



'Someone who knows how to shop for a car - they're going to get the best price.'

Pat Johnson, Galeana senior sales representative

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All residence halls should have sprinklers

A look at USC's fire-safety plans brings to light a noticeable fault: Only three residence halls are fully equipped with water sprinklers, and McBryde Quadrangle is partially equipped. The other residence halls, Maxcy College, South Quad and South Tower, along with McBryde are all specialty housing, as well.

Honors College students live in Maxcy, sorority and fraternity members are in South Tower and McBryde, respectively, and 50 percent of South Quad's rooms are reserved for athletes.

Every student at Carolina who lives on campus must demand better from university administrators. While the lucky non-athletes who got into South Quad are protected, not everyone can afford to live in that expensive apartment-style residence hall or the new one being built directly across from it.

Students need to call their state legislators and let them know that they don't want to live in buildings that serve as high fatality risks if a large-scale fire were to break out. Plans for furnishing all the residence halls with sprinklers are moving to slowly. This is especially risky for students living in high-rise residence halls like Capstone House who would have to make the long walk down crowded stairwells in the event of a fire.

The safest thing for students to do might be to move off campus. Maybe then the Department of Housing would get the message that we don't want tragedies like the fires at Seton Hall or UNC-Chapel Hill to occur here.

The Department of Housing is here to serve us and should be our greatest champion when it comes to fighting for our safety. All students - not just those who qualify for specialty housing or can afford an apartment-style residence hall - need to be protected, and protected quickly.

Web site helps pick the right candidates

Thanks to two sites on the World Wide Web, citizens have one less excuse not to vote in the upcoming primaries or in November's general election.

On www.govote.com, visitors indicate their position on such issues as abortion, gun control and gays in the military. The site then ranks the presidential candidates in order according to how your views match with theirs, based on the answers to your survey. Vote.com offers a more complex (and slightly more tedious) quiz, with the same end result of matching you with the candidate whose ideals best match yours.

GoVote.com has the advantage of offering a side-by-side comparison chart of the candidates' opinions and even tells you your political philosophy. Both sites organize information about the candidates and the latest news about them concisely and in a way that's quick and easy to browse.

So if you aren't sure yet for whom to cast your vote, take a trip to one of these sites. While no five-minute survey can completely replace reading the news and keeping up with the candidates yourself, at least the sites negate the excuse that you don't have time to make an informed decision.

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE



CAMPUS ISSUES

IM changes USC relationships

Returning home from a date at Harper's and a movie can end with a more modern option of "Will you call me?" Now, it's "Be sure to IM me to tell me you got home safely." What? Michael no longer tells Suzie he'll take her out next week, but rather MDawg35 kisses SuzieQ222 and offers hope of an e-greeting to tell of his feelings for her and the potential for another date. He will "eyemm" her, phonetically, if she's lucky. This, of course, means that he will send her an instant message via the computer when he gets home to tell her whether he wants to see her again. (They might even start to call each other by their IM names; I sometimes do.)

The America Online Instant Messenger is a highly recognizable medium these days, taking the place of phone calls and person-to-person activity. It is a way to communicate in actual time with other people and is available for free to anyone with Internet access. In fact, on-campus students who use the USC computer "backbone" for online activity can keep themselves online for endless hours, sometimes days, without disconnecting or plugging up their phone line. It's constant interaction - it's convenient, it's fun and it can be abused as a casual form of stalking, too.

AIM makes sure mystery no longer exists in the lives of Internet users. The problems of homesickness, parental advisory and relationship restrictions are improved because of IMing. (Yes, to IM is now a verb, an inclusion in our everyday vocabulary, comparable with other examples of brand-name exposure like "Xerox a copy" or "Febreeze a jacket.")

Best friends who split ways for college can IM one another cross-country.

Parents can keep tabs on their college kids easily, for many AIM users leave "away messages" to prompt a text display message of their choice, of any variety, to anyone who tries to IM them. Parents know when you're on the Sig Ep hall or eating at the Grand Marketplace, if you leave that information on your away message. Ah, yes, and jealous boyfriends know, too.

College relationships have changed because of this phenomenon; people can easily be bombarded with IMs (the noun abbreviation) the second they sign onto the computer. What to do - ignore or confront the barrage? Confronting takes up valuable time and ignoring leads to negligence, which runs rampant when one person IMs someone and ignores another. Hey, sometimes IM windows get hidden on-screen, but sometimes people get blatantly ignored, and then feelings get hurt and fights abound. Others try to talk to too many people at once and start confusing their conversations, which is nothing but bad news. AIM, of course, offers a remedy, which enables the user to block certain people from viewing them online. This is a fine idea, until that one deemed unworthy of your IMs starts chatting with someone who is simultaneously chatting with your best friend, who is chatting with you, and then you're busted and trauma ignites.

How can we fight this feeling of privacy invasion? By getting off AOL's fun, addictive and possibly destructive toy, AIM, I suppose. But it's just too much fun. Away messages of my favorite "buddies" are too entertaining to fight off; sometimes, I jump online to grab a bit of "Dawson's Creek" profundity to carry me through a tough day. Others' personal profiles, some updated daily, can give me a taste of scoop so much more meaningful than a "General Hospital's" weekly recap. Plus, what if, when I sign onto Instant Messenger, one of my pals wants to e-mail me 2Pac's latest, unreleased MP3 song? Is a moment of online exposure not worth a killer addition to my online song library, some fun

gossip and a few flirtatious gestures with some guys I met in Five Points weeks before? Of course it's worth it! Who doesn't love to be showered in good music and fun times? But, oh, I'm late for work and, oops, I didn't get my homework done. My professors no longer care what MerDavis50 got accomplished online, because I am now struggling - capital "S".

Yes, IMing can be time-consuming, worthless and just another distraction to college life. We might stay up later in the evening and have less energy because of it, and we might be more available to people when we just want to seem a little mysterious. Anyone who shares my fondness for AIM, however, understands that its attributes are much stronger than just a few typed words and funny downloads. Unenlightened IM-hating people argue that AIM takes away from personal interaction, a valid point. However, some of my most meaningful relationships have only been enhanced by the online experience, and I am surrounded by IM-obsessed people with otherwise rather interesting lives. Who wants to talk on the phone and be obligated to offer full, undivided attention when we can chat with several people at once, type a paper and research our favorite hobby, all at the same time - not to mention being able to have the television on in the background and download a mix of our most treasured and hard-to-find "one-hit wonders" by the revolutionary music program Napster?

In all cases, the IM wins out. Let the IMing long live on and let the Napster become more popular so we can all share music in unity (by the way, it's www.napster.com). Computers might be viewed as evil and dating might be hurting a bit from the emergence of such a program, but AIM has contributed a whole new level of inclusiveness and belonging to the social undergraduate experience, especially for freshmen.

- IM hooked.
- IM entertained.
- IM MerDavis50 - wanna chat?

NATIONAL ISSUES

'Utopia doesn't exist'

I'm convinced of the fact that we, the citizens of the United States of America, do live in the greatest country the world has ever known.

Today's civilization is one of great wealth, a flourishing economy and peace, especially when compared to the rest of the world. In the past century, Americans have never had to fight a war in their home country, struggle for independence or suffer through a great famine.

Since time began, hunger, war and quality of life have been major stumbling blocks for countries, as well as empires, to overcome. America, the only true current world power, is presently safe from these hardships.

However, in this day and age, Americans aren't satisfied. We all want something for nothing. I'm sick and tired of people in this country wanting special privileges.

We take advantage of the fact that we live in a democracy that caters to our every need. We take advantage of the fact that we have a Constitution that is a living, breathing document. It has been amended 26 times.

This means that our lawmakers have changed the rules on us 26 times for our better interest. In the past, laws were almost never changed without bloodshed.

Nowadays, there are thousands of political interest groups, each vying for a piece of the pie, wanting to make "their side" come out on top. Come out on top of what? The government?

Everyone wants to be heard, without hearing anyone else. I've always been taught to listen before I speak.

This, however, is not the way of the state I live in. I live in a state that spends the majority of its time and money debating over a battle flag that flies on top of the Statehouse.

It's a flag that, unless, you're sitting in traffic or have enough time to take a walk, is almost never seen by the people who live near it.

It's a flag that is a symbol of the War between the States that happened 150 years ago, splitting the nation up between the North and the South and costing thousands of young and old men their lives in a time where war was extremely brutal and barbaric.

This country has never seen eye to eye on issues. Human nature is a selfish one. But then again, our country teaches us to be this way.

It's called the American dream. But the truth is, the American dream has left the majority of us with a bitter taste in our mouths.

One can't run for president, much less office, unless he or she has political connections, is very wealthy or has been well educated at several institutions.

The average Joe can't run the country. So in order to make our dream work, we'll run people over, form groups to have on "our side" and do anything at all costs so we come out on top.

Thus, this is the potpourri of a demographic portrait that is our nation.

I don't live by these rules. As a Christian, I have been instilled with the teachings of humility, kindness and love. With a little understanding and listening from the "other side," we can understand a lot from each other. We'll never be a country that lives in a Utopian society. Utopia doesn't exist in this life.

So in the meantime, we all should do our best to look before we cross the street, thump all the oranges in the store before deciding on one because of its looks and even try clothes on before we buy them. If we can do these things, we'll come to understand other people.

Maybe we'll also understand that people nowhere live in the kind of luxury that we live in today. But, still, we find issues to fight over without caring what the other side has to say.



Charlie Wallace is a journalism junior and can be reached at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com



Meredith Davis is a journalism junior and can be reached at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com

ABOUT US

The Gamecock is the student newspaper of The University of South Carolina and is published Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the fall and spring semesters and nine times during the summer with the exception of university holidays and exam periods. Opinions expressed in The Gamecock are those of the editors or author and not those of The University of South Carolina. The Board of Student Publications and Communications is the publisher of The Gamecock. The Department of Student Media is the newspaper's parent organization. The Gamecock is supported in part by student activities fees.

ADDRESS
The Gamecock
1400 Greene Street
Columbia, SC 29208
Offices on third floor of the Russell House.

STUDENT MEDIA Area code 803
Advertising 777-3888
Classified 777-1184
Fax 777-6482
Office 777-3888

GAMECOCK Area code 803
Editor gcked@sc.edu 777-3914
News gcknews@sc.edu 777-3726
Viewpoints gckviews@sc.edu 777-7181
Etc. gcketc@sc.edu 777-3913
Encore! gamecockencore@hotmail.com 777-3913
Sports gcksports@sc.edu 777-7182
Online www.gamecock.sc.edu 777-2833

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Letters to the editor or guest columns are welcome from all members of the Carolina community. Letters should be 250-300 words. Guest columns should be an opinion piece of about 600-700 words.

Both must include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. Handwritten submissions must be personally delivered to Russell House room 333. E-mail submissions must include telephone number for confirmation.

The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space. Anonymous letters will not be published. Photos are required for guest columnist and can be provided by the submitter.
Call 777-7726 for more information.

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LETTERS

Different symbols of heritage offensive

First of all, we have all heard the arguments both for and against the Confederate flag. Some of the the quotes in "What Students Say:" in today's issue were, to say the least, ignorant. I had decided to quit discussing this issue any further. But then I saw a African-American student walking next to me with a T-shirt that had the Confederate flag done in African colors. It read as follows: UNDERSTAND? Can you please print an article explaining just what this "NuSouth" logo is all about? Many Southerners are offended by this. Whatever the meaning, I know for a fact that it is not doing much to bring to an end the racial tension that many students here at USC feel.

Tracy Little
Business Sophomore

THE WASHINGTON POST

"YOU'RE BEING NEGATIVE"



Tracy Little
Business Sophomore