divergent opinion on the matter of Mr. Nichol's resignation and non-renewal. Free thought is hindered in smaller ways too, as when course readings and assignments incorporate only certain worldviews. It would seem that there is an insidious aspect to the call for the supremacy of diversity at the William and Mary. If, despite all of our external differences, we ultimately end up thinking alike, having an internal sameness after all our time here, that would be a great tragedy. I have been greatly failed in our liberal arts education.

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I am not convinced that it is the government's job to provide a "safe space" on our college campuses. In fact, I would argue that it is the responsibility of students to police themselves and to genuinely engage in thought-provoking discussion with their peers. When students feel uncomfortable or threatened by ideas expressed by others, they should be encouraged to have the courage to stand up for themselves and voice their opinions honestly and respectfully. By creating a "safe space," we are only reinforcing the idea that it is okay to avoid challenging or uncomfortable ideas, which is contrary to the spirit of intellectual growth and development. Instead, we should create an environment where students are encouraged to listen to different perspectives, engage in critical thinking, and develop the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the real world. In doing so, we can foster a campus culture that values free speech, open-mindedness, and the pursuit of knowledge, rather than one that prioritizes comfort and avoidance of difficult topics.
Williamsburg City Council candidates set to square off in the Wren Great Hall

Andrew B. Blasi, Jr.  
Editor in Chief

The six candidates for Williamsburg City Council will be participating in the “Student Issues” City Council debate sponsored by the Student Assembly tomorrow, April 10, in the Wren Building’s Great Hall at 8:00 p.m. Among the candidates are a current student, Matt Beato and Professor Clyde Haulman.

In an e-mail to campus media, former President Zach Pilchen said “Not only is this the first debate of its kind in City history, but with 1,000+ students registered to vote in Williamsburg (and hundreds more registering before the April 7th deadline), this election cycle is the first in which local politicians must consider the issue that Mary students as part of the electoral process.” Mr. Pilchen added that some of the questions posed to the candidates will include the three person to a house rule, transportation issues and town-gown relations.

All six candidates plan to attend. Along with Mr. Beato and Mr. Haulman, an incumbent, other candidates include incumbent Paul Freiling and challengers Terence Weible, Judy Kenudson and former Mayor Gil Granger.

President Hopkins hopes to continue success, her way

Nick Fitzgerald  
Editor in Chief, Virginia Informer Online

After the recent win in the Student Assembly General Elections by incumbents Valerie Hopkins and Zach Pilchen, The Virginia Informer was able to obtain an exclusive interview. President-elect Valerie Hopkins corresponded with The Informer to discuss her goals for the coming year.

Virginia Informer (VI): What are your general goals for the 2008-2009 academic year?

Valerie Hopkins (VH): This past year we tried incredibly hard to make the SA more accessible and relevant to students. In the coming year, we will use our position to continue student empowerment as our main goal. We envision Student Empowerment on many levels: within the SA by expanding our executive branch, within the larger student body by increasing accessibility and accountability, expanding the student role in the Presidential Search Process, the Commencement speaker selection process, and more. Student Empowerment takes on another guise in the Presidential Search Process, where we will be working to continue Student Empowerment in our executive branch orientation program, to encourage students to discuss taboo topics such as consent and the role of alcohol in sexual encounters. We will work to continue Student Empowerment within the City of Williamsburg. We want to continue the ethic of voter registration during freshman orientation. We are currently working on creating an Alliance for Off-Campus students similar to RHA so that they can collectively discuss issues of mutual interest and deliberate over solutions. We also plan to continue to harness the engagement and the interest that members of the community felt in the wake of President Nichol’s resignation so that they are aware of how decisions that affect them are made. It is very important to me that students take ownership of their college experience and invest themselves in the place that is giving them so much. This will take the form of increased student-BOV interactions, and more.

VI: What has been your and the Student Assembly’s general role in student voter registration over the past few weeks?

Hopkins: As soon as we learned over the summer that students regained the right to vote after being systematically disenfranchised for far too long, Zach and I and members of the Executive and Senate Public Affairs committee began brainstorming ways to make sure that every student knew that the draconian anti-student policy had been changed, and give them an opportunity to register if they wished. I am very proud of the high number of students, especially freshmen, who have committed to having a voice in this community, and I hope that voter registration continues to be an SA initiative long after my term as President expires. In the past few weeks, we have certainly been making an effort to inform students of their opportunity to change Williamsburg history. We’ve had a registration station at the Daily Grind, and offered to come to people to do personal registration. Right now, however, we’ve begun to shift our energy into educating voters about all of the candidates. We sent all of them candidate questionnaires, which we will compile, publish and distribute to all of the registered voters in our community. We will be hosting the first on-campus debate for all candidates for City Council on April 10 at 8pm in the Wren Building. The debate will also be recorded, put on YouTube, and disseminated. VI: Do you think Matt Beato will win a council seat? If he does, how do you think the town will react, and what effect do you think his win will have on town-gown relations?

VH: I don’t want to make any prophesies about the election, but I am positive that due to the high profile nature of this election, if Beato does win, it will have to be because the town, not only the student body, also supports him. In that regard, I think many year-round residents will be pleased to elect him. Beato’s platform is for One Williamsburg, and he has promised that if he is elected, he will work for ALL of his constituents, regardless of age or duration of residency in Williamsburg. His position as a student and a member of the Student Assembly gives him a unique opportunity to liase effectively with members of the student body and members of the Council and city staff, so in that regard I can only imagine that we would see wider, more open town-gown communication.

VI: What have been the biggest challenges that you have faced since you assumed leadership of the Student Assembly?

VH: It continues to perplex me that a lot people have been so taken aback by our switch—for us it has always seemed like a natural progression; a physical manifestation of everything we stand for, and of how we approach our office. We’ve both had very fulfilling years in our positions, but we both feel ready to do something just a little bit different. For Zach, this means returning to his roots in the Senate as the presiding officer, and for me, this means representing the students during BOV meetings instead of watching from the side. Additionally, I would challenge the pejorative use of the word co-presidency. Beginning with our first campaign last year, Zach and I have approached our relationship as equals, eschewing titles in favor of partnership and of producing the best possible outcome. We often bring differing opinions to the table, and it is in discussion and formulation that we come up with the most optimal ideas and solutions. Although it may be a break from years past, it is how we have found the most successful partnership.

The dynamic of equality that we espouse should not be mistakenly interpreted to mean that I am foreshadowing “one more year of the same,” or that I am misinterpreting to mean that I am transitioning to be because the town, not only the student body, also supports him. In that regard, I think many year-round residents will be pleased to elect him. Beato’s platform is for One Williamsburg, and he has promised that if he is elected, he will work for ALL of his constituents, regardless of age or duration of residency in Williamsburg. His position as a student and a member of the Student Assembly gives him a unique opportunity to liase effectively with members of the student body and members of the Council and city staff, so in that regard I can only imagine that we would see wider, more open town-gown relations.

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