

Random drug testing should be eliminated

The University Senate today may recommend revoking the Athletic Department's mandatory random drug-testing policy. Although the Senate's decision would not be a mandate, a ruling to eliminate the current policy would be encouraging.

The motion, forwarded by Student Senator Dan Thoma, would call for the Athletic Department to limit drug testing for athletes only in the case of probable cause. It also recommends the department strengthen its current drug education and counseling programs.

(Thoma also has suggested all athletes go through the IMPACT program, a drug-education course. Although the initial cost of doing this would be greater than the existing drug-testing program, future costs would be substantially lower because only new athletes would have to take the course.)

The motion proposes a sensible alternative to the current drug-testing policy — a policy we believe is too extreme. Presently, all athletes are required to submit urine samples to be eligible to play. If an athlete should refuse to consent to a drug test, he or she essentially is presumed guilty of taking drugs and is barred from participating in school athletics. Similarly, if a student withdraws consent to be tested, the Athletic Department again presumes guilt.

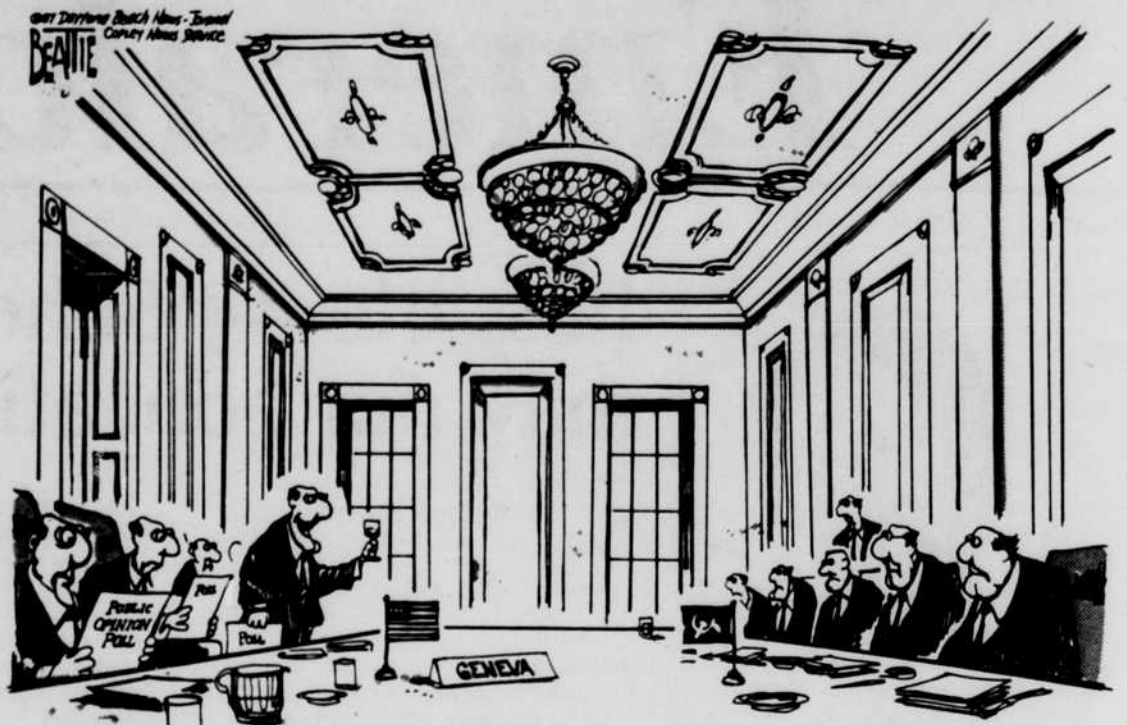
The obvious objection to this practice is that a student must waive constitutional rights in order to participate in a University program. The Athletic Department's current policy assumes an athlete is guilty of doing drugs until the athlete proves otherwise — in other words, student athletes are guilty until proven innocent. This policy is nothing less than coercion and should be revoked.

Moreover, questions have been raised about the kind of testing being done. Currently, the Athletic Department only tests for street drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, speed, etc., and a few over-the-counter prescription drugs. The Athletic Department does not, however, test for steroids and certain other performance enhancing substances.

The University maintains that it does not test for these types of drugs because it would be too expensive. There is good reason to suspect the use of steroids among college athletes is widespread, and the adverse effects steroids have on the body is well documented. If the University's main concern lies in the health of student athletes — as it claims it is — then it should be testing for these drugs.

The University has sent drafts of the current drug-testing policy to the state attorney general for review. The University should not wait for the attorney general's findings, however. If the current drug-testing policy is found to be unconstitutional, the University has inadvertently set itself up for potential lawsuits by disgruntled athletes who've unwillingly consented to drug testing.

Another concern is that if the Athletic Department's current drug-testing procedure is not modified, other groups of the student body may be targeted for drug testing. Although unlikely, it would be a small step for the University to make drug testing mandatory for all students. The University's drug-testing policy already has gone too far; we hope the Senate recommends revoking it.



"The administration is anxious to sign a damage control... I mean ARMS control agreement."

Letters

Understanding

When I decided to return to school at the age of 39, I was accepted to five graduate math departments. I chose the University over the other four because my conversations with faculty members at all five schools showed me that the math department here was more oriented toward human values than any of the others.

A year and a half of experience has emphatically reinforced that initial impression. My contacts with department head Charlie Wright and his assistant Mary Fulton have demonstrated that concern for individual students is a conscious policy of the department.

The tragic story of the suicide of John Fisher, as published March 5, contained unwarranted, unverified criticisms of the department's curriculum and its treatment of Mr. Fisher. No statement from any knowledgeable math department person was given.

Where did Alan Stein get the credentials to claim that Fisher had to study things which he "shouldn't have to study?" When topics for math courses are chosen, it is done by experienced educators, with input

from other affected departments (such as the education school in this case). Did Fisher's friend have some special expertise which was lacking in our faculty?

Any responsible article would not have confined itself to one-sided quotes from an understandably upset, but ignorant person. The fact is that any faculty or staff member in the math department would have gone to great lengths to prevent what happened to John Fisher. They (we!) are all decent, caring people.

Stan VerNooy
GTF, math

Time travel

It's not solely the professional historian's domain to speculate about the past to explain the present. In fact, we all can and do just that. That's why in the case of Blake Louis Sliter, it seems imperative that we try to rationalize our campus' biggest phenomenon pretty soon, lest his legacy grows beyond belief, and then we WILL have to hire a professional.

Conceive with me now that we've drifted back through time, through the mist and haziness normally associated with such travel, and we're suddenly unaccounted-for guests at the Sliter's about 10 years ago. Listen...you can hear Mrs. Sliter pounding on the bathroom door.

"Blake! Blake, open this door! What are you doing in there?"

"Um, I'm writing a letter to the editor, Mother."

Blake, if you don't open this door right now...!"

Well, safe to say, Blake has remained adroitly indisposed of ever since. Even today, one can see in his letters the cathartic release they impart him.

Unfortunately though, the victims of his barbs are real people with real feelings, and, according to his latest letter, when some of these people call him to get their own cathartic release, they're instead further wracked by having to talk to his machine.

Blake: we're glad you're psychologically healthy, but you'd better learn that others can be driven over the edge. Nobody likes to be labeled, especially those that can't or won't adequately defend their social practices in this forum.

Tim Jaques
Undeclared

Apron strings

I am glad that I am not an Australian. They are so willing to give up "petty" freedoms without a struggle. We Americans have a Bill of Rights that keeps the president, court, Legislature, and private citizen organizations from abusing our individual freedoms.

Braille, in his letter (ODE, Mar. 3), states that the monetary savings by the majority of Australians through a mandatory seat belt law outweighs the cost to individual freedom for the minority.

This is the exact reason our founding fathers, not the wealthy or the politicians, but the common citizen, insisted on a Bill of Rights as a condition for accepting the Constitution.

America is ruled by the majority without oppression of the minority. Perhaps the seat belt law is a petty issue, but the consequences it has for the government's ability to control the actions of the individual make it a harmful precedent.

Cost to society has become a good excuse for controlling actions which would otherwise be considered the risk of the individual. This motive for preventing the free exercise of one's rights could be extended to things such as tobacco usage, even when it doesn't interfere with someone else. Both public health and private organizations lose an enormous amount of money due to tobacco usage. Prohibition could also extend to activities which are considered dangerous, like sky diving.

I get tired of people who think they need to take care of me. I don't want to trade the apron strings of my mother for the government.

D.M. Odell

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