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**IN OUR
OPINION**

Overall USC graduation rates not good enough to compete

The University of South Carolina is the sixth ranked state university in the country when it comes to graduation rates for African-American students.

Graduation Rates

USC needs to increase its graduation rate so we can compete with other universities.

knowledge that it comes with a good education.

Until that happens, South Carolina will not be able to compete with the likes of Georgia and North

Carolina.

Obviously, a graduation rate close to 100 percent is unattainable, but it could obviously be higher than 63 percent.

If John Palms and the Board of Trustees want this university to be an AAU university, we have to retain our students. It's as simple as that.

What does it say about the University of South Carolina if only 63 percent of our students are graduating within six years?

Are we letting in students who can't handle the academic rigors of college? When students are here, are they not getting enough support to stay in school? Or are we just not keeping students interested?

These are questions that need to be answered. For some reason students are not staying here.

If they are not graduating they are wasting their time and the University's, and it's pointless to have 15,000 undergrads, if only 9,500 are going to graduate.

This is great for the University and we should be proud. But we must remember the graduation rate is still only 56 percent, and the graduation rate for the entire University is only 63 percent.

Having a little bit more than half of your African-American students graduate is, even if it is one of the best graduation rates in the country, not something to be especially proud of.

For USC to consider itself one of the best universities in the country, and to better service the state of South Carolina, we must retain our students until graduation.

In this day and age a college education is not worth anything unless it comes with a degree. This state will not be able to step into the 21st century without more college graduates.

For South Carolina to compete with other states for business and development, we must have people with college degrees and the

Beasley's new views on flag merely for his political gain

The Confederate flag that flies atop the South Carolina State House has been a controversial issue for years.

Confederate Flag

Gov. Beasley's new stance on the Confederate flag is purely political.

Until recently, Gov. David

Beasley has supported the effort to keep the flag flying on the dome.

Last week, however, Beasley delivered a speech where he expressed his belief that the flag should be removed from the dome and placed in a prominent place on the State House grounds.

While we support the idea that the flag should be removed from the State House dome, we do not believe Beasley's motives are entirely pure.

When Beasley was elected in 1994, he said the flag should remain flying above the dome.

Incidentally, 1994 was the year of the Republican Revolution and the "angry white male."

Why did Beasley suddenly change his mind in the course of two years?

Beasley's change of heart probably has a great deal to do with President

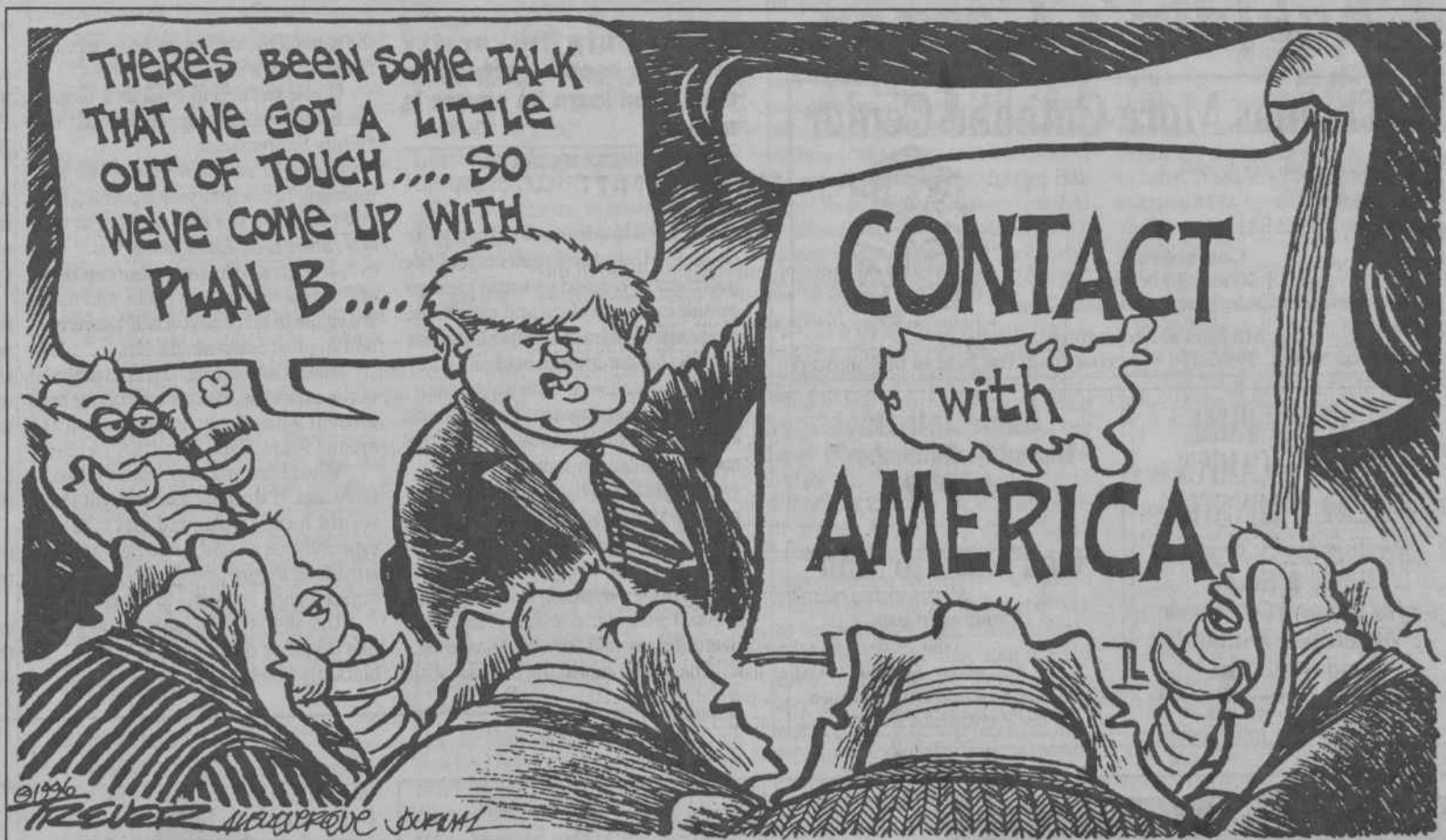
Clinton's re-election.

After all, the 1996 election was all about "soccer moms," not angry white men.

If Beasley ever wants to run for a national office, he will have to soften his views on many issues.

Saying he is opposed to the Confederate flag flying above the State House is a great way to make Beasley look less harsh, which will make him more marketable to a national audience.

The Confederate flag should be removed from the State House dome because it does not represent all South Carolinians, not because Beasley is looking for political gain.



Quote, Unquote

"If that's (performance) indicative of how things will be for us in the future, then the people who wrote those preseason magazines and our fans will be disappointed."

Eddie Fogler, USC men's basketball head coach, on Monday night's 64-41 victory over Wofford

Life's lessons can be learned from some movies

**Fred Leach
Columnist**

In my last column of this semester, I would like to take a break from writing about politics and compile a list of my top 10 favorite movies.

This will certainly be no ordinary list with "Casablanca" or "It's a Wonderful Life," simply because I have never seen either of those films, although I hear they are very good.

In order for a movie to earn a spot on my list, it needs to meet two requirements. It must be entertaining, and it must contain a good, worthwhile message.

There are plenty of entertaining movies that contain no message, and plenty of movies that may have a good moral to the story, but are as entertaining as watching paint dry. So here goes, in no particular order.

"Beckett"
Richard Burton plays Thomas Beckett, a friend of King Henry II who was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by the King so that the Church would no longer challenge the Crown's power.

Beckett decides, however, to serve the Lord instead of the King and is murdered in his own Church on Dec. 29, 1170. This is a very inspiring movie to

watch, especially around the holidays.

"Pete's Dragon"
This film is a musical about an animated dragon named Elliott who helps a young orphan escape from a backwoods family that mistreats him.

They travel to a New England fishing village where Pete is taken in by the light keepers. This is a moving story about love and never losing hope. "Candle on the Water" is one of the best songs ever in a Disney movie.

"Field of Dreams"
This movie goes way beyond being just a baseball movie. An Iowa farmer, played by Kevin Costner, builds a baseball field in the middle of his cornfield so his father's hero, Shoeless Joe Jackson, can return and play ball.

Forgiveness and never giving up on your dreams are the central themes in this movie, which also shows that heaven can be experienced right here on Earth if you believe.

"Ben Hur"
A true masterpiece, Charlton Heston plays the title character, who through years of hardships learns to show mercy and forgiveness. He also learns the true meaning of love and sacrifice.

"Star Wars"
The first one. This is the ultimate story of good triumphing over evil and

perseverance. No matter how bad things looked, Luke, Han and Leia never gave up.

"The Searchers"
Any movie with John Wayne in it is a good one. This movie is among the best of all that he did.

I often ask myself when I am in a tough situation, what would Jesus and John Wayne do in this situation. They probably wouldn't do exactly the same thing all the time.

John Wayne represents everything that a man should be: brave, loyal, honest, and strong. I've heard before that had he lived, Wayne might have entered politics like Reagan. I'd have loved to see the Duke debate Slick Willie.

"The Land Before Time"
This is an animated film from Spielberg in which five young dinosaurs travel to the Great Valley where there is a plentiful supply of food and water.

The dinosaurs have to overcome many similar prejudices that we face today. "Three-horns don't play with long-necks," Cera said at one point in the film. Fortunately, Cera and the others learn that love and understanding are far more powerful than any prejudices.

"The Wizard of Oz"
Sometimes the greatest gifts are inside you if you only know where to

look. You don't need a medal to show courage, a diploma to show smarts, or an alarm clock to show that you have a heart.

"The Great Race"
Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, Natalie Wood and Peter Falk all star in this comedy about a typical "good guy" that enters a race from New York to Paris against a typical "bad guy."

There are some things that are more important than trophies and prestige. Sometimes it is all right to lose as long as you are still the "good guy."

"Independence Day"
There is a scene in ID4 where Iraqis and Israelis have their planes parked beside one another and both sides are under a tent working together towards a common goal.

I hope it does not take an alien invasion to bring our world together. The enemy that we face today has proven over the years to be just as deadly as the aliens in ID4.

That enemy is prejudice and hate. No matter what one's religion is, think of the three precious gifts in the Bible: faith, hope, and love.

Imagine a world where faith, hope and love replace prejudice, despair and hate. Merry Christmas.

Letters To The Editor

Ballheads should learn how to behave at volleyball games

To the editor,

Having grown up in southern California on a healthy dose of UCLA Bruin Volleyball, I embraced this year's SEC women's volleyball tournament as an opportunity not only to see volleyball matches east-coast style, but also to observe the generally wonderful enthusiasm of the Carolina fans.

Sad to say, in the quarterfinal match between the Lady Gamecocks and the University of Mississippi, a group of rabble rousers, known as the Ballheads, left little to be desired in being a Carolina supporter.

The problem stemmed from the fact that the Ballheads harassed a referee regarding some disputable calls. Okay, so the referee made a few bad calls.

I, for one, fail to see the logic behind the Ballheads' actions. Was it not obvious that distracting the referee only increased the likelihood that she would make more bad calls?

Also, anyone who has ever participated in a competitive sport can tell you that good sportsmanship is a virtue we hold in very high regard.

Sure, the Lady Gamecocks howl in protest at many refereed calls that don't go their way. After all, that's part of psyching up the entire team to play better.

What makes the Gamecock players such good sports and exemplary athletes is their ability to focus on the ball in play, regardless of a referee's previous call, good or bad.

I suggest you Ballheads take a lesson in court decorum from the Gamecock volleyball players: Forget about the bad call and concentrate on the game.

I must emphasize that I have nothing against the Ballheads' (or any other Carolina fan's) vocal support of the Lady Gamecocks. However, there is clear difference between cheering for the home team, which the Gamecock cheerleaders

do so well, and heckling the judge to the point where she gets too flustered to make the proper call.

The latter, born from malice, is neither defensible nor excusable in a more thoughtful society. So, consider it a blessing that you Ballheads "left" the facility when you did; you could have lost that match for the home team.

Oh, here's a final suggestion to the Ballheads: Leave your witless shenanigans at home and help preserve the dignity of volleyball and its participants.

As a die-hard fan, go for broke player and sometime referee of my beloved sport, I much prefer to watch a volleyball game than your ostentatious tomfoolery. Your reappearance in any future volleyball match would be too soon.

Alexander E. Olvido
Ph.D. Candidate

Editorial misrepresented recycling measures at USC

To the editor,

How misinformed can one editorial board possibly be?

The editorial "Recycling not good at USC or environmental protection" was rife with misinformation, misunderstandings and untruths. We thought that any good journalist would investigate the facts before forming an opinion and writing about it.

I guess we were wrong. Let's start with your title. How can you make a generalized statement that recycling is not good at USC? You couldn't be further from the truth.

Our "Recycle 2000 Program" has been growing strong and hard ever since its inception in Fall 1994. Our program has

received several awards, including an award from DHEC for the best collegiate recycling program using grant money, and it has been featured in several periodicals and books.

Your statement about student consumption on campus is on the right track, except you missed the biggest point. You are the ones consuming the take-out containers at the dining facilities on campus.

If you cared so much about the environment, you would change your behavior and choose to eat in-and not add to the enormous waste generated on campus.

You were right when you wrote that a little effort can make a real difference. If everyone at USC chose to cut their take-out meals in half, do you have any idea how much waste would be avoided?

Even if one person stopped using disposable cups, you would avoid consuming at least two cups per day, seven days a week, 16 weeks a semester, which equals 224 cups that were never consumed. Now multiply that by 27,000, and what do you get for just one semester?

What about adding in the clamshell containers, paper bags and disposable silverware? How much consumption would be avoided then?

While we're on the subject, we were wondering if everyone at The Gamecock had purchased and faithfully used their Eco-mug this semester?

Our next problem is with your attack on polystyrene.

In an ideal world, we would not be using polystyrene or other disposable containers with such frequency, but it is built into the social custom at USC to dine-out, and so we have the need for dine-out containers.

The polystyrene that Marriott purchases is made with HCFs, not the infamous CFCs that we all love to hate.

The wax paper cup that you mentioned is not as durable as polystyrene and is also not recyclable.

Polystyrene is a better choice for disposable containers; it is an excellent insulator, is relatively inexpensive and it is recyclable.

The fact is, Marriott has been recycling USC's polystyrene for several years. In fact, polystyrene is made into many useful products you may have seen around, such as video cassettes, carpet, building insulation, toys, park benches and pencils.

As long as you make the effort to recycle, polystyrene, not Styrofoam, has the ability to close the loop and be made into new, durable products with virtually no environmental impact whatsoever.

By the way, the Department of Housing is not in charge of the recycling program at USC, Resource Conservation Programs is. Did you forget about the article that you wrote about us in the first week of school?

You were right when you wrote that we have made it easy for you to recycle, so tell us then, what's stopping you? To clarify another point, a trash can is for garbage, and a recycling can is for recyclables. There is no such thing as a recycling garbage can.

The problem does not lie with Marriott entering the 20th century, but with the consumer who continues to look at all waste as trash instead of a resource which has the potential to serve our needs over and over again.

It is now time for The Gamecock to get its act together and do their part to educate and inform the USC community with the proper facts, and the fact is, recycling is very good for the environment at USC.

Laura Pergolizzi and Anne Lacy
USC Resource Conservation



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