

Funding higher education is the key to fixing K-12



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State legislators need to take the long-term view

Despite the budget crises in recent years, a lack of money is not the greatest barrier between the state and a better public education system. The true obstacle is the shortsightedness of our state lawmakers, who are showing themselves to be little more than average products of

our tottering education system.

The latest legislature-furnished setback came last week, when Sen. John Kuhn filibustered Bill 3899 until the session ended, effectively killing it. This uncharacteristically progressive proposal would have given \$250 million earmarked for research to the state's public colleges and universities. USC, Clemson and MUSC, the state's largest research universities, were to receive \$230 million.

Sen. Kuhn's reason for condemning the bill? He claims that it isn't fair to give so much to the "Big Three" and that it would be foolish to throw so much money at higher education when K-12 is in such sorry shape.

But while Sen. Kuhn may be right about the condition of K-12, he couldn't be more wrong about the effects of a bill like 3899 on both higher and lower education. Legislators like Sen. Kuhn fail to understand that any investment in higher education is an investment in K-12 as well.

If our state's colleges and universities are given the funds necessary to improve, they will attract more and brighter students from other states and will keep more native students from attending college out of state. Many students settle where they graduate from college, so the quality of the state job market will improve. Such growth will bring businesses and industries

to South Carolina. With them will come increased wages and a better state economy. Resulting increased property tax revenues will provide more money for K-12 education, supplying the funding necessary to hire needed teachers and build needed schools.

This fix is not a quick one. Unfortunately, there is no swift solution, and lawmakers must realize that throwing money at school districts only results in state budget shortfalls and a great sucking, flushing sound.

To date, the state's efforts to improve education have proved to be little more than political Band-Aids, designed to cover, not to cure. However, education, as it currently exists in South

Carolina, is more like a swollen tumor than a cut. If our legislators fail to recognize this and to take meaningful corrective action, the prognosis is bleak indeed.

North Carolina's Research Triangle provides ample evidence that this tactic is effective. Instead, budget cuts are forcing universities to increase tuition, an action that only discourages out-of-state students from matriculating here.

The members of our legislature are proving to be fine politicians but poor legislators. Their shortsightedness could cost us all far more than a few hundred bucks increase in tuition.

Joshua Hanley is a fourth-year philosophy student.

IN YOUR OPINION

NAACP improving, doesn't need help

In your Wednesday, June 4 issue, Joshua Hanley wrote an article entitled, "NAACP is unwilling to address important issues." I was very interested in the issues that Mr. Hanley considered important to the NAACP, especially since Mr. Hanley is not an African-American.

This is not to say that anyone but an African-American can write about the NAACP, but how can whites tell African-Americans the issues that should be important to them?

I agree with Mr. Hanley on some of his points, but it disappoints me that, just like Jayson Blair, who he mentions in his article, Mr. Hanley didn't do all of his homework.

I am an African-American, a former member of the NAACP. I did not renew my membership years ago because I did not like the organization's reliance on the sound bite instead of tackling issues with bite. The current national leadership has shown a new direction

however, and I am considering re-joining.

Like Mr. Hanley, I agree that crying "racism" at every turn can cause people to dismiss the real issues and I agree that the "flag" itself is no barrier to African-American advancement; the thought process and philosophy that flies it is.

In his column Mr. Hanley defends the traffic restrictions at Black Bike Week because seven people died; however, the week before, at the Harley Davidson Rally ten people died, so the difference in restrictions seems strange.

Mr. Hanley also justifies businesses closing or altering their operating hours because of weekend long traffic jams. It seems unlikely that morning rush hour was choked by bikers who finished partying only hours before. Did Myrtle Beach or the businesses not know the bikers were coming? Was there no planning? Ever hear of car pools, vans? No wonder the economy of South Carolina is so bad; businesses are finding excuses to close

instead of solutions to make money. I wonder why?

Mr. Hanley, the NAACP needs to improve its handling of issues, but let its members determine which ones are important to it. The reason the NAACP still exists is demonstrated in the thought process behind two bumper stickers I saw side by side on a pickup truck recently. One stated, "United We Stand" over an American flag. The other stated, "It's OUR flag" over a Confederate flag. Make up your mind.

RONALD J. JEFFCOAT
USC ALUMNUS, CLASS OF 1982

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. E-mail letters to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.

ONLINE

This week's question

Is the new 12 to 16 hour bracket system for tuition fair? Vote at www.dailygamecock.com.

Winners and Sinners



USC BASEBALL Tramples over UNC, 14-4, with a pair of home runs to boot.

JOAN STEWART Good luck in the future at Hamilton College. Yay liberal arts!

MEDIA MOGULS FCC allows programming of 10 percent more Americans at a time.

DOUBLE MAJORS As if the sweat and tears of a double major weren't enough, USC wants another \$240.

MARTHA STEWART Design diva loses \$400 million for the sake of \$200,000.

Gamecock Quotables

"What you're learning in a liberal education is how to find information, how to evaluate it, how to assimilate it and how to use it. What we need is a less specific body of knowledge and more of an ability to adapt. All of the research nowadays suggests that people will change

jobs very often in their lifetimes. In any job you take you're going to need to read, to write, to think analytically.

DR. JOAN STEWART
LIBERAL ARTS DEAN
ON THE VALUE OF A LIBERAL ARTS
EDUCATION IN MODERN SOCIETY

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

A story in The Mix in Wednesday's paper should have stated that Jules Olitski, Helen Frankenthaler and Sir Anthony Caro exhibited works at the Columbia Museum of Art.

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