

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Best wishes on your new venture! Reading the Cap Times has been a nice distraction occasionally -- and it has served some role in improving the quality of life on campus. I also appreciate your apologies for not publishing the final spring issue last year. As a faculty member interested in obtaining volunteer participants for research, The Cap Times was one of few places to advertise. What is sad is that I was willing to pay people for their time; on this campus, getting student participants in research is difficult even when you pay them. Given the vacancies in SGA, and the sad state of the once lively Delta Tau Kappa, the student apathy problem is obviously still severe.

What concerns me, not only as a faculty member, but as a member of this community interested in making it a more interesting place, is the character of student apathy. One expects students to be reasonably apathetic about things that are tedious, things that are uninteresting, and things that have no bearing on their lives. Furthermore, a campus with a large population of older and commuter students, who have outside jobs and often families, one expects some degree of lessened interest in extracurricular activities. What is surprising is the apathy of students about what is in their interest, and what seems to be a misunderstanding of things that are in that interest.

I and some of my colleagues have had a curiosity of some standing about the difficulty of getting volunteers for research. This is a great way for students to find out what the world of research, the world that generates much of what they are taught, is all about. In research involving human volunteers, one also has the opportunity to learn something about oneself, in however small a way. Finally, we often pay people to do this. At any of the universities I have been at, short of this one, researchers usually have to turn volunteers away. Here, we're lucky if they show. Two years ago, I ended up offering married volunteer twenty dollars a couple for about a half hour of their time, and it still took me three months to fill 18 slots.

Last year, I was absolutely aghast at the low student and community turnout at the technology and the arts festival. The art was some of the best we've seen on campus (in my humble opinion), the technology was state of the art, and the participants were the top people in their fields. In-

teresting people, a fascinating show. I still don't have a clue as to why more students didn't show, even my own students, even after repeated in-class announcements.

So with some of these thoughts simmering on a back burner of my brain, perhaps with the heat turned up a little after reading about the SGA vacancies, that I find myself resentful about two quite separate items in your August 30 issue.

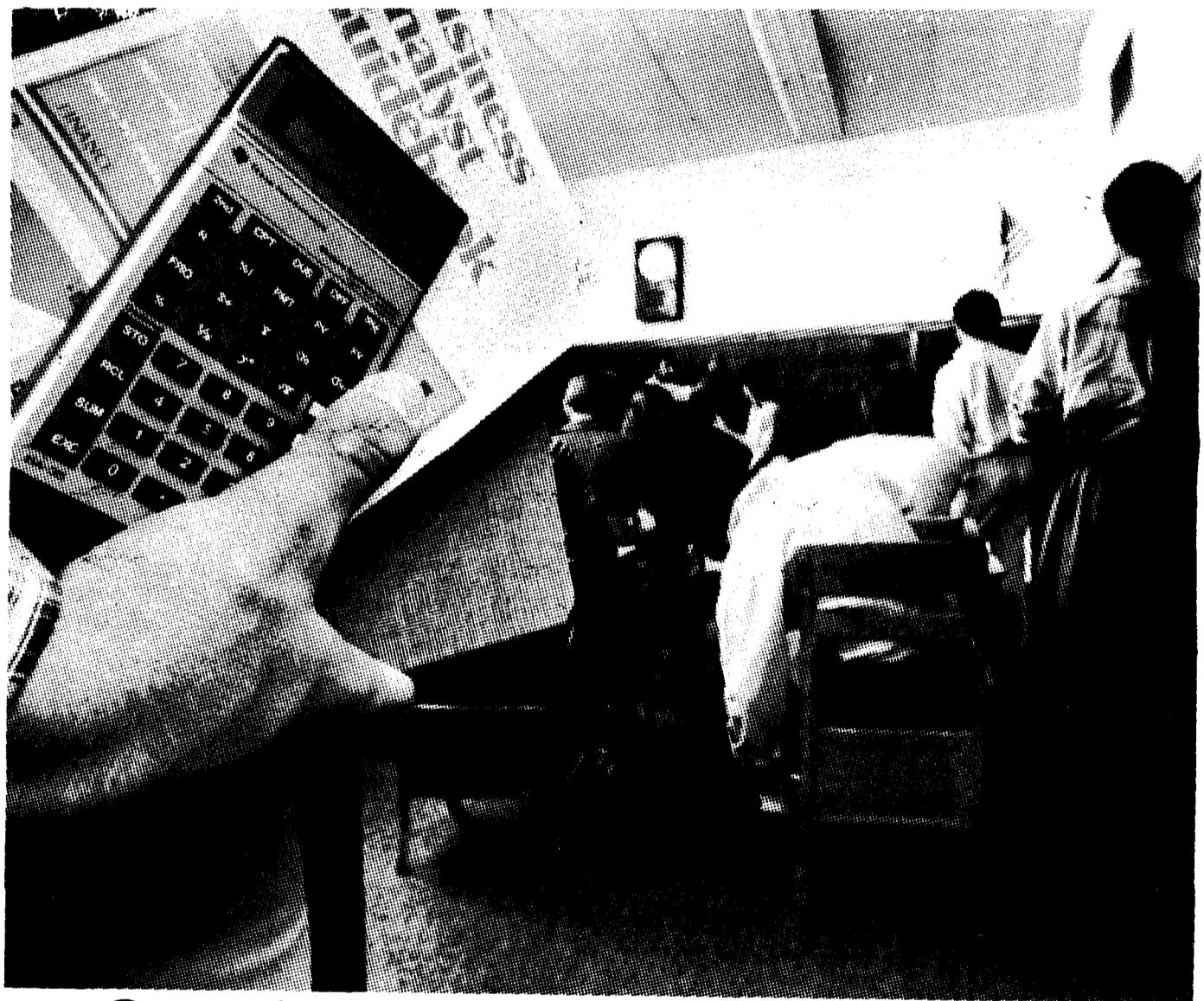
The first is your editorial on tuition. Frankly, as faculty members whose real income has been declining against inflation

(yes, even with Reaganomics), who have to beg and steal to get needed money for professional travel, research, and yes, even teaching materials, we also wonder where this money goes. The tone of your editorial is that the reason for the tuition going up has to do with obscure faculty research specialties. Give me a break! Along with your tuition increase comes pressure on us not only to continue to publish or perish, but also to improve our teaching and to generate increasing funds from outside sources to support our research. We're on your side! Admittedly some of our research is obscure, but despite the belief of the media in newsworthy breakthroughs, knowledge really does only advance in tiny steps. Fortunately there is a relationship bet-

ween research and teaching. It's a tough balance, and it is hard to avoid being sucked into spending more time on research one finds interesting when the alternative is catering to the whims of apathetic students. But look around you, and tell me which professors still have the fire in their eyes, which ones still get excited about what they teach you, which ones are still interested in what they say and interesting to you if only because of their own enthusiasm? I'll bet good money those people are also doing research and, in many cases, trying their darnedest to get students involved in it. The faculty member to whom you alluded, one who published a book on how "certain folks can carve a chain out of wood," received a student award for ex-

cellence in teaching last spring. The second has to do with your quotes from the new manager of the bookstore, about changing from a faculty oriented bookstore to a student oriented bookstore. Again, despite what a superficial analysis of the power relations on campus may say, the major opposition is not that between students and faculty. Ask any faculty member what she thought about the previous management of the bookstore. Most of that you won't print. Many faculty member tried to use the "old" bookstore as little as possible; B. Dalton was a faster and friendlier way to get our special orders. I know, I've used both. But I hardly think a bookstore "student oriented"

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