

OUR STANCE

Online shouldn't be the only option

To some students, online classes are a blessing. Maybe you have a child. Maybe you work full time. Maybe you just like sitting in your pajamas for hours on end. Either way, the convenience of an online class gives many of us the option of finishing our education without having to stop our outside lives to make way for the all-encompassing time commitment that school demands. With that being said, more often than not, online classes are usually viewed as more of a godsend than a burden, but we feel online classes aren't always as beneficial as they appear.

As the fall semester kicks off and campus is buzzing with ambitious collegians ready for their new slate of classes, some of us find ourselves bound to online classes against our personal preference. It seems that lecture classes in some departments at UCF are nearly impossible to register for.

As class sizes remain large, and the hiring freeze continues to limit the number of professors, many of us face the reality that online classes may be our only option to complete core classes. Face-to-face lectures only allow for a class capacity to reach whatever the building and professor can handle, so we see the logic in online classes to

meet the demand. With online classes being able to serve a maximum number of students, on-campus classes simply can't compete in efficiency. While it's not certain whether the number of lectures have changed, for some of us it's nearly impossible to avoid online classes. Additionally, the university also has several programs that provide video streaming of classes, so that students who must take the class online can watch the lectures at their own leisure. So if we want to pause our economics class to take a short hiatus to happy hour at the Knight Library, it's no biggie.

But what happens to those of us who thrive on hands-on learning and human interaction?

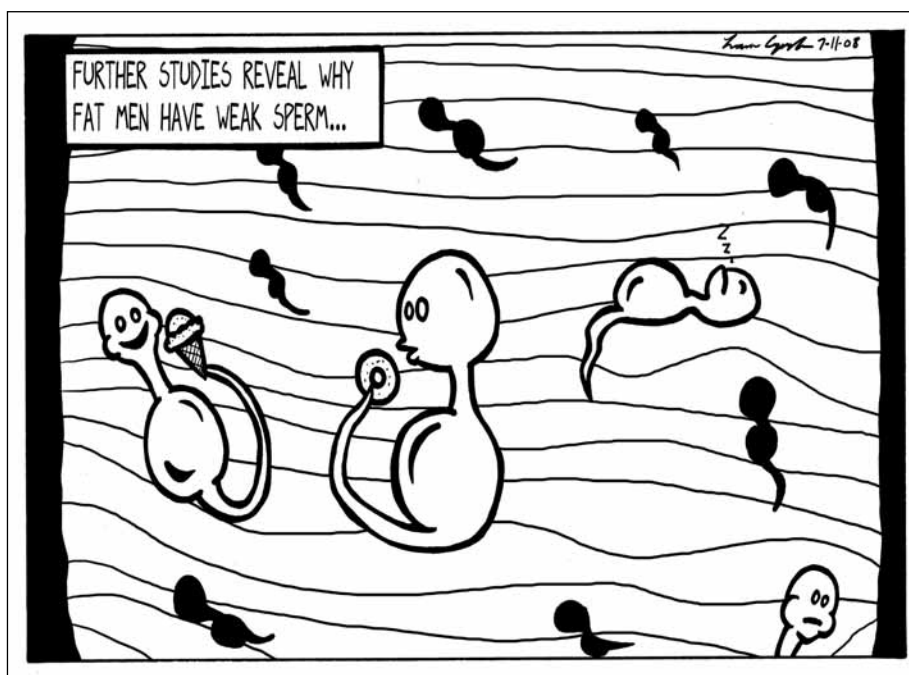
It seems to us that, although the university is going through serious budget cuts, the quality of education and the availability of face-to-face courses should be a priority. As much as online classes are helpful for some of us, others struggle to comprehend theories and curriculum without the option of raising their hands.

Although online classes utilize other forms of communication, such as e-mail and discussion forums, we feel that a certain element of understanding is taken away when a student is taken out of the classroom and thrown into the digital world.

Not to mention it's not an oddity for online classes to use textbooks as a crutch. If we are just taking quizzes on textbook chapters, why bother paying for a professor when we can just read the book on our own?

We come to college not only to walk away with a slip of paper that declares we're smart, but for the actual knowledge that we pick up along the way. Many of us will agree that some of our most memorable lessons have been taught through interaction and hands-on projects that allow us to engage ourselves in the studies that are here to help us succeed in the real world. Unfortunately, many of the online classes offered in some departments can't recreate that real world training and experience. Instead, we're getting WebCT quizzes galore and hundreds of pages to read from textbooks.

The question is, as technology continues to grow, will online classes eventually take over as the primary mode of instruction? Will we be finding ourselves glued to computer screens instead of seated in classrooms having discussions? The thought of losing the traditional classroom setting could very well be a harsh reality one day, and we as students need to make sure that we don't settle for any less of an education than we deserve.



LOUIS COPPOLA / PITT NEWS



DON WRIGHT / PALM BEACH POST

Biden is the right running mate

When you think of Delaware, you might think of the *Simpsons* episode where the only attraction that the family had to look forward to was visiting a screen door factory. While it may not be quite that boring, it's a relatively unknown place compared to the rest of the Northeast. Most people don't know the capital of Delaware, let alone its political representatives.

So when Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del, was chosen to be Sen. Barack Obama's running mate in the 2008 election, many people around the world, ourselves included, were surprised. But it was a nice surprise.

Many people expected (or hoped) that Obama would choose Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., because they believed it would create an unstoppable "dream ticket." They also felt that Obama came in and stole the Democratic nomination out from under her, so he at least owed her the courtesy of being his potential vice president. We're particularly glad that Obama went in a different direction. He chose his running mate based on his own feelings and beliefs, and didn't allow public opinion or media criticism to affect his decision.

Biden is similar to Obama in many ways. When Biden was elected to the Senate in 1972 he became the fifth-youngest senator in U.S. history, having just reached the constitutionally required age of 30.

Biden's past is an interesting one; perhaps part of the reason Obama chose him instead of

other equally qualified candidates for the vice president spot. Biden was raised in a middle-class family, and much like Obama, he had to work for everything he earned.

Even now, after more than 30 years in office, when most politicians would have used their positions to make themselves unbelievably rich, Biden remains a humble individual. He is still not a millionaire, as many politicians inevitably become, and is entirely satisfied with that fact.

In his first speech as Obama's running mate, Biden said: "Ladies and gentlemen, your kitchen table is like mine. You sit there at night ... after you put the kids to bed and you talk ... about what you need ... about being able to pay the bills ... that's not a worry John McCain has to worry about. It's a pretty hard experience. He'll have to figure out which of the seven kitchen tables to sit at."

His commitment to his family is beyond what anyone would expect from a person with such a demanding and significant career. His first wife and daughter were killed in a car accident shortly after he was elected in 1972 and his two sons were critically injured.

He was sworn into office from the bedside of his two sons in the hospital because he refused to leave their side, even for a minute. Most congressional politicians keep a residence in Washington and often only return home when it benefits their political career. Biden, now remarried, makes the two-

hour train ride home each night to Wilmington, Del., in order to spend as much time with his family as possible.

Barack Obama could have chosen a number of candidates who could have brought demographic advantages to his campaign. Gov. Bill Richardson could have helped him win the Latino vote, Clinton could have helped him win the female votes and Gov. Timothy Kaine could have helped him win Virginia, a state that hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1964.

Instead, Obama chose Biden, a middle-class family man and a foreign relations expert who can provide a rebuttal to any argument that the Obama administration would be inexperienced. Most of all, Biden is a career politician who hasn't lost sight of what he stands for and what he represents — the people of Delaware, and the citizens of the United States.

Joe Biden wasn't the most dramatic choice to be Obama's running mate in this landmark election, yet we completely agree that he was the right choice in the end. He brings the character, the passion and the devotion that lacks in so many of our politicians today.

The Obama-Biden ticket may not be the "dream ticket" that everyone had hoped for, but we believe that this will ultimately be a smart partnership between two men who wish to bring new ideas to Washington and rebuild our country to once again be a symbol of hope and prosperity.

Going for gold no excuse to like Games

The spirit of the Olympics.

The glory of international sport, competing against the best in the world on the grandest possible stage.

Give me a break. I am so glad the Olympics are completed. Done. Over. Whatever the Chinese word is, I'm that.

Now I no longer have to hear about how many pounds of pancakes Michael Phelps eats during a day or how the U.S. men's basketball team finally "redeemed" itself from its 2000 and 2004 showings.

I don't have to see Bob Costas' moonish face staring blankly out of the television if I happen to switch to NBC.

It's not the politics that turn me off. Human rights violations, smog, censorship and underage athletes; everybody, including the International Olympic Committee, knew about that back in 2001, when Beijing was awarded the Games.

What bothers me is that once every four years — or two, if you count the Winter Games, which you shouldn't — the entire nation becomes fake sports fans.

It's almost ingrained into our psyche: When the Games are on, you cheer for America, because we are awesome.

Never mind that very few people could have picked Dara Torres out of a lineup before Beijing, or that more people knew who Ryan Atwood was than Ryan Lotche; we have to cheer for them because they are American, and it's somehow a national responsibility.

That is the lamest reason for becoming a fan of anything ever.

So even though I never had a vested interest in the shot put or volleyball or soccer before, I should become a member of their supporting contingents simply because we happen to share citizenship?

Sorry, but no. So hooray for the U.S. men's water polo team taking silver. No one cares, really.



PADRICK BREWER
Editor-in-Chief

It's also the fake pageantry.

There is nothing different about this competition than the Super Bowl, the NBA Finals, the Little League World Series, your intramural flag-football game or the rousing game of close-your-eyes tag you played last week.

It's all sport, and that we treat the Olympics different just because some naked Greeks thought of something interesting like a billion years ago is a waste of time and money.

And energy, too. Save the limited time you give to sport to something local, like UCF, or something you're interested in, or just give your cat a bath. It's all the same, really.

So Phelps wins eight gold medals, Usain Bolt embarrasses everyone who has ever run before and Japan shocks the world to win the final softball gold before it is removed from the Games.

I'm not calling the performances unimpressive, just unnecessary.

I'm cool knowing that Phelps is probably the best swimmer in the world simply by looking at the results from the world championships if I were ever so inclined.

I don't need to be inundated with replays on *SportsCenter* and the local news of him winning, but maybe not winning, a butterfly stroke race.

Nor do I want to. I also don't want to hear about how the Games are the ultimate achievement for some of these sports.

If you can't find out if you are the best in a sport save for once every four years, that's not my fault.

I shouldn't have to be subjected to the inescapable coverage of the Olympics because there needs to be an outlet for weight lifting or judo or anything else.

You want to lift heavy things and be awesome at it? Good for you, just keep it to ESPN2 and the World's Strongest Man competition so I know to avoid it.

So I am going to relax and enjoy my free time now, because I only have four years of it before it all starts again in London.



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