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completed next June



STUDENT VOICE

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University evaluating smoke-free campus

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As more states and businesses are becoming smoke-free, UW-River Falls Student Health Services is looking into whether or not the campus should also go smoke-free for health reasons.

Currently, UWRF holds a 25-foot policy. There are posters in buildings on campus displaying the phrase, “Be sweet, stand 25 feet.”

According to a spring 2008 survey



Keven Syverson

conducted by Student Health services, 82.7 percent of surveyed students say they are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke on their way to classes and 48.6 percent of faculty members agree.

Pennsylvania recently passed a law that all their state schools would be smoke-free.

“It’s starting to be a bit of a trend,” Keven Syverson, health education coordinator, said. “Secondhand smoke is dangerous.”

Another issue associated with smoking on campus is the litter

generated by cigarette butts. According to cigarette litter.org, cigarettes can take years to decompose and are harmful to wildlife.

Of the surveyed students, 88.2 percent and 92 percent of surveyed faculty said they agreed with the statement, “Litter caused by smoking detracts from the appearance of this campus.”

“We’re a campus that wants to go greener,” Syverson said.

The debate is whether or not this would affect students and faculty negatively.

“As much as I don’t like smoking, it wouldn’t be fair to the students

who do smoke. I wish they would clean up their butts more, but it’s just a fact of life with that around,” student Dominic Ostberg said.

Another interviewed student not only said she felt it was unfair to the students who smoke, but also that it was an act of discrimination.

“It would be terrible if our campus was smoke-free. It’s taking away student’s rights,” student Angel Brellie said.

Syverson said he disagrees that the move would be an act of discrimination.

“Nothing in the Constitution makes it a right to smoke or not

smoke. It’s not a rights issue,” Syverson said.

Going smoke-free would also prevent students from starting to smoke or to keep smoking, Syverson said. Student Health Services considers anyone who has had a cigarette in the past 30 days a smoker.

“It wouldn’t bother me, I don’t smoke. The 25 feet rule is pretty good, though,” student Reese Lutgen said.

Data from the survey that was sent to 2,000 students and 900 faculty members showed that more than half of surveyed students would

See **Smoke-free** page 3

Design phase begins for HHP building

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The design phase has begun for the \$54 million health and human performances project, which is expected to break ground in late 2011.

“It will recreate the physical education program of the whole campus into one big complex,” Campus Planner Dale Braun said.

The plan is to completely demolish Karges and the Nelson Center. The project will include a new gym, dance studio, racquetball courts, pool, strength and condition center, locker rooms, aerobics studio and physiology lab.

The project could also include moving fields, expanding parking and a new road extending from Cemetery Road and South 6th Street up to the new complex.

“It will be a 200,000 square foot space, 33 percent bigger than the student center,” Braun said. “This will be the biggest project ever done on campus.”

The HHP program has had issues because of inadequate facilities. The Karges Center has a poor ventilation system and no air conditioning, causing students to always be either be too hot or cold, and the University’s swimming pool is too small to host events, Debra Allyn, health and human performances professor, said.

“When the heaters are working it is too hard to hear in class,” Allyn said.

Currently there is a lack of equipment and technology for

some of the exercise science labs.

“The health and human services are not adequate to help us apply what we’ve been learning,” Jake Verner, HHP senior, said. “The floors are falling apart, the tiles shift at your feet and the equipment is the same as what it was in the early 1990s.”

The new facility will allow for more hands on experience and application, Allyn said.

The money for this project comes from state general fees, parking fees, the UW-River Falls Foundation and student fees, Braun said. Last March the Wisconsin Building Commission allocated more than \$1 million to UWRF for the project.

UWRF students, staff and faculty put forth tremendous effort in the spring of 2007 for the University to receive state funding. A petition of 1,700 signatures and letters written by HHP staff members was presented to legislators in Madison.

“A number of Health and Human Performance students encouraged students to sign a petition in support of the funding for the building,” Allyn said. “Then three students took the petitions to Madison and actually met some of the representatives.”

Faculty and staff have been working on the planning of the building for 20 years, Allyn said.

“To have an architect team for the pre-design phase is exciting. We can see some light at the end of the tunnel,” Allyn said.

“It will be a 200,000 square foot space, 33 percent bigger than the student center. This will be the biggest project ever done on campus.”

Dale Braun,
campus planner

Global Drum Project rocks UWRF



Sally King/Student Voice

A Global Drum Project musician performs for a sold-out crowd of students and community members in the North Hall Auditorium Thursday, Oct. 16. The event was a part of the Wyman Series and celebrated the anniversary of the album “Planet Drum,” featuring percussionists from India, Africa, Cuba and North America.

UW-River Falls enrollment center awaiting approval

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UW-River Falls administration officials are planning to combine the offices of admissions, registrars, financial aid and accounts receivable into one location in Hagestad Hall that would be known as the enrollment services center. The center will serve to expedite and improve the enrollment process for students, Campus Planner Dale Braun said.

The proposal calls for about 20 thousand

square feet of space and will cost approximately \$4 million, Braun said.

The new facility would allow students to speak with a staff member who has been trained in a broad area of enrollment services.

Students will be able to ask questions at a single transaction center as opposed to having to ask questions at the four different offices spread throughout North and South Halls.

“Co-location and integration allow staff to become more efficient so that we can do our work better” Alan Tuchtenhagen, associate

vice chancellor for enrollment services, said.

The project is awaiting acceptance by the UW System Board of Regents. Upon acceptance it will be presented to the Wisconsin legislature and must attain final approval with the governor. Project approval is expected by July 2009. Construction would begin sometime next year and take about six months, Braun said.

The new enrollment center would be located where the cafeteria once resided in the east side of Hagestad Hall. The plan is part of a

larger University initiative to develop Hagestad into a student support services hub. Textbook Services moved to Hagestad and there are plans to move more services in when the athletic center receives a new building, Tuchtenhagen said.

The University hopes to have the building fully transitioned within the next four years, he said.

See **Enrollment Center** page 3

VOICE SHORTS

It’s time to “rake a difference”

This Saturday, Oct. 25, is “Rake a Difference Day.” This event provides UWRF students the opportunity to volunteer and "rake a difference" in the River Falls community. The event begins at noon at the University Center. Students who participate will be sent out into the community to rake the lawns of community members who may not be able to do so themselves. For more information contact ellen.bares@uwrf.edu

CPR classes offered on campus

There will be a certification class in CPR on three different dates: Oct. 28, Nov. 3 and Nov. 5. Classes will be from 6 to 10 p.m. each night. You only need to attend one of the classes for certification. Larry Hennemann will be back to teach the classes. Classes will be held in the Chippewa Room, UC. Cost is \$60, payable by check only . This price includes the training, a booklet, and a mask. Make out the check to UW-River Falls and send to Connie Smith, Room 25H, North Hall. Don't forget to include your preference for the date. Also include your name as you want it to appear on your certificate and a phone number. You will receive a certification card from the American Heart Association on the night of your class once you complete all requirements. There is a limit of 12 people per class.

Haunted side of UWRF revealed

Haunted UWRF tours will be held on Oct. 30 starting at the Kleinpell Fine Arts building at 7, 7:30, 8, 8:30, and 9 p.m. The cost is \$1. Grimm Hall will host its annual Haunted Hall as well. Community members are welcome 6-7:30 p.m. and campus members from 8-9:30 p.m. Admission is \$3 or two non-perishable food items.

Voice Shorts compiled by
Natalie Conrad

UWRF and FVTC move towards joint BA program

Sara Pitcher
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UW-River Falls and Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) are working on a 2+2 Agriculture and Transfer Agreement Program which would entail students spending two years at each school to complete a baccalaureate degree.

"What we're attempting to do is develop a program which would allow them to receive two years of credit for their work at a technology college system and apply that, not as a course by course transfer, but as a program-to-program transfer into our program where they could conceivably complete their degree in another two years in a baccalaureate degree," Associate Professor of Agriculture Engineering Technology Jerry Nechville said.

A grant that was written by Fox Valley Technical College indicates the importance of Wisconsin students receiving a four-year baccalaureate degree instead of just a two year associate degree. It is estimated that 30 to 50 percent that enroll in the agriculture technology program at UWRF are from FVTC. However, there is still a need for expanding transferring so that students can achieve a baccalaureate degree at a four-year university.

UWRF is particularly interested in FVTC because it is one of the oldest agricultural programs in the technical college system. It is well-established and has several faculty alumni that are connected to UWRF.

The difference between the two year degree at FVTC and the four year degree at UWRF is the intent in training service technicians for local dealerships.

The additional two years at UWRF is a broader education and covers all technology areas in agricultural engineering. These include power machinery, structures of the environment, electricity, information systems, soil, water, food and process engineering.

"[UWRF is] providing education for students to move into the field as application engineers or field-test engineers," Nechville said.

One of the criticisms of UWRF is that it does not have an extensive experience of hands on teaching. UWRF focuses more on teaching theory of technical education. While the technical colleges are heavy on the hands-on teaching, they would spend two months on a specific area where a university might only spend a month.

There is also a higher demand for a four year degree, because it would increase salary for graduates of this 2+2 Agriculture and Transfer Agreement Program. At this time there are 60 majors available to agricultural students with excellent salaries for graduates.

"With the potential of earning a higher wage [after graduation] and college expenses... it will continue to be a factor in a student's decision to attend FVTC or UWRF," instructor and Department Chair of FVTC's Agriculture Program Randy Tenpas said.

There is a strong correlation between the students from FVTC and that region enrolling at UWRF to earn a baccalaureate degree in one of the agriculture-related disciplines even though the two campuses are set more than 200 miles apart. In 2006-07, 450 students transferred to a university from FVTC.

"The time is right to formally acknowledge this history, strengthen these ties and ensure that the flow of students continues," Public Relations Manager Chris Jossart said.

Many students are unaware of these opportunities and, because the program is expanding, it's important for students to gain that knowledge. According to Nechville, many people who go to a technical college think they are not ready for university-level schooling. Some then decide that they are capable, which is why transferring is common among students at universities. Still, there are other reasons why some students transfer.

"It was affordable and I like small town colleges verses interstate universities," UWRF Marketing Communication student Chad Quandt said.

Right now FVTC and UWRF are working to review the curriculum and are making sure that the curriculum is aligned with the guidelines for achieving a four-year baccalaureate degree. They will be looking at the courses that each individual has to offer and then see how they correspond to the program at UWRF.

"The demand continues to grow for our program graduates looking to transfer into a four-year degree program," Tenpas said. "This 2+2 Agriculture and Transfer Agreement will hopefully create additional opportunities for both students and staff at FVTC and UWRF."

Full UWRF professors awarded salary compensation

Eric Pringle
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A plan to award all full professors an extra \$2,000 for the 2008-09 school year was approved by the Faculty Senate and former Chancellor Don Betz last spring.

When compared to the salaries of full professors at other schools in the UW System, professors at UW-River Falls were earning significantly less, according to Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance Mary Halada.

"Certainly the biggest [pay] variance was for full professors," she said. "We decided to spend some base resources to reduce that variance."

The pay plan was also implemented to try and solve the salary inequalities among assistant, associate and full professors at this University, Faculty Compensation Committee Chair Stephen Olsen said.

According to Olsen, in the 1980s, assistant professors at UWRF were hired at generally very low entry-level salaries. As they have been promoted in rank through the years, their pay has not always increased, with some professors not receiving any increases at all. However, in more recent years, the

University has had to hire assistant and associate professors on at higher salaries in order to be competitive with what other universities were paying them. This has led to “compression,” or a salary difference between the ranks, with some assistant and associate professors currently being paid more than full professors, Olsen said.

“The real problem was to deal with the compression,” he said.

In 1999 when Gary Thibodeau was chancellor of UWRF, a motion passed which granted assistant professors a \$3,000 salary bump when they achieved associate status and a \$4,000 bump for associate professors achieving the status of full professor, Olsen said.

“Basically, the \$3,000 and \$4,000 bumps haven’t changed since 1999 until now,” he said. “This means that there has been no cost of living adjustment for almost 10 years.”

Halada said she knows of approximately 100 other universities that have used money from their base resources to boost the salaries of full professors. She also noted that, even after the extra \$2,000, UWRF full professors are still earning “between \$4,000-\$5,000 below the average.”

There are approximately 102 full profes-

sors on campus, and all were awarded the extra \$2,000 for this school year on July 1. If the budget allows, the program will be continued for the 2009-10 school year.

“It’s a step in the right direction, but it still doesn’t solve the problem,” Halada said.

UWRF science professor Eric Sanden is one of the full professors who received the \$2,000 increase.

“I think it’s a well deserved pay increase for full professors at the University,” Sanden, who has been teaching here for 17 years, said. “We rank near the bottom of the pay scale compared to professors at other UW schools, even though our faculty is outstanding and many have won awards.”

In addition to the salary bump for full professors, the Motion for UWRF Faculty Salary Adjustment and Salary Preservation also states that, starting this school year, “the award increments for promotion to Associate Professor and Full Professor will be increased yearly by a percentage that equals the approved pay plan percentage increase.”

The motion presented by Faculty Senate and approved last spring, also states “all monies assigned to unclassified salaries shall remain assigned to unclassified salaries when an unclassified employee leaves UWRF.”


Unclassified employees include faculty, academic staff and other administrative staff. This motion simply means that when an unclassified employee retires, resigns, dies or leaves the University for any other reason, their salary will stay in the salary line instead of being used as “a revenue source for UW System budget cuts or transferred to non-salary budget cuts,” except in cases of emergencies, Halada said.

The final part of the motion said that UWRF set aside a minimum of \$100,000 each year to an adjustment fund. This will be implemented for the 2010-11 school year, and Olsen said that the money in this fund can be used virtually anywhere it is needed.

All in all, Olsen said he is glad that the most important part of the motion, the compression problem, has finally been resolved after 12 years of different faculty and administrative committees working on it.

"Though [UWRF professors] still rank 11 out of 12 in the [UW] system, after the new pay plan, we’re only now \$800 behind,” he said. “The administration really should be complimented for trying to help solve this problem. The whole way through they really did a great job.”

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RIVER FALLS POLICE/PUBLIC SAFETY

Editor's note: Information for this section is taken from the River Falls Police and UWRF Public Safety incident reports.

October 13

- Approximately \$100-\$250 of damage was done to sheet rock at the ampitheater. There are no suspects.

October 14

- A cat was reported at large on the UWRF campus.
- A framed Falcons hockey jersey was reported stolen from the Hunt Arena. There are no suspects.

October 15

- Ryan T. Field was cited for underage consumption, obstructing an officer/resisting arrest, speeding and violationg probation.
- Laddie O. Lucke was cited for underage consumption and obstructing an officer/resisting arrest.

October 16

- Brady J. Fosse was cited for retail theft and an open container. Fosse took a pumpkin from Econo Foods, but returned it.

October 17

- Two sapling trees were pulled out of the ground from between Hagestad Hall and the Ag Science building. The trees were found laying along the ground floor hallway of Hathorn Hall.
- Marijuana use was reported and documented in Hathorn Hall.

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Revisions of University policies may lead to student fines off campus

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Beginning fall semester 2009, Public Safety will have the option to fine and penalize students for their off-campus behavior if the final revisions of Chapter 17 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code is passed by the UW System Board of Regents.

The issues discussed in Chapter 17 concentrate on regulating non-academic conduct, establishing rules and formatting consequences for UW students.

According to Matthew Dale, legislative affairs director of the Student Senate, Chapter 17 deals with underage drinking, assault, disorderly conduct and similar charges.

The chapter currently states, “The university has a responsibility to identify basic standards of nonacademic conduct necessary to protect the community...any person who violates state or federal laws on university property may face prosecution in the appropriate courts.”

The changes currently being revised would alter the chapter by allowing a university to prosecute a student who violates state or federal laws on or off university property. The current chapter only allows the University jurisdiction over its own property.

The UW System Board of Regents, an 18-member board that sets admission standards, reviews and approves university budgets for all UW schools, is reviewing the chapter.

The Board of Regents’ revision process includes updating documents, making alterations due to new technology, editing the present chapter and making any necessary changes in hopes of maintaining orderly UW campuses.

“I think that this is a standard thing that we would look at regularly. It is protocol to revise eight to 10 years, and it’s been, I believe, 13 years since the last revision,” Colleen Thomas, a senior at UW-Madison and student member of the Board, said. “So as a regent, the Board is simply attending to the code and updating and responding to campus needs.”

Therefore, once the Board of Regents passes the alterations, the UW campuses will have no choice but to obey the permanent changes for an extensive period of time.

Chapter 17 has become an issue because UW-Milwaukee and UW-Madison have had problems with rowdy off-campus parties, disorderly conduct charges and a lack of control over students once they leave campus, Thomas said.

“The neighborhood and the residents in the neighborhood have expressed some extreme discontent with students in their neighborhood and [the Board of Regents] are really worried how the students have impacted their way of life. They are feeling less safe than in the past,” Thomas said. “The system of legal is starting to say that maybe we need a more strict policy on this.”

According to Dale, a majority of the Board of Regents believe that one option in controlling this intolerable behavior from students off-campus is to have the illegal behavior also affect the students once they return to the University.

The possible alterations will allow Public Safety to be notified of any charges a student receives, whether on-campus or off-campus.

Once Public Safety is notified of the specific charge, the officer will then evaluate the charge based on three determining guidelines.

The officer will determine if it is a serious or criminal offensive, if the individual was committing a health or safety risk to self or others and if it threatens the teaching, researching or public criteria of the University.

The possible guidelines Public Safety is currently provided with does not give specific limits and behavior that the

University will allow and not allow.

“Because it’s so vague and since there aren’t strict guidelines, it could be used against petitions and other minor situations,” Dale said.

The changes are to protect the students, but the frustration of possibly losing freedom outside the campus is gaining attention throughout Wisconsin campuses, Dale said.

“Anything they do that is against University policy and could be punished by the University. Out of town, out of state, even out of the country. You still can be charged,” he said.

Tara Straub, a sophomore at UW-River Falls expressed her concern toward the revisions.

“That makes me feel like I can never really leave campus. I just don’t see how it’s fair for a university to punish me for something I committed nowhere near the campus,” Straub said.

Contrary to the concerns of a few students, a majority of the board expressed their support at the October Board of Regents meeting.

“I think that it’s quite likely that some form of the revisions will be passed and be set for fall,” Thomas said.

The Board of Regents have expressed their concern for the current off-campus problems, yet they are skilled and well-educated professionals working towards the safety of students and citizens within the town, she said.

“They understand rights, they worry about abuse power and are concerned of any circumstance on the language. The revisions are appropriate and I think as we go forward we will hear from those regents,” Thomas said.

According to Thomas, the revisions discussed at the last Board of Regents meeting have been submitted to the draft office at the State Legislature, where professionals will revise legal errors and make sure the law is written accurately.

“Once the draft comes back to the board, the board will conduct a large debate in March,” Thomas said.

Students are able to attend the Board of Regents meeting in March to voice any of their opinions or concerns towards the Chapter revision.

Smoke-free: Majority of students, faculty surveyed favor smoke-free campus

from page 1

favor a smoke-free campus. Of those surveyed, only 382 students responded and 138 faculty members responded. Data from the survey shows that 66 percent of surveyed students and 70.3 percent of surveyed faculty would favor a smoke-free campus.

The idea of UWRF becoming a smoke-free campus is not yet set in stone. Student Health Services plans to propose the idea to the Health and Wellness Committee and the UWRF Administration.

“It is a process that will take planning,” Syverson said. Student Health Services wants to make sure this is what students and faculty want before making it official, Syverson said.

“It’s not meant to be a judgment,” Syverson said. “It’s an addiction. It’s a public health issue. When we know the science behind something, we have an obligation to do something about it.”

Enrollment Center: \$4 million proposal allocated from student fees

from page 1

“There really are no cons to the proposal,” Mark Meydam, director of admissions said. “It provides one place for students to go to do business and helps create synergy between the four offices.”

The cost is an issue the University feels is minimal compared to the benefits, he said. The student senate approved the \$4 million proposal which is allocated from student fees.

UWRF staff currently working in the four offices subject to convergence should be accommodated for in the enrollment center project. The University is working with an architect to make sure that all staff can fit, Sandra Oftedahl, director of financial aid, said.

Singular student support centers are a common trend across the country. The

University of Minnesota is a classic example of the trend, and a consultant from the University of Minnesota helped UWRF draft the proposal, Tuchenhagen said.

“We’re excited, it can’t happen fast enough,” Meydam said. “The proposal has unanimous support from the different areas involved.”

The University will inform students once the approval process is completed. New students will be sent material during the summer detailing the changes. Posters and pamphlets will be spread across the campus; the plan is to work through RAs and provide more information to students online, Tuchenhagen said.

“The whole goal is to make the student experience much better,” Braun said. “We believe it will be a great convenience to students.”

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EMT/Firefighter Benefit

The River Falls Area Ambulance and Roberts-Warren Fire & Rescue are hosting a benefit for one of our shared members who is battling serious medical issues.

He is a volunteer EMT and Firefighter as well as a small business owner. This leaves him without health insurance and growing medical costs.

Thursday, October 30, 4pm-8pm

Masonic Lodge
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Cost: Free Will Donation

There will be a spaghetti dinner as well as a silent auction, raffles and DJ music provided by Premium Entertainment of River Falls

Please contact Stacey LaPlount with any questions or to donate money, or an item to the silent auction 612-636-5454.

EDITORIAL

Course registration requires preparation

It’s that time of year again—the middle of the semester, when students are just getting settled into their classes, bracing themselves for midterm exams and perhaps enjoying autumn as it paints the campus. It is also that time of year when the word “Registration” creeps onto the scene. However, registration is not something students should forget about until the last minute. Preparing for it ahead of time can help prevent problems further along in their academic careers. Students should prepare for the meeting with their advisor ahead of time and not expect their advisor to do all the work for them. The advisors are there to do just that—advise, not to tell you exactly what courses to take and when to take them. Be proactive, print out your DAR and highlight all the classes that are still required. Sit down and plan out your next couple semesters. Without doing this it can be too easy to fall into the trap of having one left to graduate, and not having it offered the semester when you need it. Find out what classes are offered, and when. Liberal Arts and General Education requirements call for special preparations. The UWRF Web site offers a full course catalog at www.uwrf.edu/ogs/registrar/courses2.php that gives course times, professors and descriptions. Utilize such resources to find out which classes you need to graduate. By doing a little pre-planning students can better enroll in the classes that really interest them rather than taking classes just because they fit in their schedule.

If you come up with questions along the way, bring them to your advisor. They too have an obligation to know what is going on during the registration season. Be honest with your advisor. Let them know if you are falling behind in your current classes so that they can help work through it. They should have an overall knowledge of the catalog, know how to interpret the DARs and know the best ways to get students graduated within the four-year time frame. They should be checking the student’s selections to make sure that they are in-line with the pre-planned graduation requirements for the degree. They are not there to be a PIN vending machine for students. With a little planning by both parties the stress of registration-week can be greatly reduced. So take the time, do the research, and know that you are making the right choices.

Editorials represent the opinion of the Student Voice Editorial Board and are prepared by the editorial staff.

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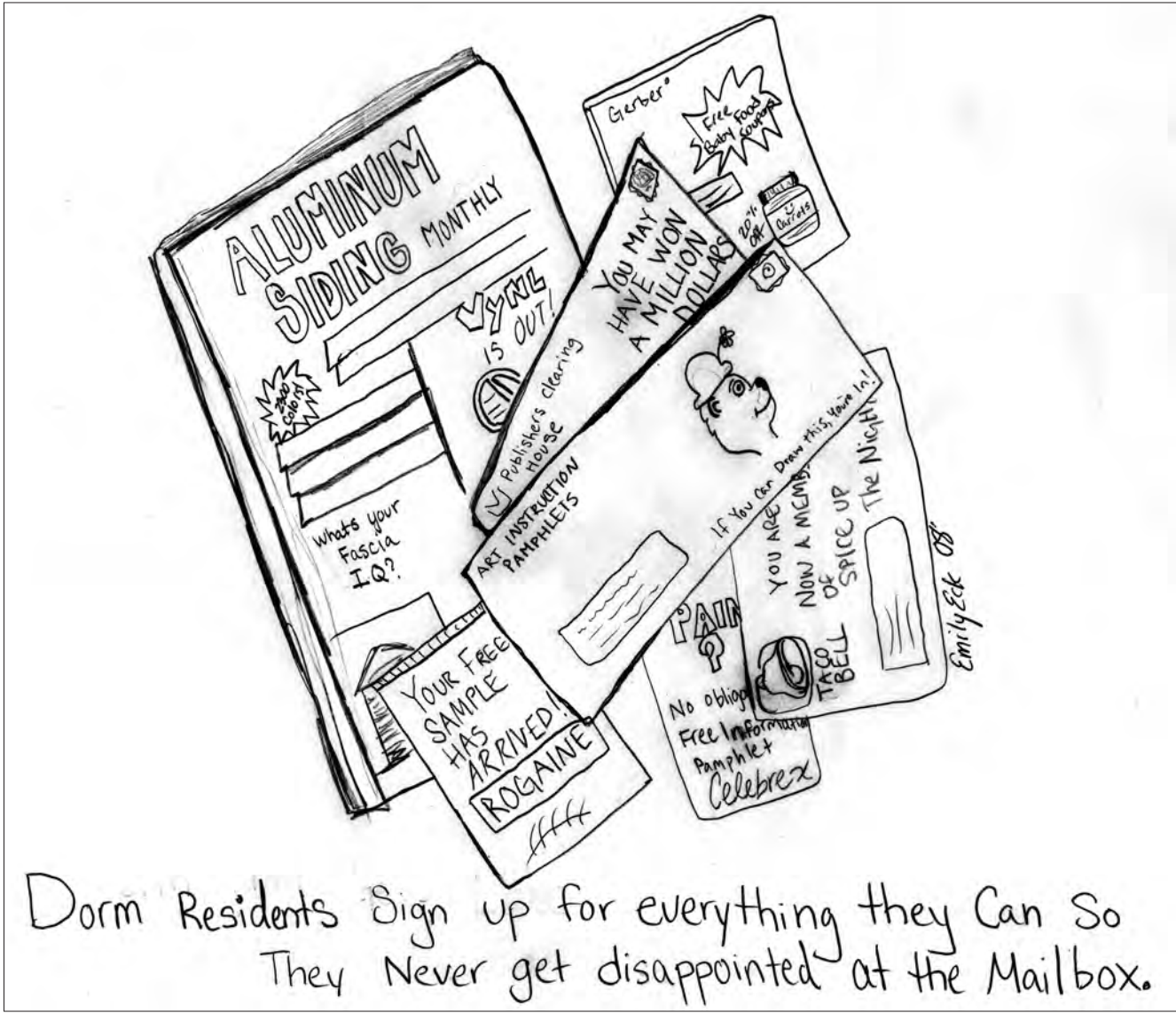


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Argumentation class inspires response

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) is the Nation’s largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together fo social justice and stronger communities, according to Acorn.org. Muriel Montgomery claims that Wis., "is one of 13 states which ACORN is under investigation for election fraud" and that "the number of ACORN workers suspected with the tampering of voter registration in Milwaukee alone is upwards of 49 individuals." In the column written by Montgomery, Barack Obama is tied back to this fraud through a series of claims. Montgomery claims that because Obama is endorsed by ACORN, that means he is responsible for the fraud that has taken place. Montgomery does not provide any evidence for this in her column.

There is no direct link of causation in this claim as Montgomery generalizes 49 people to all 50 states and all 50 states to Barack Obama. In addition, Montgomery uses ACORN’s contribution to the failed bail-out plan as support for her claim that Barack Obama is tied to the fraudulent registration forms. The supposed role that ACORN played in the economic bailout, which again Montgomery does not have sufficient evidence for, has no relation to one another. They are separate issues. ACORN is, said by Montgomery, to have stolen the elections. Again, this is a generalization from 49 people to ALL the ACORNs in every state. According to Montgomery's column, Talbott of the Chicago division of ACORN has asked Barack Obama to train ACORN in leadership. What does this have to do with fraud? Just because Barack Obama has contributed to ACORN does not necessarilly mean, for a fact as Montgomery claims, that

Barack Obama and the democrats are responsible for the 49 people in 13 out of 15 states. Although some of the "facts" Montgomery states may be true, these facts have no correlation to each other. Anyone who is able to think critically may find themselves questioning the validity of the "facts" as they relate to each other. Where is the evidence that says Barack Obama directly created fraudulent registration forms? These claims cannot be true if there is no real evidence to support them. Really, how does Roe vs. Wade relate to homosexuality, and how do these two combined relate to the fraudulent registration forms by 49 individuals? There is no doubt that it is wrong to create fraudulent registration forms, but it is also not good to claim something as a fact. Especially when there is no evidence to support it.

Columnist’s claims need evidence

Muriel Montgomery makes many loaded charges in her columns of 10/17/08 ("Barack Obama: guilty by association?") and 10/2/08 ("Democrats receive accusations for America's economic struggle"). When I review her writing, I am struck by a two common themes: 1) she asserts that the problems in America are the fault of blacks and poor and 2) there is no evidence to support those assertions. Ms. Montgomery is entitled to her own opinions, but she is not entitled to her own facts. She may aspire to be the next Michelle Malkin or Ann Coulter, but the Student Voice is not obligated to print her opinions if she will not adhere to some minimal standard of truth.

Michael Kahlow, chemistry professor

Cassie Vogt, student

Politicians open mouths, lose credibility, risk votes

I am, in fact, a fraud. It is factually correct that I previously stated that I would not write another column subjecting innocent readers to my “radical” conservative views. I must prove that statement to be a lie, by writing another political column. But understand this, my little liberal minions, it’s not my fault. I don’t want to have to write columns about politics, but the insane idiocy spoken by politicians forces me to. Michele Bachmann, a congresswoman from Minnesota’s sixth district running for re-election against Elwyn Tinklenberg, recently said on MSNBC’s Hardball with Chris Matthews that she is concerned Barack Obama has anti-American views. Though I support Bachmann, I must say she is an idiot. Obama is in the process of perhaps winning the presidential election by a landslide, and you go on the most liberal news media on the planet and say he’s anti-American. Good luck with that election. Tinklenberg apparently raised upwards of \$1 million in the past week in a race that was going to be a landslide, but now will be close. Side note: I actually considered voting for Tinklenberg before I found out he was a lib, just because of his name. Elwyn Tinklenberg sounds like the main character of a Saturday morning cartoon, and I love it. This brings up a whole different issue about liberals getting all the best political names. In the third congressional district in Minnesota, Ashwin Madia is running against Erik Paulsen. Guess who the democrat is.

Next up is Muppet character/ Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank. This week he made a statement where he said there needs to be an immediate increase in spending, there needs to be less focus on the deficit (something that the liberals have consistently hammered President Bush on) and that all of this is fine because there are “rich people we can tax.” Wow. Have you ever heard such an arrogant approach to blatant wealth redistribution? It’s like saying let’s spend like crazy because when Obama gets elected it’s going to be like Christmas morning and the rich, hard-working successful people are buying the toys. Barney Frank, aside from sounding like Sean Penn in “I Am Sam” and looking like the Chef from the Muppets, has a socialist agenda and is, in fact, a massive idiot. Go on YouTube and explain to me how someone who talks like that could possibly ever win an election. Finally, let’s take a little peek at the rhetoric being spewed on the campaign trail. It is amazing that Sarah Palin continually gets hammered for what she says, when Joe Biden is guilty of saying equally ridiculous things. Biden’s quote of President Franklin Roosevelt speaking to the American people on television during the great depression—even though television wasn’t invented then—is far in the rearview mirror, he recently said this

on the campaign trail. “Mark my words; it will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama ... Watch, we’re gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy ... and he’s gonna need help. And the kind of help he’s gonna need is, he’s gonna need you—not financially to help him—we’re gonna need you to use your influence, your influence within the community, to stand with him. Because it’s not gonna be apparent initially, it’s not gonna be apparent that we’re right.” Oh ... My ... Dad ... Seriously Joe, did you really just say that? Biden explicitly said that Obama was not ready to be president when he was running against him, and apparently he still thinks it. Biden is laugh-out-loud funny. I honestly have nothing to say for this quote, I am just in complete shock that Biden could possibly have said something that stupid. Good luck with your country after you elect Obama, because according to his own running mate there will be a “generated international crisis” and the response is “not gonna be apparent that we’re right.” Good luck America, say what you will about John McCain, but we all know that nobody would generate an international crisis to test him. That’s all I’ve got. Biden, in his own words, is journalism gold and I don’t want to ruin it.



Caleb Stevens

Letter to McCain reminisces when he was a real maverick

Dear Mr. McCain:

It didn't have to be this way, man. Here we are two weeks away from the end of your dying presidential campaign and I'd say you deserve a break. Your slide in the polls in recent weeks has been so dramatic and so conclusive some of your critics have already switched into pity mode. It's true—a lot of us do feel sorry for you and the way the sad state of modern politics has completely erased your true identity.

I remember the John McCain of a few years back. Once upon a time, you really weren't a bad choice for the Republican candidate. I remember when you kicked some ass with my main man Russ Feingold on the issue of pay-for-play practices on the radio, otherwise known as "payola." You and Feingold also co-sponsored the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002, which was nicknamed the "McCain-Feingold Act."

I remember, John, those days when you routinely broke with your own party to kick corruption square in the balls. You seemed so out of place during the early Bush/Cheney years as the classic Republican ideology of



Joe Hager

fiscal conservatism and small government dissolved before our eyes. Back then everyone, even your advisors, believed you were a maverick!

These days you're almost there: you've got your very own presidential ticket, a cute vice presidential candidate and a race so negative it makes Emperor Palpatine's senatorial campaign look like an Easter egg hunt for special-needs toddlers.

You are letting your crack team of advisors steamroll the real you in their rabid quest for more votes and more power. I know that deep down, there must be some small nugget of the real McCain left screaming out for vindication as your advisors paint a picture of you, your opponent, and your message riddled with inaccuracies and exaggerations.

For example, you never even met Gov. Palin before you chose her as a running mate. You claim you knew of her reputation, but with the long political career you've had, surely you met someone more qualified than her?

Perhaps a wink won you over, but in my

opinion, the pick of Gov. Palin was nothing more than a political move initiated by your advisors. She was a shot in the arm for a few weeks, but by now we've all sampled her lack of complexity (and reading materials) and most of us have had enough. As far as I can tell, she contributes only superficially.

But what about after that? Vice presidents should be picked for their qualifications as they pertain to the job in the White House, not in a stump speech. She can wink and smile and memorize flash cards, but can she deal with another 9/11-type attack or the worsening financial crisis? My doubts are piling up. Got it wrong, John.

And John, you keep pushing this Willy Ayers issue; Barack Obama was only 8 years old when Ayers committed those crimes! As a fellow human being, John, can you stand here and tell me you really think we should spend more time on this issue than the crumbling economy or the Iraq war? I know it'll slightly improve your dim chance at winning in November, but at some point you've got to get back to core issues that actually affect the American people.

Your advisors own you, John. They've beaten you into submission to the point where you let anti-Obama shouts of "traitor!" and "kill him!" fly at your rallies. They've

substituted the real you with an amalgamation of snappy sound bites, message repetition and whatever Sarah Palin is. This happens with every presidential candidate to some degree, but when I see a former hero of the GOP like you collapse under the weight of a campaign like this, I can't help but feel a little sorry for you.

You said last spring that you would conduct your race against Barack Obama in a tasteful and positive manner, yet just in the last few weeks there have been periods in which every single one of your ads across the nation have been negative.

Only two more weeks and then you're free, John. You won't have to keep pretending to like Sarah Palin. You won't have to keep inventing stories to distract Sean Hannity with. You won't have to keep dishonorably smearing a decent man like Barack Obama, because I know you don't hate the guy.

Obama's got it in the bag—not because of ACORN, not because of voter fraud, not because of the "leftist" media, but because he's realer than you are.

And also because Sarah Palin is a joke.

Joe is a marketing communications major with a creative writing minor. He is interested in movies, religion, politics, culture and people.

Monotonously routined days spiral downwardly into a rut

I am ready for a fresh start. Lately, I have been lonely, tempestuous, disgruntled, furious and disenchanted with my life. I feel myself wearing thin and turning gray. I long for foreign languages and new views from unfamiliar windows. I am sinking into a crevice in which my good intentions morph into bad habits and my shoulders are folding in on my chest from lack of room to breathe.

I seem to be forever dealing with some crisis or another that has thrown itself at me—sometimes big things, sometimes small. Either way, they add up. Car trouble, bad test/assignment grades, wet pants-cuffs, stubbed toes, fight with a friend, lack of money, lack of sleep, scholarship deadlines, my perpetual need for more time.

There is inevitably some unavoidable thing that rubs me the wrong way or gets under my skin. It has bestowed upon me a short temper and low tolerance for the most trivial of things. I feel myself forever grasping for small bits of time that don't exist. I constantly feel that I just need to "get back on the wagon" and "get my shit together," so to speak.

I have fallen into a rut, something that happens annually, but this year it seems to have crept up on me even faster. I am restless and behind and frustrated that I am once again falling into the same patterns and routines. It is making me unusually hotheaded and miserable.

This year is the first year that it has



Katie Heimer

cut this deep. I have never in my life not wanted to be in school. I was the student who demanded to go to school despite my mother's advice to stay home and keep my viruses to myself and, in turn, likely give you all my sicknesses so as not to skip a day.

This is the first year that none of my classes, despite how interesting they may be, have managed to summon from me that elated feeling academics usually fill me with. I wish I were somewhere else every minute I am forced to sit in those wobbly chairs cursing the half-desk I am forced to write on.

I am in need of two things I will forever be unable to possess at the same time. I need a break from the rigors of school in which I am able to relax and reintroduce myself to the things that have previously kept my chin up, while simultaneously acquiring extra time to catch up on all the things that are bogging me down ... preferably in the form of a tear in the space-time continuum.

Thus, I am forced to spend time out of my day that I do not have contemplating a way in which to combat this feeling before it swallows me whole. Being forced to be so immersed in the tedious and lackluster parts of one's life is unhealthy and unproductive. It curtails motivation and drive. It is imperative to find a way out.

Katie is double majoring in international studies and history, with a German minor.

Irrational fears, compulsion often utilized to generate blameful acts

When the Founding Fathers of the United States of America hammered out the Constitution in 1787, they were not expecting perfection from their fledgling nation. Instead, they saw the potential for many mistakes that had troubled other countries for centuries. Showing remarkable foresight and wisdom, this first American generation sought to protect the people from their government, and even from themselves.

Going by what America is like today, they certainly had the right idea—perfection is still nowhere to be found. We argue, we judge, we don't always tell the truth and we tend to act first and rationalize later. Our culture too often fails to appreciate intellectualism, creativity, diplomacy, science and the value of a good education. Due to many contributing factors ranging from sub-prime mortgages, to Wall Street firms, to President Clinton, to President Bush—our economy is in turmoil. Finally, we have claimed to represent democracy at its best, but our social network reflects barely suppressed tension and unspoken class divisions instead.

Many of us might ask ourselves, and each other, "Why have things gone wrong lately?" There have been countless different answers to that question, often influenced by irrational fears and the compulsion to blame someone else. But I have a suggestion: look beyond the politics, the nationalism and the incessant arguments, and instead look deep within yourself. When I look at the bigger picture, I see that no system can be 100 percent successful—because human beings are not perfect either.

I'm not saying we should give up on solving our problems, or that things can't eventually be made better. What I am saying is that there is no ultimate fix, for us or our organizations. We are



Nathan Sparks

all self-absorbed, conflicted, vulnerable, undeniably sexual and sometimes very dangerous beings. In the past we often saw these traits as flaws to be hidden, and actions resulting from them as sins to be absolved.

But if the traits are built right into our nature, and we have no concrete proof that complete perfection (or its opposite) exists ... then do we truly have any flaws?

I believe nothing is fundamentally wrong, lacking or unworthy about us. I believe we merely are what we are. We can't be anything less; nor do we need to be anything more.

Realizing this clears a lot of things up for me. It makes it much easier to accept who I am. And I feel good about my country again too. It's functioning exactly as it's supposed to, imperfectly.

So we don't have to spend our lives constantly chasing after something better, or retreat into the past looking for "golden ages" that never really existed. We don't have to dwell on our failings and mistakes, as long as we learn the right lessons from them. We can more effectively use what power we do have—and that is how we'll make a difference.

We don't always understand how completely our human nature transcends our culture, thoughts, words and actions. I think many of us are not used to stepping back from our busy, uncertain lives—looking underneath who we are, to appreciate what we are. It may be the only way to truly understand ourselves.

Not all of us will achieve that. But it's important to remember that any one of us can.

Nathan is a journalism major, free thinker and perpetual miscreant. He enjoys eating, sleeping, reading, writing, skepticism, grape juice, death metal and the color blue.

River Falls' lifestyle would benefit from Chinatown

River Falls will soon have another gas station on Main Street. In addition to a new stoplight at the corner of Quarry Road and North Main Street, there will be the town's second Kwik Trip. Another gas station. Another gas station? Someone thought this move was a good idea. Do you think it is a good idea to plant another car-fueling stop for a developing city of cyclists and pedestrians? In a town where there is a lack of good restaurants and a surplus of dirty bars? In a town where there is already a vacant gas station lot on the same road?

No, seems like a wildly, ridiculous idea to me. Think about it city planners, what do super cool, awesome cities have? Not an obscene amount of gas stations!

Super cool, awesome cities have art galleries, themed bars, and buskers instead of drunk, shouting people during the night life. But most importantly, if River Falls wants to be cool, it needs a Chinatown.

People love cities with Chinatowns. Chicago, New York City, Austin, London, Sydney, Amsterdam, Vancouver, Havana and Bangkok are just some of the wicked cool cities



Teresa Aviles

that have Chinatowns. If River Falls obtained a Chinatown, its tourism income would increase and restaurant options would go way up. Who doesn't like to see dangling dead rabbits when they walk through a market?

A Chinatown district of the city would increase the amount of pedestrian-only paths without increasing the amount of paved roads and the impact of cars on the environment.

By adding some color and a freshly cooked garlic aroma to the city, there will be a reason to stay within the city limits for that second big date.

Imagine the money-making college student playing his guitar near the Chinese candy shop where little girls on their Razors buy bubblegum. This is a place where parents are teaching their five-year-old how to say "duck" in a foreign language.

A Chinatown would create more jobs than a gas station. In our proud, sustainable city, "green jobs" could also be created by engineering a district that uses green energy and pro-

viding healthy alternatives to the usual MSG-filled Chinese foods from conventional restaurants.

Artists will have an outdoor, public place to sell or display their art. It would also give the opportunity for community art—not to be confused with graffiti of the gangster/ amateur variety. This tasteful graffiti, by washing it off or painting over it, you commit a destructing sin.

With music, structural and 2-D art, new jobs and bicycle/pedestrian friendly paths, I believe that a Chinatown would bring the city of River Falls good fortune, a cool factor and a functional mini-economy. Not to mention the feng shui of an ecologically friendly environment and no parking lots.

There are too many gas stations in River Falls. There are not enough restaurants or places to go to on a Saturday night. Traditional River Falls needs a modern change.

The economy is up and down. Oil prices are up and down. The people need health care. The children need to be properly educated. As a citizen, it is your right to use your voice. Vote for change.

Teresa is a journalism major and geography minor.

STUDENT voices

What types of businesses do you want to see in River Falls?



Ali Al-Hanooti, junior

"I want to see more mom and pop stores. Less 'Mc Corporate' businesses"



Lindsay Exworthy, senior

"More diverse restaurants. We've got a million pizza places, I want some place else to go to dinner."



Joe Hooley, freshman

"A record shop"



Josie Cater, junior

"Clothing stores! Target, Wal-mart, anything like that."

Student Voices compiled by Jonathan Lyksett.

nen

"We have a pretty good connection," Zweifel said of himself and Harmon. "We

“I believe the more sports you play w

The Falcons will wrap up their regular season with Invitational tournaments at Elmhurst, Ill. Oct. 24 and Oct. 25 and in Whitewater Oct. 31 and Nov. 1.

“The good news is we are only losing two seniors and my lower players on the ladder are good enough to fill in those spots next year,” Lueck said. “Last year was also my worst year of recruiting and I’m hopeful I can bring in one quality player and that would change our entire outlook in 2009.”

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Best Western hotel under construction near University

Nathan Sparks
nathaniel.sparks@uwrf.edu

The giant hole in the ground at the corner of Cascade Avenue and Main Street next to the Mariachi Loco restaurant will not remain a hole forever, as Twin Creek Construction Company builds a new Best Western hotel on the land.

The project is scheduled for completion in June 2009, and the foundation of the hotel has already been built. As of Oct. 14, Twin Creek was preparing to cast the concrete flooring and start on the underground plumbing and electrical systems, Twin Creek General Superintendent Dave Hackett said.

“We started removing trees and blacktop on June 30,” Hackett said in a telephone interview.

The hotel will be called River Falls Best Western. When finished, it will be around 100,000 square feet with three floors and one underground level for parking. This hotel will also have 86 rooms, a kitchen, banquet and retail areas, a swimming

pool and a Jacuzzi.

The construction has been budgeted for about \$5 to 7 million, Hackett said.

The City of River Falls allowed Martinsen Investment and Land Company, Inc. to use the land. In turn, Martinsen hired Twin Creek Construction to build the hotel and will lease the property to Best Western. River Falls will profit from the hotel in the form of taxes, River Falls City Administrator Bernie Van Osdale said.

“It’s part of a tax increment financing district. Once the project is completed on there, its value should be about \$10 million. The city will receive a tax payment on that in the amount of approximately \$136,000 [a year]. So we gave the land to them, and then we get repaid back out of those yearly tax payments,” Van Osdale said.

Sophomore Nikki Galvan said she disapproved of having a hotel by UW-River Falls, and would rather stay overnight with her friends for free.

“Personally, I don’t like it at all,”

Galvan, a biology/pre-veterinarian major, said. “I came to this campus thinking it would be more of a small town feel, and with the hotel it’s going to be more...not.”

Graham Gausman, a senior majoring in agricultural studies, said the hotel could benefit the campus.

“If somebody’s going to the hotel and they check out the University, maybe someday they might want to go there,” Gausman said. “I’d say, for student’s visitors, it’d be convenient.”

Valerie Rolling, a junior secondary education major who lives off-campus, said she was shocked about such a large structure being built so close by.

“I think if I was a resident here, I would be concerned about the amount of traffic,” Rolling said.

It was Martinsen Investment and Best Western that wanted the hotel to be built, and not necessarily the City of River Falls, Van Osdale said.

“We own the property and we



Sally King/Student Voice

A construction worker works to fill the hole that will soon be a hotel.

wanted to see some development on [it],” Van Osdale said. “[Martinsen] came forward and gave us a proposal that made sense, and we made an arrangement with them to be able to build the [hotel].”

Martinsen is based in Ashland, Wis. and headed by President Hank Martinsen, Sr.

Best Western was founded in 1946 and is based in Phoenix, Ariz. Its Web site claims it is “the world’s largest hotel brand with more than 4,000 hotels in 80 countries,” with 2,288 of the hotels in North America alone.

Reviewers disagree on movie’s George W. Bush portrayal



Ken Weigend

Fact: Bush is done as president. Forever. Do not pass go, do not collect another term. Why, then, is our culture over-saturated with overt torrents of pseudo-hatred? There are books on colloquial missteps labeled “Bushisms”; clocks counting down the time until Bush leaves office; inaccurate, apocryphal documentaries concocted by bitter, hypocritical egotists... and now, there is “W.” - Oliver Stone’s self-prescribed prophetic dissection of, for better or worse, one of the world’s most well-known figureheads.

Stone has a penchant for presidential biopics - he has already examined two with “JFK” and “Nixon” - but this latest foray into the slanted world of docudrama lacks something the others benefited from: hindsight. With time comes clarity, but “W.” was purposely rushed through a production cycle of less than a year to release before the election.

The hasty construction shows. The script, penned by Stanley Weiser, is little more than a quick and dirty recap of the life of Dubya, dropped intermittently (and with little regard to pacing or plotting) through dramatic reenact-

ments of images we’ve already seen on TV.

“W.” attempts poignant investigation on how Bush’s earlier years led him to the decisions he’s made in office. How much truth is imbedded in the raging parties, flowing booze and female flesh Bush immerses himself in is unclear. Between the bottles of Jack and store-bought diplomas, we catch a glimpse of a tragic anti-hero longing for nothing but his father’s approval; we see a disappointed father struggle with the realization that he has desensitized his son to easy street. This father/son dichotomy is intriguing but given too little maturation, stagnating in pools of stale development that drown among hollow rhetorical banter.

Weiser’s script is only skin deep. Stone’s direction is blasé, quickly collapsing under a false sense of superiority. The bitter stench of Oscar-bait clings to “W.”, as does its autocratic objective - “W.” intends to show the world what it needs to see. Unfortunately, “W.” never finds that rare voice of revelation.

It has something to do with famed leftist Stone staying relatively left of center; although he obviously leans liberal, he never strays too far into Bush-bashing territory for too long. The film is definitely not as poison-tongued as it could have been, as it wants to be. But this vain attempt at nonpartisanship sabotages the

vision. It’s hard to decide whether to feel sorry for Bush, or hate him - the film ricochets between the two emotions with every scene. It is not until the very last shot do we come to understand what Stone’s message was: that Bush has lost his way. But by then, the film has lulled itself into a dreadful stupor. There is none of Stone’s signature bold excess of emotion or style. The clichéd approach feels too safe, consequently making the film feel at least a half hour longer than it is.

Whether you like Bush or not, it’s obvious the man has convictions, the man has balls. “W.” does not.



A.J. Hakari

The mystery behind Oliver Stone’s “W.” is of a kind usually reserved for Bigfoot and PT Anderson films. Lionsgate has remained curiously tight-lipped about the movie in the months leading to its release, its scant few trailers only fueling the fire of anticipation. With a filmmaker of Stone’s disposition at the helm, you could prob-

ably surmise that “W.” is no love letter. What it is, though, is a film so crazy enough that it works, a fascinating, pseudo-hypothetical look at what drove the actions of the man currently sitting in the Oval Office.

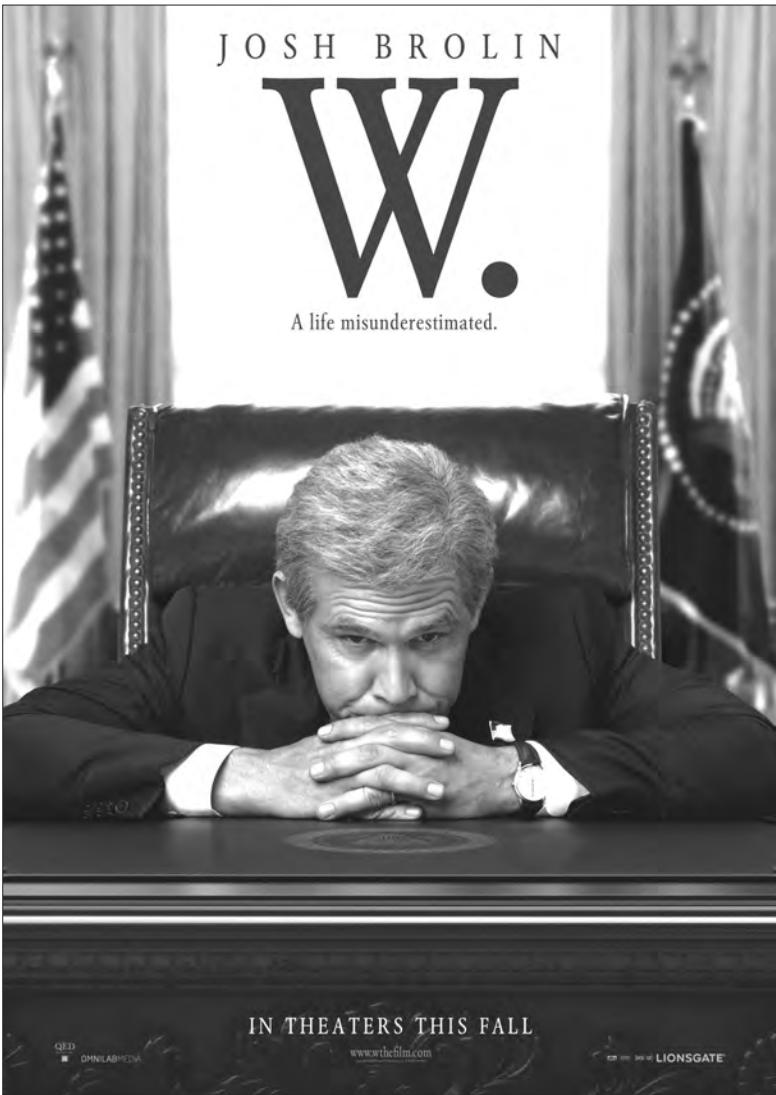
With “W.,” Stone traces the life of George W. Bush (Josh Brolin) from his college days to about 2004 (leaving out the election in 2000 - otherwise, we’d be here all night). Bush is depicted in his earlier days as something of a wild child, a guy not quite ready to handle the responsibilities of adulthood once his Yale party days came to a close. Failing in job after job, ol’ W. continually serves as a disappointment to his father, the elder George H. W. Bush (James Cromwell). Driven by a desire to earn his dad’s respect, Bush sees making his own name in the world of politics as a way of winning him over. Eventually abandoning the bottle and settling down with his supportive wife Laura (Elizabeth Banks), Bush rises despite the odds, working on his own father’s campaign before taking over the presidency himself.

Stone’s aim with “W.” is to work his way into Bush’s various nooks and crannies, to make as accurate a guess as possible as to why he did what he did on the road

to the White House. It’s fascinating to see figures like Dick Cheney and Karl Rove in action here, manipulating the well-meaning Bush into pushing their own agendas. This isn’t to say that “W.” will suddenly make detractors fall in love with the much-criticized Bush, but Stone’s efforts to put the man’s history into perspective do pay off handsomely.

The acting is just about spot-on, as well. Brolin has W.’s mannerisms and speech down pat, but he does an even better job of conveying the “Aw, shucks,” everyman type of charm that got him elected in the first place. But it’s Richard Dreyfuss’ scary-good performance as Cheney that may very well be the film’s highlight. The only actor I didn’t care much for was Thandie Newton, who looked an awful lot like Condoleezza Rice but who delivered a cringe-inducing imitation of the real thing.

A friend of mine asked me what the purpose behind “W.” was, what I thought Stone expected the film to do. To be honest, I don’t really know, though its rushed production to have it in theaters before the upcoming election is definitely one clue. But as is, I have to say “W.” drew me in like few films this year have, a wise and delicately-balanced picture that ventures a thought provoking guess as to what went on in Bush’s brain.



Ken is a senior journalism major with a film studies minor. He has aspirations to write film reviews as a career. His favorite genres are drama and comedy.

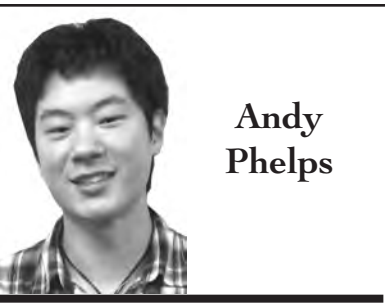
A.J. is a senior journalism student who has been reviewing movies for almost 10 years. He digs horror movies and documentaries the most.

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

Movie ratings are based on a scale from one to five. A film that scores five stars is worth seeing. A film that scores one star is horribly acted or directed, with no substance.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Rapper heads in a new soulful direction with ‘Paper Trail’



Andy Phelps

My name is Andrew Phelps, and I am currently the chief copy editor of the Student Voice. Avid readers may also recognize me as the author of several completely average and underwhelming news stories that have appeared in the paper this fall.

This week, I will be filling in for Erik Wood. Hopefully this will come as a relief to those who wish to read a review of a band/artist they have actually heard of before.

I must admit I have always been a closet fan of T.I. The Georgia rapper has always been able to combine his extravagant swagger with a trademark syrupy, southern drawl into perfect singles that are saturated with unabashed and unapologetic boasts. However, “Paper Trail,” his latest effort, shows the rapper move in a completely new direction. Absent are the constant references to drugs and guns. They are replaced with a more inspirational and intro-

spective final product. I am disappointed with this new direction.

T.I. (Clifford Harris Jr.), grew up in a Georgia ghetto, was selling crack by the age of 12 and was lucky enough to live to record raps chronicling his life on the streets. While he was riding high at the top of the charts, he was busted for possession of multiple machine guns. Since then, Harris has spent over 500 hours of community service time educating kids about values.

“I’ve made enough mistakes for all of you,” he told an Atlanta audience. Noble it may be, but it only serves to dull the street cred that provided the backbone for all his previous

albums.

It’s pathetic to watch the self-proclaimed “King of the South” replace his realistic recounts of street life with nauseatingly devotional homages, which are, unfortunately, all that “Whatever You Like” boils down to. Equally unremarkable is the single “No Matter What,” which despite its rebellious tone, offers little in terms of substance and quickly fades from memory.

The album does offer glimpses of vintage T.I. The bouncy “Swing Ya Rag,” echoes with smooth, carefree attitude. “I’m boppin’ while I’m walkin’ rag fallin’ out my pocket / If big money ain’t the topic, homie, I

ain’t even talkin’,” he brags.

Tracks like this make it clear Harris’ brilliant cadence and easy flow will never abandon him. Perhaps the best track on the album is “Swagga Like Us,” featuring Kanye, Jay-Z and Lil’ Wayne, where T.I. lets everyone know “All my verses picture perfect only spit to serve a purpose / You ain’t living what you kickin’ and you’re worthless.”

All throughout “Paper Trail,” the hooks are a little less catchy and the “matured” T.I. is significantly less fun. Overall, Harris comes across as a lame, emasculated shadow of the southern king he once was.



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