

Editorial Opinion

Get a clue

Running for office is not a simple answer to student apathy

There is an old adage that should be retired once and for all ... because what you don't know can hurt you. In fact, it can hurt an entire community.

Lack of student involvement has long been a problem in State College, and it is high time students got busy. Recently, two have taken the initiative to involve themselves by running for borough offices. But don't be deceived — these candidates may not be all they are cracked up to be.

Recent mayoral candidate dropout John Meredith has never been to a State College Borough Council meeting. Borough council candidate Adam Bender didn't know where the borough building was a year ago. At one point, both men wanted students to vote for them, despite their questionable records. Go figure.

Although both candidates based their campaigns on the desire to get a stronger student voice in borough politics, neither seems to have a grasp on the issues or the students they expect (or expected) to vote for them.

Taking advantage of already apathetic student voters by running without concrete platforms cheats the student body and other local residents of the chance to vote for a worthy candidate. Campaigning without a solid platform is self-defeating, and only makes fools of the candidates and those who support them.

Although student activism is desperately needed, empty voices fail to break the silence that student apathy creates.

On that note, considering Meredith's failure to announce a definitive platform and his admitted lack of understanding of what the job entailed, it is better that he leave the local political stage quietly now instead appearing clueless in the fall.

As for Bender, perhaps this will be a lesson. Like Meredith, Bender has not yet solidified an agenda. Although he seems to be focusing on a wider scope of borough issues, Bender is so tied up in the political rhetoric of getting students involved that he too is giving off a one-dimensional appearance.

Getting student candidates elected is not an effective reason for trying to mobilize student voters who usually lack a pulse. It is a sad assumption of the student population to expect they will vote for a candidate simply because that candidate is a student.

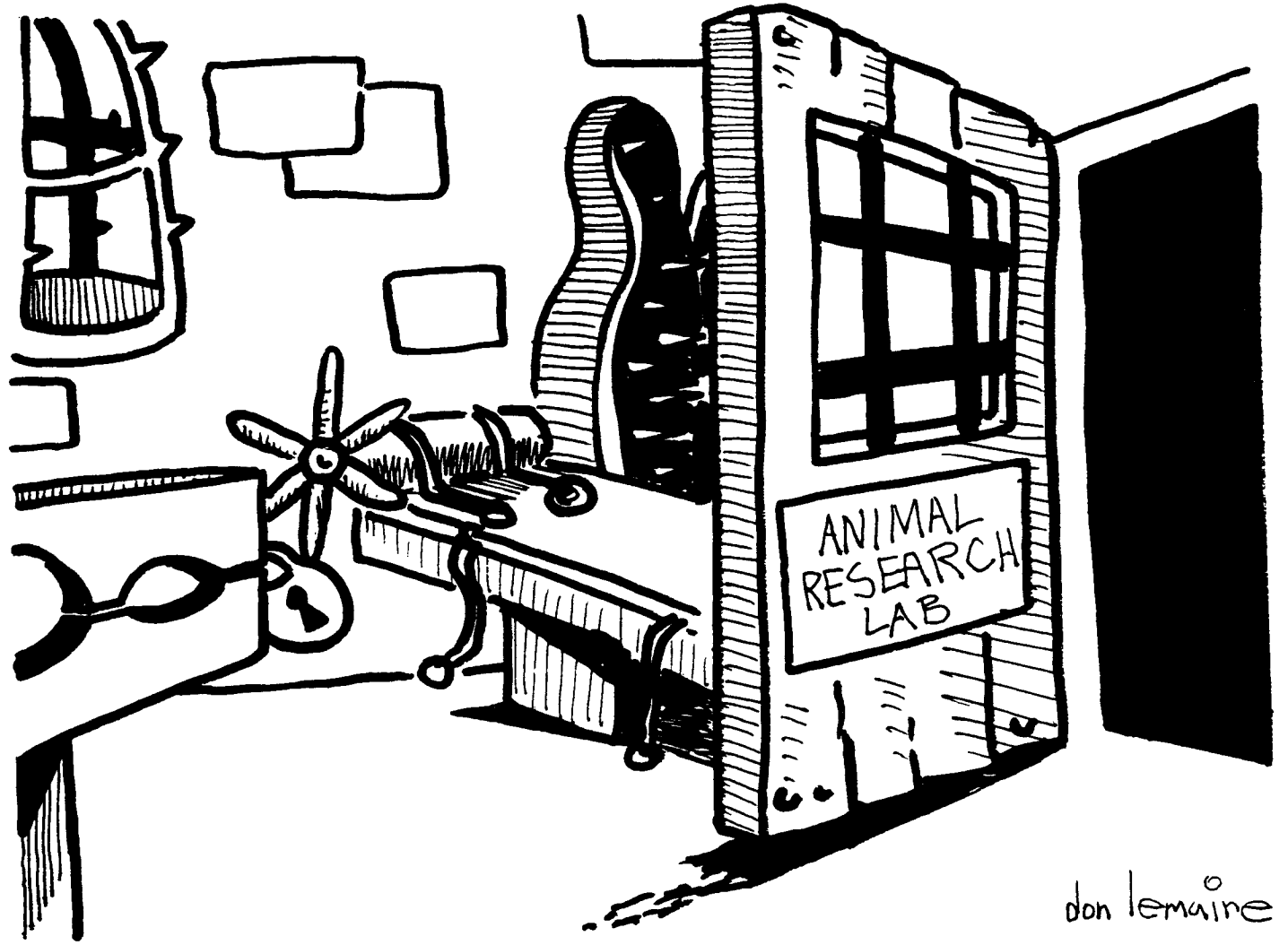
State College residents — whether students or not — should not vote for candidates with nothing more to offer than pie-in-the-sky wishes for greater student involvement. It takes knowledge of town/gown issues to be a viable politician in the borough, and students must keep this in mind before they endorse any new candidates.

The Fall Semester is just three weeks away. That may be enough time for Bender (and other potential candidates) to study the constituency, set an agenda and take a piece of advice from Meredith: get a platform or get out of the race.

Lion Eyes

by Don Lemaire

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If you are interested in being a Collegian columnist, please contact opinion editor Rebecca Fishkin at 865-1828.



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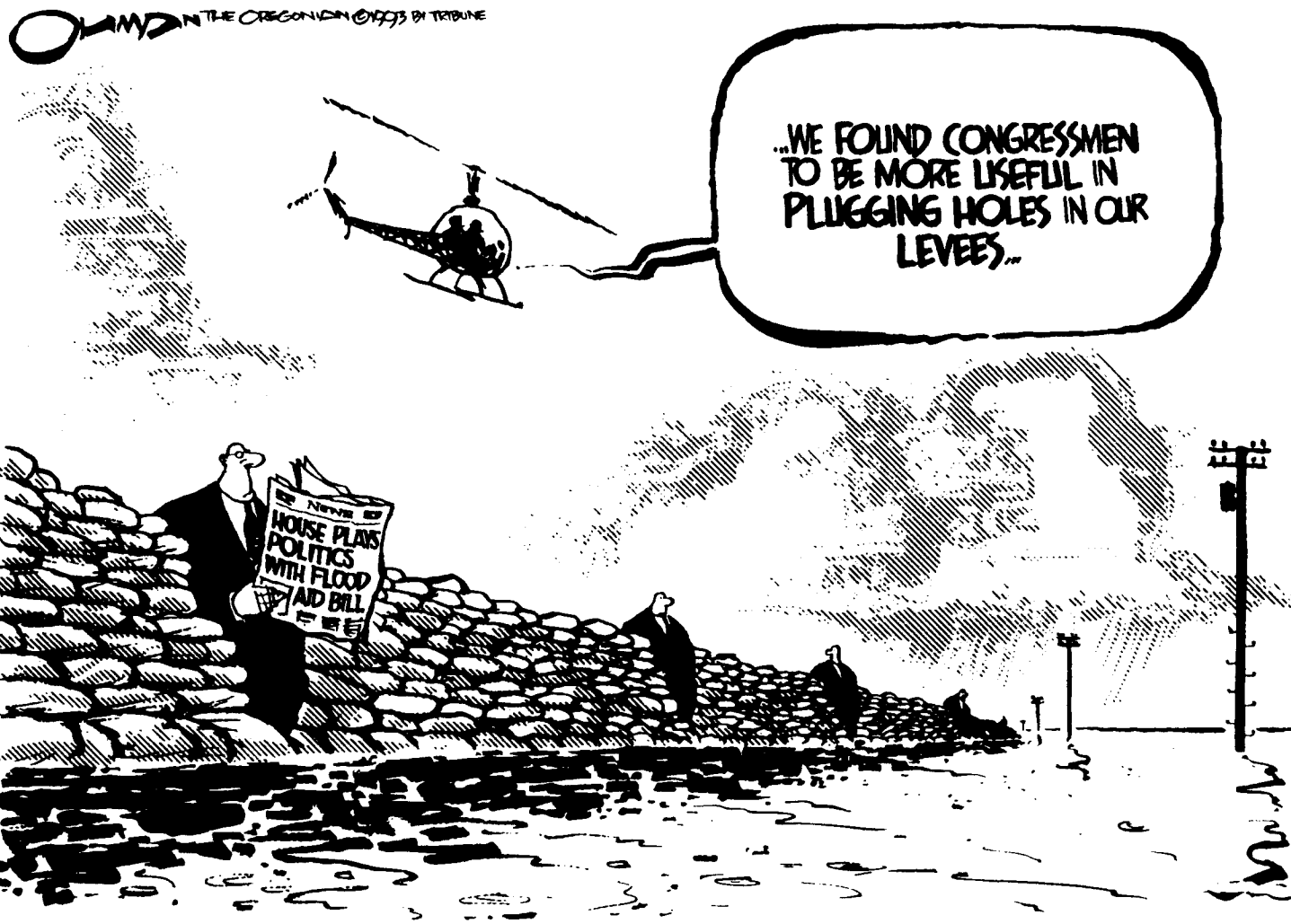
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Neither makeup nor purple flowers can hide our flaws

The farmer's market on Locust Lane was bustling with people on that cool autumn afternoon. I strolled by each booth, hoping to find a treasure, the one element missing from our half-furnished apartment. There were posies, sunflowers and baked goods from a sunlit country kitchen ... then there it was — the cactus.

I don't know why I was so drawn to this cactus. The booth was full of shiny-leaved aloes and descending spiderplants. But it was the cactus with its thick stalk held up by a long rod. How awkwardly its arms reached, jutting out against the other almost-symmetrical botanical beauties. Each stalk supported a lovely purple blossom. For \$8, I visualized the cactus' flowers adding beauty to our collegiate flat.

Sadly enough, I was disappointed to find my roommates were less than enthusiastic about my contribution to the household. They furnished the place with erect plants on the balcony, post-impressionist prints on the walls and sweet-smelling candles on the living room table. My flowering tangle of a cactus seemed awkward in contrast.

After my roommates left for class,

My Opinion

Michelle Abarbanel



I scrutinized my new acquisition. Its thorny stalk was already brown at the base, a foreshadowing of its inevitable demise. I knew the cactus' time in the apartment would be brief. I touched the lavender flowers that appeared to be the cactus' only redeeming aesthetic quality.

Then a strange thing happened. One flower fell, revealing its true identity. The purple beauties were mere plastic fronts for my poor decrepit cactus. This was no blooming cactus from the desert, it was a mangled work of nature. The flowers were fake, and I was the victim of a scam.

The next morning I showered, then glanced at the cactus. Another flower

had fallen to the floor. The branch that had once suffered the foreign object looked exposed. The cactus was slowly going through a metamorphosis before my eyes. I straightened my naturally frizzy hair, put on my makeup (not forgetting to spritz on some Fendi perfume) and took off for class.

On my way, I passed by the bus stop where several people were waiting. They wore the typical uniform to hide their individual flaws. They wore tailored suits, had neatly arranged hair and smelled like the perfume counter at the mall. They all looked lovely, and I wondered what they would think of my half-dead cactus rejecting its last beautiful flower from its stalk.

The next morning, the cactus was finally devoid of flowers. It was now a drab olive color, its thorns jutting out in all directions. It concealed nothing. The cactus was in its original form, stark-naked against the otherwise colorful apartment furnishings. Its state was obscenely real, and I saw all of its flaws and all of its organic imperfections.

I then discovered a parallel between the cactus and my own

"We want to be soft and smell lovely. We don't want our prickly outsides to be put on exhibition for all to see."

habits. My daily preparation for class wasn't a ritual anymore; it was a series of conscious concealments. We all have our variations of lavender flowers, items that hide the physical traits we resent. My hair is too frizzy, so I must blow it dry. Makeup hides the zits that I cannot Oxy-cute. My breasts are too large, so I put on an oversized shirt. I go to class, like the rest of you, in my respective costume.

But like veils removed from a painting, we are also exposed. Sometimes it rains and my hair goes curly. Sometimes my makeup wears off and freckles splatter my face. Sometimes even my breasts are noticed and I am ashamed. Sometimes those items, like plastic flowers, fail to conceal our flaws at the most inopportune moments.

Maybe that's why I have such an affinity for my cactus. Its honest appearance represents what I am

unable to accept. We all aspire to be aesthetically beautiful. We want to be soft and smell lovely. We don't want our prickly outsides to be put on exhibition for all to see. The cactus is twisted in all directions, its thorny branches indecisively growing in all angles. The cactus is like me.

This summer, in the humid heat of State College, the cactus withered away. I thought this to be a timely moment, for in a few weeks I too will move on from Happy Valley. Bittersweetly, I carried the plant to the dumpster.

After I threw out the cactus, I flipped by two remarkably different images in a magazine. On one page was the scantily clad Cindy Crawford, so smooth and air-brushed, the ideal of perfection. I was jealous of her physical beauty. Yet strangely enough, it was not this picture that enticed me.

On the opposite page in black and

white lay a close-up of an aged Native American man. He stood alone against a backdrop of a barren field. His wrinkles displayed the paths of labor and pain he endured. His crow's feet stood out like an effusion of laughter. His face revealed more to me than Cindy's see-through lingerie. He was provocatively naked in the story his face told. His beauty was not unlike the cactus'.

I will carry this picture with me for a while, remembering beauty is not always the soft curve of a neck. Sometimes it can be a prickly cactus or the leathery face of a broken man. Maybe one day I will walk out with my hair in curly tresses, my eyes open wide and clear and makeup-free. Maybe one day I will be able to embrace those things of which I am ashamed.

But for now, like the rest of you, I put on my uniform. Unlike the cactus, I can shield my imperfections. But I find beauty is something raw and honest; it is that which makes us human. Purple flowers will never conceal your true identity.

Michelle Abarbanel is a senior majoring in French and a Collegian columnist.