



'I've been circumcised. No more cuts.'

The text of a sign at this past Friday's budget cut protest

The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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Palms leaves students hanging by a moment

Another year is over, but there's no closure on two issues vital to USC's future. President John Palms, aspiring-aspiring senator, had "hoped" to decide by May 1 whether he'd step forward as a Democratic candidate for Sen. Strom Thurmond's soon-to-be-empty seat, which would likely mean his resignation from USC.

Well, it's May 2, and he's remained reticent, trying the patience of students and the trustees, who needed to begin the search weeks ago for Palms' replacement.

His bumbling, delayed-reaction style of decision making is eclipsed in ineptitude only by his sense of timing; it's tactless to scurry away from the state's largest university when it's mired in the morass of potential budget cuts. Though the budget won't be passed until July, already it's caused damage. USC has enforced a hiring freeze, asked staff members to take unpaid leave and cut countless classes that people need to take to be graduated. How much can you tighten your belt before it cuts you in two?

USC deserves better than vacillation from its leadership. Palms needs to decide now what his path will be so other leaders may decide USC's.

Return Gertrude as soon as possible, you cowards

There are certain things that we at *The Gamecock* just can't stand. And stealing a Columbia landmark is high on the list. Recently, somebody stole Gertrude, the wooden purple cow that sits out in front of The Purple Cow grocery store on Pickens Street.

Gertrude is as much a part of Columbia and USC as the city skyline and the Horseshoe. Whoever stole Gertrude is a sick individual who should be punished severely. But fortunately for whoever stole the cow, the management at The Purple Cow simply wants Gertrude returned, no questions asked.

Whoever stole Gertrude, if you have any sense of decency, any pride in Columbia and even a shred of respect for the generations of students and visitors who will come after you and will want to see one of Columbia's most famous landmarks, then you will return Gertrude immediately.

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 activity fees. One free copy per reader. Additional copies may be purchased for one dollar each from the Department of Student Media.

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SUBMISSION POLICY
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 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 and should be e-mailed to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space. Anonymous letters will not be published. Photos are required for guest columns and can be provided by the submitter.

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Guest columns and letters may be submitted by e-mail to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com. Call 777-7726 for more information.

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE



FINAL THOUGHTS

I am the luckiest guy in USC history

Make no mistake about it, I am the luckiest guy in USC history. You'd think working more than 40 hours a week, getting no sleep, skipping at least four classes a week and receiving anonymous threats, dozens of critical letters and angry phone calls every day wouldn't qualify someone as being lucky, but you'd be dead wrong.



Brock Vergakis is a fourth-year student in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications. Send responses to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

All these things are part of what it means to be the editor of South Carolina's leading collegiate newspaper. And, beyond a shadow of a doubt, being the editor of this newspaper is the single greatest job any student could dream of having.

Now, there were times being editor in chief made a week in hell sound like a dream vacation, but I wouldn't

change those times for anything. Those were the times I learned the most. Those were also the times I truly learned to appreciate my friends and family. And without them, I never could have survived this year. I know I will never be able to convey to my parents how much their love and support has meant to me.

And when it comes right down to it, family is what life is all about. No matter how you define family, it is the one thing that keeps us all going. It is what inspires us to attempt to accomplish great things in the face of adversity. It might seem like a difficult bit of information to swallow, but everything our predecessors did was for us. And if we're not selfish, everything we do will benefit those who follow us.

Sometimes this means continuing a tradition that was laid out for us, and sometimes it means starting our own. This year at *The Gamecock*, we tried to honor those who came before us, but we were not afraid to carve our own path. We became the first, and still the only, collegiate newspaper in South Carolina history to publish five days a week with new content, via the Internet. Our stories

were picked up by collegiate wire services on a regular basis, which told us what we already knew — we're South Carolina's best.

We also weren't afraid to endorse candidates in Student Government elections, and we won't be scared to in the future, either. There are certain battles worth fighting, and the editorial freedom of this newspaper is one of them.

It is a battle that desperately needs to be fought; one we have no intention of losing. But it is now up to future staffs of *The Gamecock*, and I'm sure they will fight a good fight. Someday I will return to campus and pick up a copy of *The Independent Daily Gamecock*.

I know this because there is no single group of people that is more passionate, more idealistic, more driven than a college newspaper staff. It is amazing what a bunch of young journalists can accomplish. I have witnessed some of these accomplishments this year, and I could not be more proud of my staff. It takes a special group of people to realize that just because something has never been done before doesn't mean it can't or shouldn't be done.

But after a few semesters at *The Gamecock*, I realized that the people I work with are much more than co-workers, they are some of the best friends I will ever have. These are the people I have grown up with, day by day, for the past few years.

And to all my other friends I've depended on these past four years, thanks for staying up with me way too late, having a beer with me at 3 a.m. on countless school nights and calling from wherever they were around the country to lift my spirits at the exact moment I needed it.

It's amazing how different our view of the world is now compared with what it was four years ago, but even more amazing is how, four years later, I still wouldn't trade any of you for the world. I'll never forget all the fun we had, the hell we raised and the lessons we learned. To my family and friends, you are what makes me the luckiest guy in USC history.

To the 2000-2001 staff: I love you guys.

LETTERS

RHA congratulates Vergakis on year

To the Editor:

We would like to publicly praise Editor in Chief Brock Vergakis for the work he has done with *The Gamecock* this year. We have seen a marked improvement in the overall quality of articles and coverage of events under his strong leadership. He has played a large role in supporting RHA's enterprises on campus this year, and for that, we thank him.

Though we refrain from stating an opinion on some of his actions that have recently come under attack, we do congratulate him for doing a remarkably good job in his duties this year, and we hope to see similar progress continue with *The Gamecock* in the fall.

Residence Hall Association Executive Board and Council

Garnet & Black worth 200-year wait

To the Editor:

Thanks to the *Garnet & Black* staff for such a great new issue! Martha Wright was correct in saying that the Bicentennial Special was "worth waiting 200 years for."

Clearly, the *Garnet & Black* staff put forth its best effort for this edition; the pictures are beautiful, and the stories are interesting and well-written.

USC has thrived during the good and bad of the past 200 years. This bicentennial edition is the first part of our very own story.

Ginny Thornton
Third-year Student
College of Journalism and Mass Communications

Reprimand deeply disturbs former staff

To the Editor:

As a five-semester veteran of *The Gamecock*, I am deeply disturbed by the recent revelations concerning the Board of Publications and their cowardly "reprimand" of *Gamecock* editor Brock Vergakis.

Word on the street is that the illustrious board is seeking to turn *The Gamecock* into a lame, irrelevant community-type newspaper, the type that only runs zoocentered feature stories and bean dip recipes.

Of course, the best way to go about this is to get rid of the one editor in the past five years whose dedication to excellence and bucking the status quo threatens the board's comfy little slumber party.

Have no doubt, folks, if Vergakis doesn't step down voluntarily, he will be removed. He makes students think, challenge mediocrity and stand up for the First Amendment. Thus, he is an obstacle to the board's obvious "journalistic" agenda of soft news and spineless, politically correct rhetoric.

The Vergakis agenda, on the other hand, is a simple one: he wants *The Gamecock* to be the best damn student newspaper it can be, not the butt of jokes by smug professors and students who choose comfortable ignorance to challenging information.

By God, Vergakis was almost there, too, with the addition of aggressive city-state coverage and fearless editorials that buck the board's sacred complacency. So he must be stopped, right? The first step of which, a "reprimand," was done with Vergakis not even present.

Plus, at the time this letter is being written, the board has refused to speak with student journalists who want answers for the board's passive-aggressive actions against Vergakis. While this seems oddly appropriate considering the board's desire to thwart student journalistic freedom, it reveals the cowardly character fueling the Vergakis "reprimand."

Readers and staffers must stand up for the values of journalistic excellence Vergakis has worked so hard to implement over the past two semesters and stand against

The Gamecock's almost assured return to mediocrity. If not, have fun reading and writing those bean dip recipes.

John "Hacksaw" Huiett

Fourth-year Student
College of Journalism and Mass Communications

Sports editor wrong to hate Florida

To the Editor:

Kyle, I understand your problem with most of the schools in the SEC. I hate most of them. You have to be in a tough conference like ours. Tennessee sucks. They cheat, play dirty, and, damn it, their fans are the most obnoxious in the SEC.

UGA is easy to hate because they are a border rival and they've been whooping on us for years. Plus, they are the meanest fans in the SEC. All of the other schools are small change, except Mississippi State. I've got two words for you: Cow Bells.

But Kyle, buddy, have you missed the boat on Florida. Florida is without a doubt the easiest team to pull for in the conference besides our beloved Gamecocks. First of all, as you pointed out, they win. Secondly, their coaches are the kind of guys that everybody hates but would love to have on their side. Spurrier is the Don Corleone of football coaches because he strikes fear into the heart of every other coach in the SEC, with the exception of Holtz.

Finally, it is obvious that you have never experienced the magic which is Ben Hill Griffin stadium. That place is the best stadium in the country, and week in and week out, it is filled with the best fans and usually one of the best teams in the country.

Just ask Shane Hall what it's like to have Alex Brown and 86,000 Gators in your ear for 60 minutes. So, Kyle, it's time to rethink your anti-gator stance. Because as they say, "If you ain't Gator, you must be Gator bait."

Dan Blackmon
Fourth-year student
College of Liberal Arts

Adviser defends abortion display

To the Editor:

I commend you for your balanced coverage of the Genocide Awareness Project display that took place on campus March 22-23 and for printing so many letters representing a wide range of points of view.

Students for Life exists to educate people about life issues such as abortion, euthanasia, managed health care, physician-assisted suicide, genocide and capital punishment.

We realized the GAP project would be intensely controversial but felt the resulting discussion and debate would help people of opposed viewpoints to understand each other's concerns better.

The people who set up the GAP display have similar aims. They included African-Americans and a Jew who could be identified by the yarmulke he wore. Had Linda M. Ziegenbein [Letters, April 2] talked to them about the Holocaust and lynchings, she might have been less inclined to accuse the GAP people of being "disrespectful" of "the victims of genocide" in showing pictures of victims of these and other crimes against humanity.

I would also like to say that there is no "hypocrisy," as Alison M. Hogue [Letters, March 23] claimed, in regard to "having to destroy an animal because it was diseased or unwanted." One of the GAP pictures showed a rhesus monkey obviously suffering from an experiment, and many pro-lifers are appalled by cruelty to animals, myself included. However, there are laws against cruelty to animals and none against cruelty to unborn human beings.

Peter J. Nyikos
Faculty Adviser, Students for Life