

THE GAMECOCK

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IN OUR OPINION

Abbas, Sharon must reconcile

Last year's notable death of Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat and the subsequent ascension of Mahmoud Abbas to the prime ministership of the Palestinian Authority through democratic elections offers a glimmer of hope for the prospect of peace in the Middle East. Progress toward a resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people will require significant steps and concessions by both sides, and the period of transition for the Palestinians is an excellent opportunity for this to happen.

Our support can force both sides to the table and ensure longevity of cooperation from the Israelis.

Unfortunately, Israel has suspended ties with the Palestinian government until the latter takes steps to end terrorism against Israel, a move that can only be characterized as illogical. While Arafat was able to moderate some of the more extreme groups because of his history with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Abbas lacks that charismatic control, and to insist he has such power effectively gives extremist groups veto power over the diplomatic process. Israel is correct to insist on their domestic security as central to any agreement, but simply building a wall or fence is an insult to Palestinian demands for statehood, as is the tacit approval the Israeli government gives to Jewish settlers in the Palestinian territories.

It is essential that the United States play a central role in brokering any agreement, due to our ties with Israel, our vested interest in Middle Eastern stability and our implicit superpower status. Just like the successful Oslo agreement in 1993, our support can force both sides to the table and ensure longevity of cooperation from the Israelis. President Bush has made his public support for an independent Palestinian state clear, which is a positive development towards long-term regional peace and the end to radical Islamic terrorism that targets Americans.

Ultimately, Abbas' success on his ability to win the freedom from Israel to build an independent society and economy that promises a hopeful future for young Palestinians.

IT'S YOUR RIGHT

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GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

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ABOUT THE GAMECOCK

EDITOR
Michael LaForgia

DESIGN DIRECTOR
Chas McCarthy

COPY DESK CHIEF
Steven Van Haren

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Jane Fielden, Katie Miles

CONTACT INFORMATION

Offices on third floor of the Russell House. The Editor's office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 3-5 p.m.
Editor: gamecockeditor@gwm.sc.edu
News: gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu
Viewpoints: gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu
The Mix: gamecockfeatures@gwm.sc.edu
Sports: gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu
Public Affairs: gamecockPR@yahoo.com
Online: www.dailygamecock.com
Newsroom: 777-7726; Sports: 777-7182
Editor's Office: 777-3914

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S&K



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Sir, I have not yet begun to write

Provocative message mistaken for hostility toward the overweight

I generally choose to ignore responses to my column. However, given the nature of the subject and the mixed responses I encountered across campus, I felt it necessary to clarify a few misinterpreted points regarding my article last week.

I understand that with our society's over-emphasis on unrealistic physical aesthetics, eating disorders and unhealthy lifestyles abound. It was not my intention to belittle overweight students, or to contribute to these unhealthy self-images. It was also not my intention to discourage them from pursuing realistic fitness goals. I actually don't write the headlines accompanying my articles, and I can see how the headline last week could have created assumptions about the subject of my rant. Let me clarify that my article was not addressing overweight students in the gym, but rather those who annually invade the gym in ephemeral hordes as a result of their New Year's resolutions.

It seems as though each year, students with bad gym etiquette rush in and occupy the equipment. I'm glad you've decided to pursue fitness goals, I really am. However, I see it every year — guys rush in expecting to double their max in two weeks, and give up when they don't look like Arnold at



CURTIS CHOW

FOURTH-YEAR ECONOMICS STUDENT

the end of their self-imposed time limit. Princesses sit around in groups talking to each other and checking out the Arnold wannabes while occupying the equipment for extended periods of time. You really are accomplishing nothing — and all because some stupid fad that happens on the first day of each year.

This brings me to my next point: Anyone who needs the New Year as an excuse to get into shape probably doesn't have any real resolve. It's nothing more than a trendy bandwagon to jump on, and I can only describe it as idiocy. If you want to get in shape, don't do it under the premise of a "New Year's resolution." Do it under the premise of health, discipline and self-betterment. You simply need to resolve to do it and follow through, holding yourself accountable for your own well-being rather than for some yearly fad.

Everyone needs to start somewhere, and I can assure you that no gym "regular" will look down on you because you're not already what you seek to become through a regular workout routine. I've had a regular

workout routine for years and I'm still not exactly Mr. Universe. We will look down on you, however, if you have bad gym etiquette and are one of those who invade the gym with all the other mindless automatons just to occupy the equipment and parking for a few weeks.

And no, we don't really pull up chairs to hold group discussions about you after you leave. That has happened less than 10 times in my experience. People who go to the gym regularly usually don't like to be distracted from their workout and are generally oblivious to anything outside of their immediate activity. If you find that people are staring at you, it's either because you're a severe hottie, or because you're doing something dangerous.

I think that you'll actually find the gym community to be fairly supportive of your ambitions. Strangers are usually willing to spot you or let you work in with them. If you have any questions, you shouldn't feel silly asking — it's much better than hurting yourself because you aren't doing the exercise properly. Everyone has been in a similar position, and we respect you more for asking than for dangerously trying to figure things out on your own. If you have true resolve to meet your fitness goals over a realistic time span, then by all means, press on. If you're one of those New Year's resolution invaders, then as I said last week, I entreat you to either quit now or to prove me wrong.

IN YOUR OPINION

Wolfe misses point of Bush Pell policy

In his column ("Bush's Pell policy out of line," Jan. 10), I'm saddened to say that Wes Wolfe has completely forsaken the company of respectable columnists in favor of inarticulate drivel that can only be described as libelous.

Wolfe raises the issue of the recent Pell Grant funding shortages, citing recent estimates that about 1.3 million students nationwide will either see their grant limited or eliminated entirely. He goes on to acknowledge that the federal government will save around \$300 million annually under the new funding structures. Unfortunately that's the last remotely logical sentence I could find in the entire column. The rest of the story babbles incoherently about Mr. Wolfe's opposition to the war in Iraq, attacks Congressman Joe Wilson for trying to keep South Carolina military bases open and actually includes the following statement: "If you're in college, you're not in Iraq, and our intrepid president needs more cannon fodder to send to that quagmire by the Tigris."

That's a pretty inflammatory statement for anyone in the media (The Gamecock only loosely classified therein) to make without as much as a hint of actual fact supplied for evidence. Wolfe's own moronic attempts to libel the President and

Congressman Wilson aside, I'd like to examine the Pell Grant issue once more on the off chance that Wes might not have fully grasped the situation.

The Pell Grant is one of numerous federal financial aid programs enacted in order to assist college students' pay for their educations. It is by no means the sole source of funding available, though it's particularly attractive because it maintains loose restrictions regarding the ways in which grant money must be allocated and does not require the student to pay back any portion of the grant upon graduation. While it is true that some students will see their grant money reduced in the near future, those students are by no means whatsoever precluded from receiving additional funds — most notably several merit-based scholarships. Any in-state student who maintains a B-average in college automatically becomes eligible for the LIFE scholarship, good for almost the entire cost of attending USC.

Even if academic scholarships are not a possibility for students, they need only apply for federal low-interest loans to subsidize their educational costs. Of course these loans must be repaid upon graduation, but the interest accrued is much lower than private loan rates. The basic premise is that the government will pay for any students to go to school on the understanding that the students should work hard during school, and

after having done so, enter the workforce and begin repaying the debts they owe. I struggle here to find exactly what is so objectionable about the expectation that all students receiving federal aid work hard during college so that they might be able to pay off their school debts.

The extremely liberal idea that Wes takes to be the Gospel — that the government should act as one giant ATM providing cash on demand for any and everybody — is under increasingly relentless assault throughout American society. Given the innumerable tasks charged to the federal government and the finite amount of funding it has to meet its obligations, I see no problem with establishing priorities for the allotment of federal monies. In doing so, deficit reduction (the proposed use of the \$300 million saved) should take precedence. If Wolfe would but climb down from his soapbox he might realize the veracity of such a claim, though of course that would require taking a break from his pitiful attempts to vilify Republicans.

CHRIS SPEAKS

Fourth-year political science and religious studies student

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ID worries shouldn't encumber students

Carolina should leave SSNs behind to prevent student privacy worries

As great as Carolina is, we all recognize that there are some things we should change. Students always want more parking, we always want our meal plans to cover a little more and we all want to be assured of our ticket to the Carolina-Clemson football game. But one issue that has received more exposure in recent years is that of identity security. In the Oct. 1, 2004, issue of The Gamecock, Erica Kolmip penned a column on the risk of student identity theft at USC.

Kolmip focused mostly on the issues surrounding identity theft, including the impacts a lack of identity security is likely to have on students.

In contrast, I'd like to focus on the use of the Social Security number as our primary identifier here at the university. You've used it time and time again.

When buying books at the bookstore, you write it on the receipt. When you forget your ID card, you give it to the cashier at the GMP. When turning in the Scantron for your large class, you bubble in your Social Security number so your professor grades the right student. One would think that such a frequent use of these numbers would greatly increase the likelihood of identity theft on our campus.

In 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported, "Nearly half of colleges nationwide still use Social Security numbers as the primary means to track students in academic databases."

This means that conversely, more than half of the colleges surveyed have concluded that the use of Social Security numbers is inappropriate and have therefore jettisoned such usage in favor of a better way to track students.

The issue of using SSNs has been addressed in two ways: by the institution itself and by the state in which the institution is based. At the University of Texas, students still use the SSN as an identifier, but services have been provided without the requirement of frequently giving out the SSN. At Virginia Commonwealth and Texas A&M, students have been given randomly generated numbers in place of their SSNs.

States have also joined the debate. In Kentucky, students are given the option of choosing another identifier in place of their SSN. In the states of Arizona, Colorado, New York and West Virginia, institutions are prevented from using the SSN as a student's primary identifier.

Now we turn our attention back home. There are two options. USC can choose to join other schools around the nation by assigning randomly generated numbers to its students, keeping the same system in place while removing the profound significance of students' current identifiers. Or, the state of South Carolina can enact legislation preventing universities and colleges within the state from maintaining the current harmful system.

Neither option grasps the attention of movers and shakers at the university and in the State House. Enacting the system within the university will undoubtedly require hundreds of man-hours in addition to the financial resources needed to reassign identifiers for 25,000 students. Enacting the system from the chambers of the legislature is likely to anger the already-frustrated institutions of higher learning which might be inclined to raise tuition to cover the unfunded mandates levied upon South Carolina schools.

However, no one can deny that identity security is absolutely crucial to the personal safety of every student. This is a change that I think all students are willing to support and a change that the administration — and if necessary, the state — should take into serious consideration.

WINNERS AND SINNERS

U.S. SEN. LINDSAY GRAHAM S.C.'s senior senator points out problems to overcome, on the civic and family level, to achieve Martin Luther King's dream.
COLUMBIA COLLEGE Students donate 20 tons of yams to the Harvest Hope Food Bank.
SPACE TRAVEL A probe of Saturn's moon Titan sends back to Earth remarkable photos of a place with an atmosphere denser than our planet's.

TONY MCDANIEL The Tennessee defensive lineman — a native of Columbia — was suspended indefinitely after being implicated in an on-campus assault.
ARIEL SHARON Israeli prime minister refuses to have peace talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.
COLD WEATHER An arctic chill descends on Columbia after several days of beautiful skies and warm temperatures.