

## NEWS FEATURES

# Study: Many seniors lack basic knowledge

By Janice Simon

■ The Cameron Collegian  
Cameron U.  
and Wendy Bounds  
■ The Daily Tar Heel  
U. of North Carolina

One out of four college seniors surveyed in a recent Gallup Poll could not name the century in which Christopher Columbus landed in the New World.

The survey, commissioned by the National Endowment for the Humanities, provides dismaying evidence that students are not learning much of what an educated person should know, according to an NEH spokesman.

The results also said that 58 percent of the seniors surveyed didn't know Shakespeare wrote "The Tempest," and 55 percent couldn't identify the Magna Carta. Twenty-three percent said Karl Marx's phrase, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need," is part of the U.S. Constitution.

"The survey results prove colleges need to revise their curricula so that undergrads get a broad education," said NEH chairwoman Lynne Cheney.

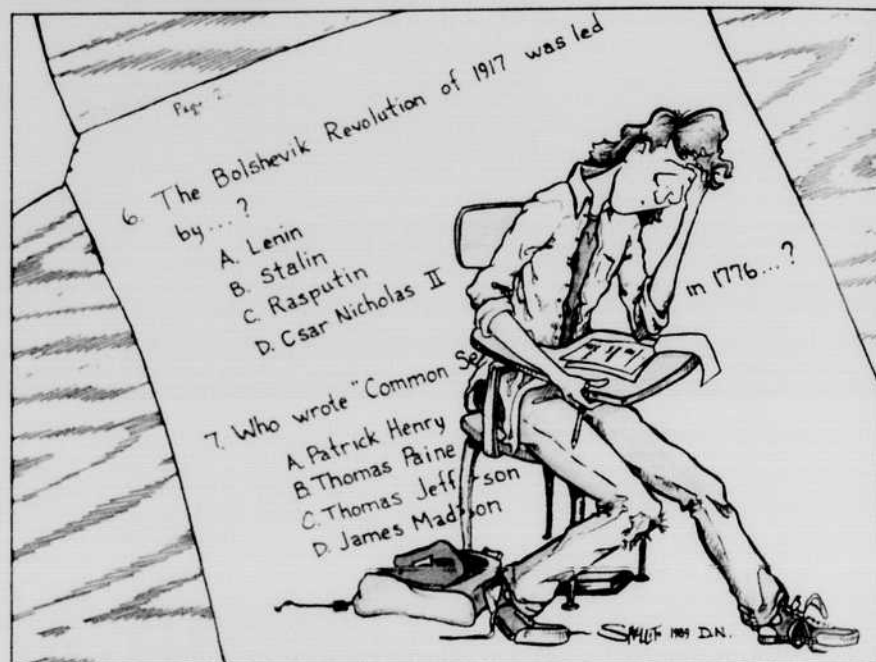
Cheney also released a NEH report urging that all students be required to take 50 credit hours of humanities courses to graduate.

According to the report, "Students who approach the end of their college years without knowing the basic landmarks of history and thought are unlikely to have reflected on their meaning. A required course of studies — a core of learning — can ensure that students have opportunities to know the literature, philosophy, institutions and art of our own and other cultures."

The survey tested 696 college seniors from 67 universities across the United States. The test consisted of 87 questions on a variety of concepts and landmarks NEH felt are common knowledge. Seventy-one percent of those surveyed came from public schools and 29 percent from private institutions. Ninety-three percent of the students were non-humanities majors.

According to the NEH report, more than one-third of the 87 questions were originally designed so high school 17-year-olds could answer a majority of them. Five questions also came from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service test administered to prospective American citizens.

If the test results were graded, 55 percent of the students would have received a grade of F and another 20 percent a D. Only 11 percent would have received an A or B grade.



BRIAN SHELLITO, DAILY NEBRASKAN, U. OF NEBRASKA

However, 64 percent of the seniors surveyed knew the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in the Union. Eighty-four percent knew Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy and the controversy surrounding him focused on "investigations of individuals suspected of Communist activities."

The validity of the test and NEH's policy recommendations have been questioned by some educators and students. "I'm not sure even if the students are taught these facts, that they will remember them," said Richard White, dean of arts and sciences at Trinity College. "I might have trouble with some of those questions myself."

Thomas Goldstein, executive director of the American Association of University Students, a group representing college student governments, said, "The test itself is circumspect. Do I have to know these things to be a good citizen?"

Cheney's report suggests a strict core curriculum concentrating in five main areas: cultures and civilizations, foreign language, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences. Colleges adopting the program would require specific courses for freshmen, sophomores and some juniors.

Cheney recommended the classes be taught in small classes by a school's most distinguished faculty.

## SAT

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The bias may stem from questions on the SAT, particularly those using examples that are familiar to only one group, Stockwell said.

For example, a question on the SAT might ask students to compare "mercenary: soldier" to other pairs and find a pair with the same relationship. Because men may be more comfortable than women with a question about soldiers, that question favors men by 16 percent, according to FairTest.

Statistics released by the College Board indicate that the average combined SAT score achieved by women in 1988 was 875. The total average for both

sexes combined was 934. A combined score of 1,600 is perfect.

"There are score differences between men and women on the SAT," said Nancy Burton, program director for the admissions testing program of ETS. However, she said the differences do not stem from a bias in test questions but rather from the different educations men and women receive.

Men tend to take science and math classes, she said, and women take liberal arts classes.

Burton also said each SAT question is checked for bias five times before it becomes part of one of the nine new SATs created each year.

A representative of the College Board, the group that sponsors the SAT, also said many questions that may seem

biased — because of the examples they use — are not biased at all.

In questions on ratio, for example, men and women score equally well on a question that involved a cooking recipe and a question on jogging.

To examine the difference in men's and women's scores, ETS and Rutgers U. are conducting a study of the SAT to determine if the test accurately predicts academic potential. However, Ray Nicosia, manager of media relations for ETS, said the test is not a direct response to concerns about gender difference in SAT scores.

"The SAT is always being looked at for a variety of different reasons, and ETS does work with a variety of college and universities on these studies," he said. "These studies are ongoing."

## Student sanctioned

A U. of Mississippi student suspected of plagiarizing information from *Seventeen* magazine for an article that appeared in *The Daily Mississippian* and the October 1988 *U. The National College Newspaper* has received unspecified sanctions from the university.

The Administrative Discipline Committee sanctioned the student after a blue-ribbon committee of professional journalists and others determined that portions of her article were plagiarized, said Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Jerry Lee Westbrook.

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## FBI releases crime data; schools question accuracy

By Jeff Perrine  
■ The Daily Lobo  
U. of New Mexico

If recent FBI reports are accurate, the U. of New Mexico is the most dangerous place to attend college and Michigan's Macomb Community College is the safest. But police from both schools question the report's accuracy, and the FBI admits that only a small percentage of schools nationwide provided information for the report.

At the U. of New Mexico, 53 violent crimes were reported to the FBI for 1988,

the highest number nationwide. But according to UNM Police Chief Barry Cox, the actual number of violent crimes at UNM should have been 20. A campus police staff member sent in the wrong data, said Cox, who has sent a letter to the Justice Department asking for a correction. "They were counting simple assaults, not aggravated assaults," he said. Aggravated assaults, but not simple assaults, are classified as violent crimes.

Macomb Community College, located in Detroit's suburbs, reported only one

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