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Make your voice heard in 2011

t was back in August that I last took to these pages to ring in the start of a new semester. Writing this column, I can say that there is a lot of merit to the cliche that time flies. Yet I couldn't be happier to face the new year.

First and foremost, welcome back to our campus and our community. Durham might have made The New York Times' list of the best places to visit in 2011 (just edging out Kosovo) but we all know which corner of the Research Triangle has the most acute minds.

Last year was mixed for UNC. Budget burdens have been a perennial problem as long as I have been here, but the cloud cast over the football program was a source of further bleakness. A tragic death in our own residence halls and sexual impropriety by a professor made the year even more surreal.

And yet 2010 saw much of the groundwork laid for 2011. The Board of Governors worked on a new Four-Year Tuition Plan, and UNC produced a draft of its new Academic Plan. It even ended with two students both widely assumed to be running for student body president this semester feuding over alleged campaign

law violations. This semester brings fresh ideas and perspectives. Our editorial board and columnist positions have expanded in ways that I believe will keep our content consistently strong.

We have columnists exploring numerous topics — from food to athletics to the African-American experience. Others will be more thoughtful. Instead of conveying ideas, they may challenge readers to critically evaluate their own: aspects of tradition and culture that we often passively accept.

The editorial board will continue to meet three times weekly, reacting to the events and decisions that shape our campus and community. Ideas and angles are discussed and decided on collectively. Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the board at large — just as they do for other newspapers — whose names can be found at the top of the opinion page every day.

And, of course, the editorial board will also be conducting endorsement interviews for the spring election. We take endorsements very seriously, and we keep our endorsement process rigorous — there's no other way to articulate our decision in good confidence. So when endorsements run, know that great thought and consideration went into the decision.

With all of the deliberation and thought that goes into the work of an opinion desk, one might think that we're sick of outside voices. That couldn't be further from the truth. This desk not only wants —but needs your voice. And I challenge you this new year: be louder. It may just be kvetching, or it may be sending in letters to the editor. Your voice is vital and always welcome. Even if you want to privately discuss a subject, feel free to e-mail the desk.

We work to keep our leaders accountable. We need you to keep us accountable. Someone must watch the watchmen.

SPEAK OUT WRITING GUIDELINES:

Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.

- > Sign and date: No more than
- two people should sign letters. > Students: Include your year,
- major and phone number. ➤ Faculty/staff: Include your
- department and phone number. ➤ Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

➤ **Drop-off**: at our office at 151 E. Rosemary Street.

➤ E-mail: to dthedit@gmail.com Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.