

BOROUGH COUNCIL PROPOSAL

# Council needs to communicate

The negative feedback from the State College Borough Council in response to UPUA President Christian Ragland's proposal for a non-voting student member is disheartening.

It seems as if Ragland and the rest of University Park Undergraduate Association are taking all the appropriate steps to foster a better relationship with the council, but they are consistently being squashed in their ambitions.

It is clear that the council has no desire to initiate a non-voting member as it has been proposed by Ragland, but the fact remains

that Penn State students make up the majority of the borough's population and their opinions and interest should be taken into serious consideration. Having a representative on the council is a sensible way to achieve this.

We are baffled those borough council members who refuse to meet individually with UPUA to explain their personal feelings on the issue, for denouncing this simple request seems to paint a larger picture on how members feel about working with students. We also urge Ragland and other UPUA members

involved to keep pushing borough council's request until we see positive action.

It seems as if the borough council is being fickle over the definition of a non-voting student member, and has instead defaulted to proposing outlandish ideas such as Ragland running for borough council and serving out a four-year term. But we'd like both sides to communicate and agree on a way for a non-voting student member to be appointed.

If a working relationship is desired, then communication is required.

## LETTERS

### Economy warrants welfare

This is in response to Friday's letter, "Undeniable that Americans should not be welfare state." I have a question for you, Andrew: What is the alternative?

That is, what else should we do with these millions of Americans? Let them go hungry and homeless? Allow their children to starve? Yes, several million people are depending on social welfare programs at this time, but there is a fact that explains these statistics: We are slowly emerging from a historic economic downturn. There are not enough jobs to go around. In some career fields there are as many as 70 applicants for a single job opening.

I am sure most of the people collecting unemployment benefits would much rather be working right now, given all of the benefits of employment (e.g., higher incomes, health care benefits, self-worth). Also, because health care depends on employment, high unemployment contributes to high enrollment in Medicaid.

Another fact you are overlooking: A large proportion of Medicaid recipients are children. Children from disadvantaged families have no choice but to rely on social welfare programs. So, Andrew, rather than bemoaning this welfare state, use your energy to come up with a solution.

Valerie Clark  
Class of 2010

### U.S. balances greed, charity

In response to Friday's letter, "America's 'greed' is better than economic complacency," Kai Kaapro claims that dissatisfied self-interest is the necessary driver of progress in America. This view of Americans reduces us all to selfish beings who are only capable of acting in order to fulfill our private needs and desires. When our needs and desires are fulfilled, it is assumed that we will cease to act, like robots powering down.

This is a pretty dismal view of people living in our country, and I for one do not believe it to be true at all. What about charity and helping others? What about raising healthy children? What about enjoying life and having fun? What about helping to create a beautiful, harmonious and efficient society? Aren't generosity and selfless exertion the natural byproducts of a comfortable and secure attitude that doesn't insist on possessing as many externals as possible?

I disagree with Mr. Kaapro's thesis. Self-contentment does not equal inactivity. Efficiency, happiness and charity are much better for ourselves and for our society than greed and selfish interest.

Garrett Evans  
graduate-physics

### Students should pay gratuity

As a long term employee of the service industry, it never ceases to amaze me how little some customers understand the social custom of tipping. I keep hearing the argument "how hard is it to bring food to a table?" or "in Europe they don't tip." Enough with the excuses! People who say serving is easy have clearly never worked in a restaurant, and those who serve in Europe have a higher minimum wage. Do these people realize that the hourly rate of waiters and waitresses in Pennsylvania is only \$2.43 an hour? That means, after an 8 hour shift of bringing food to tables, we have made less than \$20!

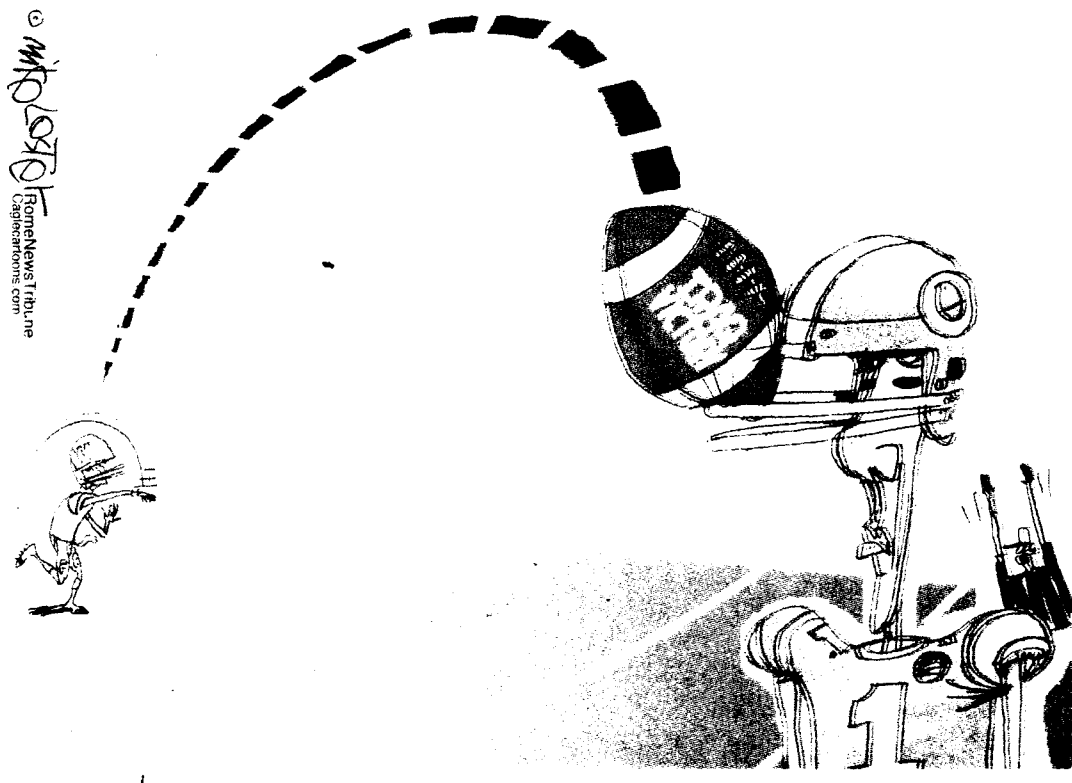
My most recent, and also most humorous excuse was "sorry bro, I'm a college student, I can't afford to tip... you know how it is..." Why yes, I do know how it is! I do know what it's like to be broke, working my hands to the bone while waiting on obnoxious, arrogant and self-centered college students who single handedly change my job title from "server" to "servant." Come on people! Life isn't free for all of us! My point is please have some consideration for those who serve you. Whether it be your waiter, bartender or cab driver, throw them an extra couple bucks. I'm sure they could use it.

Steven St John  
senior-history

### HUB preachers went too far

In response to Thursday's letter "Preachers do not disturb," to say that these particular preachers who were on campus last week were not disruptive is simply not true. I sat listening to these people for about 20 minutes and witnessed as they shouted to students that we were sinners and going to hell. Others who had been there longer also informed me that they were saying distasteful things to students who appeared to be from religious minorities. The First Amendment gives these people the right to openly state their beliefs as long as the university allows it. It does not, however, give them the right to publicly demean others because of their faith. Such acts should result in the loss of the group's privilege to preach on campus.

Ben Frazer  
junior-classics and ancient Mediterranean studies



## THE DAILY Collegian

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# Obama's religion is too old an issue

By Michael Oplinger

ENOUGH is enough. As the Obama administration attempts to rectify a bleak economic situation in the United States, two old but scary rumors about the president continue to flourish.

Though they've been circulating since before he was elected, Barack Obama must still deal with comments that he is a Muslim and that he is not an American citizen.

A recently released Newsweek poll shows that nearly a quarter of Americans believe Obama is a Muslim.

An early August CNN poll found a similar number reflected the belief that he was not born in the United States and therefore, ineligible to be president.

Both numbers are actually higher than polls released earlier this year, representing a daunting task for Obama as he tries to promote an economic recovery and deal with two wars while a significant portion of his constituency feels he doesn't lawfully hold his position.

Obama has clearly stated he is a Christian from Hawaii to no avail.

As the country deals with larger issues, these false rumors based on fear, hatred and bigotry must stop.

Obama finds himself in a prickly situation, especially when addressing the Muslim rumor.

If he repeatedly and forcefully stated that he is not a Muslim,

he would imply that being a Muslim is a bad thing and a trait that inhibits one's ability to effectively govern.

To make such an implication could hurt only worsen public perception of Muslims in a country where many misunderstand the faith.

Faith is a challenge to prove. No real documentation exists to establish religious beliefs. Whatever Obama says he believes, he believes.

There is no DNA test for religion and people aren't born into them.

Religious beliefs are chosen. Besides, the religions of leaders shouldn't matter. Politicians seem to announce their faiths only to increase their electability. Once they enter office, most politicians seem to only follow the Gospel of their party anyway.

Perhaps more diversity is needed in a country that has continually elected presidents cut from the same religious cloth.

But being different is exactly what got Obama in the middle of the whirlwind of ridiculous rumors.

Were Obama a white man with a more common name, no one would question his religion or citizenship.

His name and skin color fuel the falsehoods, particularly the "Birther" movement, which bases its entire stance on racism.

The most telling example of such bigotry is Terry Lakin, an Army doctor who refuses to report for duty in Afghanistan because he thinks Obama was not born in the United States and therefore, not the commander in chief of the U.S. military.

Lakin has served for 18 years

under multiple presidents, yet hasn't questioned a president's authority until now.

He claims to want proof of Obama's birth in Hawaii, denying the legitimacy of the president's previously released birth certificate.

Couple the birth certificate with a birth announcement in the local newspaper and Lakin has no case, unless he believes Obama's presidency is part of a 50-year plot by his family, who just knew he would grow up to be an intelligent, well-spoken and popular political leader.

Without any supporting evidence for their wild conspiracy theory, Lakin and other Birthers get exposed for their blatant racism.

Normally, such bigoted beliefs can be cast aside as the thinking of a small fringe group. But the poll numbers suggest a disturbing trend of racist behavior.

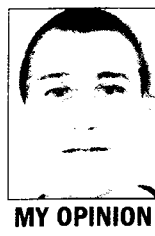
As the president, Obama will certainly be scrutinized but critiques should be based on his policies and leadership abilities, not his religion and birthplace.

Obama's election represented a triumph of civil rights in a country founded on the freedom of all, regardless of race or religion.

But should these movements continue to grow, Obama's election won't be nearly as historic or symbolic as originally thought.

It will just be an example of how most of the country believes in equality, but a far-too-large portion of the population still practices bigotry and blind hatred.

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MY OPINION

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Elizabeth Murphy  
Editor in chief

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