ONLINE POLL

Do you understand Value-Centered Management? www.dailygamecock.com. Results published on Fridays.

THE LEADER

USC's 'values'

Though the Strategic Directions and Initiatives report devotes a page and a half to the proposed "Value-Centered Management" system for USC, VCM would mean sweeping changes to the way USC divvies up money. It would allocate money to the university's colleges based on the number of students they attract, their fund-raising abilities and their "value" to USC as seen by administrators.

Blind leap of faith

USC's Student and Faculty senates have criticized VCM and questioned how the board plans to implement it. The board's answer is as disturbing as it is vague - essentially saying, "Trust us."

University administrators aren't even sure who would ultimately make the changes. It's possible that USC President John Palms could change the system on his way out the door.

It's hard to trust the board when Testing the system we don't know whether trustees

will have a vote.

The one encouraging aspect of the VCM plan is that USC would "test" it before

implementing it by paralleling it on paper for a year with our current management system. But that doesn't ensure the system will be fair.

In one scenario, money would be allocated based on the number of students in a college. In another, funds would be distributed based on the number of students enrolled in a certain college's classes.

Allocating the money based on credit hours would slant funding even more toward the "Cathedrals of Excellence" - Liberal Arts, Science and Math, Engineering and Business — where much of USC's wealth is already concentrated. Everyone has to take English and math; not everyone needs a course in journalism or nursing.

And it could lead to the proliferation of repetitive courses. The university could see colleges creating courses to pad their pockets, such as "Art History for Social Workers" or "English and Pharmacy."

VCM should be implemented carefully and after a great deal of thought. If done correctly, the system could lead to a stronger university, where colleges are rewarded for a job well done. If done incorrectly, it could widen the wealth gap between colleges and send more money to a select four while allowing equally strong but less "valued" colleges to tumble into mediocrity.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

The day on the March 22 paper should have been Friday. The prizes for Carolina Productions' Oscar Party include a dinner for two at Dianne's on Devine.

The Gamecock regrets the errors.

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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When mediocrity is king



EDRIN WILLIAMS GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

Mediocre black males have become the norm.

The jury has ended its deliberation and returned this verdict: The overwhelming majority of USC's black male population is guilty of blatant mediocrity. The evidence is piled higher than the garbage in your residence halls.

Guys on this campus have too many systems in place to support the "strive-to-be-a-facein-the-crowd" mentality. Everywhere we turn, we're being persuaded to do just enough to stay in school, and being the gullible souls that we seem to enjoy being, we say OK and spend more time at the "Tree of Knowledge" than at the library or doing community service.

And we treat mediocre men with too much regard. We allow them to call us their friends. We accept them into our

organizations. We even introduce them to our female acquaintances.

The mediocre black male has become the norm at this institution and is reaping the rewards. From the hundreds of Jay-Z and Mobb Deep lookalikes to the 112 wannabes, each has scheduled their classes around the Russell House lunch period to give them the opportunity to approach as many women as possible. Once classes are out, they head to the gym to see who's hanging out courtside. And at about 7 p.m., they go back to the Russell House for the nightcap.

Knowing this schedule, it angers me when I invite some of them to a meeting of the Brothers of Nubian Descent (BOND), and they give me a line about having to do this or that. Then they have the audacity to avoid eye contact when I see them an hour later sitting in the Grand Marketplace

Another sector of the black male population needs to be addressed - members of the class of 1997 and before. They've been here long enough to know what goes on, yet I'm surprised that they don't do more mentoring to young, misguided men. Instead of talking about the mistakes they made by settling for average, they

condone the practice. Instead of encouraging younger men to get involved with worthwhile organizations, they tell them to meet them at the gym where they show off their crossovers and class of '96 senior T-shirts.

I hope by now that all you mediocre black males are so mad that you go out of their way to prove me wrong. Get at least a 3.0 GPA this semester and show me how out of line I was. Join BOND and work toward becoming one of the few elite men on this campus. Do some community service. Force me to print an apology.

Ladies, you have a responsibility, too. Stop settling for the guys who aren't about anything. You will know which guys are working toward goals. And if you absolutely have to have one particular guy, encourage him to do something with his life.

Guys, I hope you realize what I'm trying to do here. I'm not trying to ridicule you for your complacency; I'm trying to let you see what society sees when they look at you, and I hope that image will inspire you to move away from the practices and stereotypes that plague us. Wake up!

Williams is a fourth-year African-American studies student.

IN YOUR OPINION

Don't take away students' rights

In regards to Ashley Lewis' March 20 letter, congratulations that you're in the Honors College. Here's your cookie. As my friends and I read Lewis' letter, we couldn't help but laugh.

She began by saying all of the perks that come with the Honors College have traditionally gone unchallenged by the student body. Realize that non-honors students have always thought it was unfair that the Honors College receives early registration. We would love to have smaller classes. However, even in your sheltered Maxcy confines, this latest attempt at taking privileges from upperclassmen is going over

the line. Lewis compares honors students to athletes in that they rightfully deserve better housing. But athletes have talents. Honors students were born with the exceptional ability to take biased standardized tests well. Have another cookie. Just because your parents still have your sixth-grade honor roll sticker on their bumper and say you're special doesn't make it Try to ground yourself and

realize you're not superior to anyone. I truly am sorry your friends got "verbally assaulted," but quit your bitching and leave upperclassmen with the rights they have become accustomed to. We were watching seniors move onto the Horseshoe when you were still in grade school.

THIRD-YEAR MARKETING STUDENT

MATT PENNINGTON

Miani needs to be better informed

I just took a break from writing a paper for one of my "elitist" honors classes to read The Gamecock, and all I can say is, "What the hell?" Ann Marie Miani's column on Friday is an obvious example of how misinformed USC is on the subject of honors housing.

I'm one of the "prissy sophomores" who'll be stealing Horseshoe housing away from poor seniors next year, and I'm tired of hearing about it. There was never any "assumption" that, because we live in Maxcy, we should get the rest of the Horseshoe. We didn't ask to live there - the Housing Department came to us first.

I'm sorry that Miani's teachers don't cut her any slack, but ours don't either when we have four tests, three papers, two labs and an Honors dinner with the university president in one week. And most of us didn't make a 1300 on our SAT; we scored higher. My suggestion for Miani would be to drop The Gamecock, pick up a copy of The Princeton Review and study up. I'll even save her a spot in my apartment next year. But leave us alone about decisions we can't control. Remember this when

you're 35 years old and not suffering from lung cancer because Capstone was renovated the summer before your senior year. Be thankful that this university offers the opportunity to live on-campus. Many schools reserve their housing for underclassmen.

TRACY FORD FIRST-YEAR POLITICAL SCIENCE

AND FRENCH STUDENT

Talented students deserve rewards

This "newspaper" has become a bastion of anti-intellectual

sentiment. Anyone who read Ann Marie Miani's column on Friday would certainly agree. She complains that honors students get privileges in almost every aspect of life at USC.

But USC rewards studentathletes in the same way. The lesson is that talent will bring rewards.

Miani continues, "Let's teach them early on that if they want something, they can get it because they're 'elite.'" Now she's making sense. Hypothetically, if you were a potential employer and had to choose between an Honors College graduate who'd received prestigious awards and a regular "C" student who was too hungover or lazy to go to class, who would you pick?

Though her final sentence was meant to be sarcastic, it's also truthful: "You can lament the fact that, if you had gotten a 1300 on your SATs, life at USC might have been better." I couldn't agree with her more. There's nothing wrong with settling for mediocrity, but don't go expecting the world to be handed to you on any silver platters if you do. **RYAN MORTON**

FOURTH-YEAR ANTHROPOLOGY

Submission Policy Letters to the editor should be less than

300 words and include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. Bring letters to Russell House 333 or e-mail gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com. The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space, Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.

Having a senior moment



MARTHA WRIGHT GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

We May 2002 graduates will be leaving prepared.

Here's a deal: These days, moments of reckoning cost \$38.81.

That's the going rate - sales tax included - for a cap, gown, tassel and honor cord at the Russell House Bookstore. It's a uniform every student hopes and dreads to wear, and I bought mine this past week.

As "sayonara" symbols go, the purchase of graduation garb is hard to top. We can't predict the future, but we know what we'll be wearing to greet it. Formal caps and gowns, first mandated in mid-13th century English universities, were based on medieval clerics' robes lined with wool or rabbit fur. May 2002 graduates will take the world by storm in 100 percent polyester.

Still, most graduating seniors are ready for that world. There are a lot of us chomping at the bit. This past fall, 4,275 people were classified as seniors at USC-Columbia, and 334 were, like me, enrolled in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

My brain is packed with thoughts about starting life after school. Superstitiously, I feel that completing graduationrelated errands hastens its arrival. And so buying commencement regalia has taken on importance.

I didn't try on the outfit in the bookstore, except the hat (it had to be screened for willingness to accommodate fluffedy Southern hair). When you're buying ceremonial clothes, who's looking for a perfect fit, anyway?

A robe is a robe is a robe. But when I brought my graduation gear back to my dorm, I decided to try it on. I unpacked and put on the billowy, black gown, knowing I'd never be able to redo the incomprehensible origami that made it fit in its crinkly plastic

Next was the mortarboard, another variation on medieval dress. The black cloth didn't quite fit the broad, flat top. At first, I mistakenly put it on backward, the Eddie Munster widow's peak sitting squarely between my eyebrows. Static caused the tassel's tendrils to splay, and a brassy "2002" hung awkwardly horizontal. There

was little glamour here. Looking in the mirror, I could imagine myself in the parade of graduates on May 10, all of us in baggy black robes and flat hats. looking like frumpy and somber coasters. This is what we'll wear as we receive our "Have-A-Nice-Life" handshakes from our respective deans and USC President John Palms.

In my room, not a graduate but dressed the part, I thought about my haste to leave this academic world for the world of work. By now, I'm sure a lot of us have come down with senioritis as we tally our credits and earn the GPA we need to graduate. But the cause isn't impatience or naivete or a "hurry up" attitude peculiar to our generation.

Instead, I think this eagerness to go is a sign we've been well educated. All that we've learned from professors and mentors and advisers and friends is ready to be tested in the real world, where class rank and GPA and honors are wholly irrelevant.

On the day that marks that transition, we'll wear our tilted caps, shapeless gowns, tangled tassels and confused cords. But because of their

symbolism, they'll be a perfect fit.

Wright is a fourth-year print iournalism student.