

Professors: part I

Professors. A university is a small community consisting of students, staff and professors, and it is from the third group that most of the stereotypes about a university are drawn.

They range in style from the thin-lipped "traditionalist" who penalizes students for missing classes to the Irwin Corey type who can be seen riding a bicycle to campus from Windsor Park in the dead of winter. All of them have an important impact on students, but unfortunately only some of them can handle that responsibility.

Many instructors like to point out that each student is fully responsible for his or her success; that university isn't like high school where you are policed by teachers who judge your lifestyle. But when there are no standards for final examinations and term paper topics, when some professors make up final exams from the tops of their heads the evening before exam time, or when each professor demands different writing styles, there is little a student can do to convince himself that his fate lies in the hands of individual instructors.

Not that this is necessarily bad. There are plenty of students for whom it doesn't matter: some will fail no matter what and others will get nines with a breeze. Besides, a lot of professors recognize the inadequacies of our marking and grading system and make personal adjustments to the benefit of all of their students. But, face it. Professors are by nature over-glorified civil servants, and the only ones who rise above this level are those who take a personal interest in the lives and academic work of their students. There are some professors like this, but not enough.

Both by choice and by the demands of their jobs, professors seem to end up leading very sheltered lives. Living and working in the academic community can definitely warp one's perception of the rest of the world, and it seems that professors who come from backgrounds or employment other than *academia* are often the most sincere and most open-minded. I know of one professor who was once a semi-professional boxer, and another who is a member of the clergy. It is this type of professor, I would suggest, who is most in touch with everyday life.

A professor can become so wrapped up in research, ranging in topic from womb symbols in D.H. Lawrence to the effects of Christmas on political beliefs, that he or she cannot understand why students fail to show the same interest in the work. For many, the job of instructor is a necessary evil that must be tolerated in order to receive tenure and an office. While there are slackards in every profession, there seems little that can be done about weeding out unconcerned and petty-minded, vindictive professors.

While many complaints about professors by students are handled in a condescending, barely-tolerant manner, that does not mean that we should stop judging those who are constantly judging us. If you have a good professor, write to the department chairman and register your satisfaction. If you run up against a bad one, don't hesitate to complain. Nothing will further perpetuate the existence of deadwood amongst the teaching staff than consistent indifference toward the quality of professors and its impact on the schooling of their students.

Gordon Turtle

the Gateway

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If it happens on campus...it's news to us.

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Newsroom 432-5168
Advertising 432-3423

STAFF THIS ISSUE: Krusher Kilgannon, David Hermanson, Ken Daskewitsky, Garnet duGray, Jim Connell, hello graffiti artist, Bill Ruzycski, Margo Leahy, Peter Benn, Jim McElgunn, Ken Meyers, Marni Stanley, welcome back Hollis Brown, Janice Michaud, Maxwell Murphy, special thanks to Gerard Kennedy, congratulations Patricia and Larry and welcome Mr. Tebbut Jr.

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Engineers defend week

I'd just like to commend the staff of *The Gateway* for both the high quality and number of issues we have seen this year. I didn't think I'd have a reason to write to you, but I had to, as I have one question to ask.

Who does this David Marples think he is?

Let me begin at the beginning (logical place, don't you think?). I had just left my last class on Tuesday and innocently picked up a copy of *The Gateway* on my way out of the Mechanical Engineering building, and read it on the bus bound for home.

To put it bluntly, I am turned off by Marples' choice of words about the Engineering Handbook and the annual Engineering Week. If I may give a few examples:

1. Engineers are referred to as "... our beer-swilling brethren..." a statement which is one of the more powerful libels humanly possible. This is far below the quality of language we should see in a student newspaper — a phrase like that is what one might hear on the street, not read in a newspaper!

2. "The Queen Ball is a sex-object display..." I'm certain that the writer of that article has witnessed several Miss America and Miss Universe pageants, and has never had the same reaction to any of them.

3. "Engineering Week represents an open display of reactionary chauvinism." I see nothing chauvinistic about it —

it's simply a re-creation of a pageant plus several other activities.

Of course, we should never forget the immortal words in that particular article concerning the Handbook itself. Only thing here is that it isn't called a handbook; rather, it's "sixty-four pages of inane drivel designed to attract potential new recruits to the faculty." He should know that that book is NOT a faculty calendar; it's a humorous look at what might otherwise be an uneventful studying place. And if Marples has the sheer audacity to call it that, he must have forgotten how to laugh or never learned how to in the first place.

Just getting back to the topic of Engineering Week, don't get the idea that I'm against minor changes in activities of the extravaganza event. I just disagree with the idea of killing the week as it stands, and putting in a brand new thing. Engineering Week is a milestone in the university year, and is an event that all engineers and many other U of A students look forward to as it is.

I sincerely hope that Engineering Week never fades. I'm not biased, but the U of A year would be empty without the activity from Jan. 14-19. And we should keep a tradition that has held up for several years, one that has never failed to provide entertainment and enjoyment for the entire university.

What will he attack next? Nobody knows. But I can guarantee that his topic will not please everyone. (For example, he took a shot at one-tenth of the U of A population!) So speak out! Perhaps we can combine to greet him with, once again quoting the article, "a noisy, vociferous protest!"

Jeff Lowe
Eng. 1

Quixote tag fits

Wasn't Don Quixote that rusty-armoured Spanish gent, who tilted at windmills in the belief that they were giants? What an apt and elegant appellation for your resident columnist, David Marples!

He uses his freedom, operating beyond censorship, in an attempt to block that of the Engineers. Strange souls that they be, I would not necessarily agree with what they publish, but I defend their right to publish it (I think someone once said that before, no?). And what a tiny little windmill this is, to be inflated to a giant by David's imagination.

Still, it was a nice little debate that the article on Ireland produced, wasn't it? A pity about all these errors, but it generated a lively discussion. It all served the purpose of informing the readership, in a roundabout fashion; a much more appropriate Goliath for our David than the Engineers. I rather enjoy these odd stands he takes, belching wind like his own windmill running bass-ackwards, for us in the gallery to tilt at.

Charles Farley seems to feel that a columnist should always reflect the views of the populace, but who wants that? No; David may run a bit strong on the righteous pomposity, and a touch weak on the self-mocking humour, but he can only improve.

Until the day he *does* reflect the views of the populace.

Richard Miller
Graduate Studies
Geology Department

Could Marples be a ...?

I would like to reply to the opinion set forth by the "Quixote" column in our illustrious student publication of Tuesday.

As Mr. Marples is probably an Arts student with questionable sexual preferences (do not take this personally, it is a characteristic of all anti-Engineering Week fanatics), I can excuse the mistakes.

Fortunately for all on campus, Engineering week is not a "meat show" but a break in a very tedious, and mostly difficult educational process. Yes, assignments do get done during Engineering Week, and yes, most of us do make it to classes. But a spirit of friendly competition is maintained in several contests which, when compared to the

gymnastics of City Council, are not inane at all.

The final outcome of Engineering Week and the goal to which all students strive towards, is to have their club named Club of the Year, even though it does not result in any type of monetary return. Pride and the knowledge that all clubs have developed a sense of closeness and friendship is what is important.

D. Mazurek
Eng. 4

No comment

Mr. Marples remarks of Sept. 25 are not worth commenting on — so I won't. However, I do suggest you replace him in the

editorial section with Terry Jonestown.

C.H. Reynolds
Civ. Eng 4