

OUR STANCE

Open teaching is the way to go

Wouldn't it be nice if we lived in a world where college meant more than a simple piece of paper?

A world where you could pick and choose all of your classes that were tailored exactly to your interests, rather than what a department says you should study?

For some students this world is a reality, like those at the Utah State University. Last year, David Wiley taught an online class at Utah State that had about 15 students officially enrolled in the course. By the end of the course, he also had five students who were not enrolled that participated throughout the entire semester and did all of the assigned homework and papers the same as the rest of the students.

At the end of the semester, those who were enrolled got their grade from the school, but those who weren't enrolled in the class received a signed homemade certificate of completion from Wiley that could be used to prove that the class was taken.

Some people might ask why you would take a class if you're not getting credit for it. The answer is that some students don't care about the credit, they just want the general knowledge and skills that the class provides.

Antonio Fini, a doctoral student at the University of Florence, took the class but was one of the five who were not enrolled. He told the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the certificate of completion is all the recognition he needs.

"I include it in my [curriculum vitae,]" Fini said.

We think this is a great idea to get more people into college that either can't afford it or don't necessarily want the whole experience. Obviously, it would most likely have to be limited to online classes, because if schools started opening their traditional doors to anyone and everyone, the four-year students would suffer.

Offering higher educational instruction and learning materials is not necessarily a brand-new concept, but it has not caught on like Wiley hoped it would. While at Utah State, he was the director of the Center for Open and Sustainable Learning. The school's administration was not aware of the certificates that Wiley was issuing until after he left to take a position at Brigham Young University.

When Michael K. Freeman, the associate dean for education outreach at Utah State, heard about the free education, he told the *Chronicle*, "I would have said 'let's ask around before doing that,' simply because I'm a cautious administrator." He wasn't averse to the idea, he just wanted more information and Wiley's peers' approval before they would have approved it.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology was actually one of the first institutions to come up with the idea of "open teaching." In 2001, MIT officials wanted to make lecture notes and course materials available for free online in every course.

According to the *Chronicle*, MIT didn't really see a problem with giving away the information, because it's no different than going to a bookstore, buying a

textbook and attempting to teach yourself the material. It's the interaction with professors who will actually teach you the information that they deem most valuable. That's where MIT, and unfortunately, many other schools draw the line.

Higher education has always been seen as a privilege, not a right. But should that change?

Our tax dollars help fund public universities, so shouldn't every tax-paying citizen be entitled to some amount of free education in return? In countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland, college is free to everyone, and, in some cases, the governments even pay them to attend because they realize the importance of having a well-educated workforce.

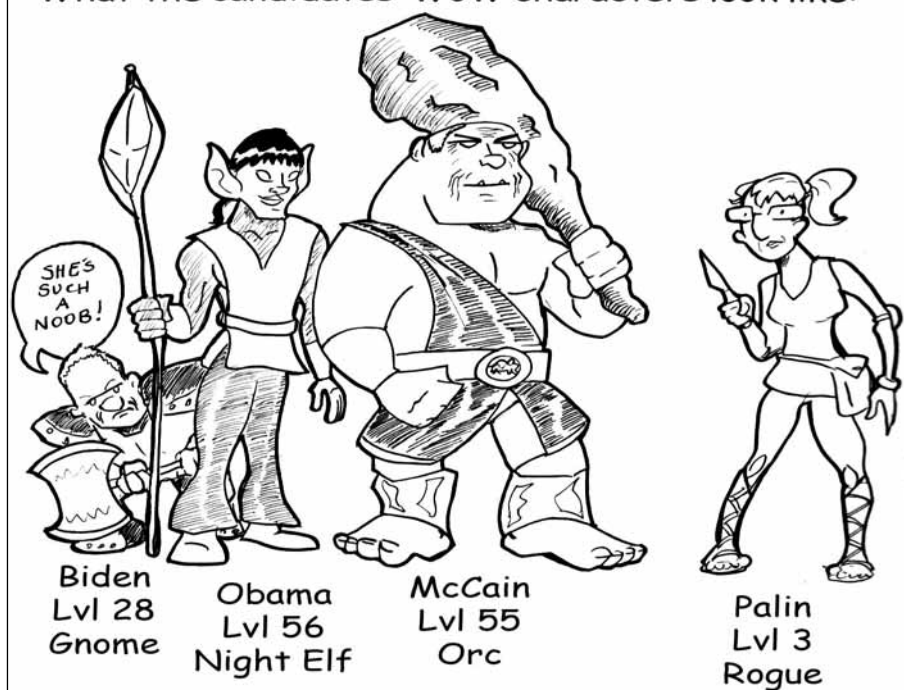
We don't necessarily think the entire college process should be free in the United States, because taxes would have to skyrocket, but there's no reason we can't provide a certain level of higher education to every citizen, free of charge.

Plenty of employers want specific skill sets and would probably rather not wait four years for potential employees to finish an entire degree. If you could just take a class online and not worry about registering with the school or paying an exorbitant amount of money for it, what's the harm?

It seems like it has become the American way to charge for every little detail of one's life.

Hopefully, we can one day use our Nordic friends as an example to create a semi-subsidized higher education system in the U.S.

What the candidates' WoW characters look like:



RINALDO STEPHENS / CENTRAL FLORIDA FUTURE

Constitutional rights are there for a reason

I've mentioned in past articles that there are two things I love talking about but choose not to write about. One is politics; the other is religion.

I've spent nearly a year writing for this publication and trying my best to avoid such treacherous terrains, but the time has come when I have to speak out about a topic that's very dear to me and involves both of these areas: the rights of homosexuals.

Don't expect your average take on this. I'm not going to talk a bunch of jive about which candidate cares more about the plight of homosexuals in our nation. This column is about more than all of that. It's about stupidity.

The idea of a state or federal constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage is absolutely absurd and entirely pointless. In other words, it's just plain stupid.

Let's focus first on the all-powerful Constitution. I've read it in its entirety. I've studied it vigorously. I carry a copy with me in my backpack, just in case someone tries to infringe upon my rights. Needless to say, I love the document that is the backbone of our country.

A few years back while looking over my beloved pocket Constitution, I came to a realization. With the exception of Amendment 18 (prohibition) and Amendment 26 (voting age), every amendment pertaining to the American people is written in order to afford us rights or to explain the rights we already have. There is no such thing as an amendment that takes rights away from an American. If you're not sure where I'm going with this, I'll try explaining it in different terms:

"No State shall make or enforce any



BEN BADIO
Contributing Writer

law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

That is the 14th Amendment, which says state governments cannot pass laws that strip people of their rights.

Therefore, no gay marriage amendments, no gay adoption amendments, no amendments that stop homosexuals from doing anything that they should have the right to do.

Be not deceived by the clever way these amendments are being written. Most of them are written to sound like they are truly affording rights to citizens. For example, on Nov. 4, the registered voters of Florida will get to vote on Amendment 2 which was condemned by a *Future* editorial last week.

Rather than saying "This amendment ensures that two people of the same sex can't marry each other because that would be just weird, and the world would surely come to an abrupt end," it claims to protect the idea of marriage. Since when does legislation protect ideas instead of protecting people? It's written like a conceptual restraining order. After reading the text of these legislative abortions, it doesn't take long to realize just how shady, unethical, and plainly unintelligent they are. I, for one, refuse to allow stupidity to seep into my state's constitution.

If you are registered to vote (today is the deadline to register) I implore you to vote against Amendment 2, if not for the sake of the disregarded rights of gays in Florida, then simply for the sake of intelligence over stupidity.

VP debate didn't offer much clarity

Well, we are torn. After Thursday's Vice Presidential debate, we couldn't possibly stomach telling you which party to turn to yet. In fact, we are almost to a state of apathy. Almost being the key word.

So we're going to take this time to tell you just how ridiculous the entire debacle seemed.

Let's begin with the battle between Senator Joe Biden and Governor Sarah Palin. According to a CNN poll, Biden won the debate with 51 percent of 611 adults polled.

We couldn't possibly agree more with those results. He did seem to offer more solid answers, with a sharp appeal toward framing McCain as a Bush lackey.

Sure, Biden won, as a typical politician should. Perhaps this is why the same poll indicated 70 percent of respondents viewed him as a "typical politician."

Oh, but we can't forget about our lovely beauty queen candidate, Sarah "Maverick" Palin. Maverick is not her real middle name, but it might as well be — she used the word about a million times in one night.

In the same CNN poll, 54 percent of respondents said Palin was more likeable. Well, duh. We think of the two candidates, Palin obviously seems the most down-to-earth. In fact, she seems the most human and probably the most genuine. Using references to her kids and doing what looked like a slight wink at the camera, she comes off as a very real person who can relate to the real things plaguing all of us — although the wink kind of creeped us out. On the other hand, spewing clichés like, "Americans are

cravin' that straight talk," and "walk the walk if you can talk the talk," only catches the attention of the growing population of ignorant Americans.

Don't get us wrong; we don't think Palin rocked the room. Her claim that pulling troops out of Iraq with a flustered comment about showing a white flag of surrender just wasn't convincing compared to Biden's straightforward, "we will end this war." The truly shocking part is that she didn't fall completely on her face like she did in the Katie Couric interview just days prior.

However, the polls don't really give Biden that much credit either. Hey, he's down-to-earth too, right? He says he regularly visits Home Depot where he, "spends a lot of time." What could be more American than that? Plus, he probably went there directly after the debate to hang out with the bros and pick up some mulch and patio chairs for his gigantic house which he calls his "entire investment." He even calls himself "champ" when referencing the good old days. Now that is someone we can relate to.

As we sat undecided watching the debates, hoping for a clear answer as to whose ticket is fit for this country, a lot of us probably walked away more disappointed than when we went into it. Honestly, who could make sense of half the claims both candidates were making?

First Palin suggested that one of the solutions to the war is a surge in Afghanistan. Biden then suggested the commanding general in Afghanistan said a surge won't work. Then, Palin, who used the name of a civil war general instead of the actual officer in question, retorted that

Biden was wrong. And the back-and-forth "he said, she said" continued. Honestly, who the heck are we supposed to believe?

A good majority of Americans are not going to know little tiny details about who voted for what or who said this or that. So why is it that these politicians are using rhetoric to convince us of something during a debate? There always seems to be more to the story and missing pieces to the puzzle. We write this now with a grin on our faces, as we relish in the bogus manipulation of these mysterious politics.

With that being said, let's take a deeper look into the ridiculous wording used to capture our attention. For those who didn't take the debate quite as seriously, you could follow Tina Fey's lead and create a drinking game using the word "fundamental". That could have led to some severe alcohol poisoning though, which the *Future* does not support. Somehow an adjective is supposed to vividly draw the line between the two candidates.

Most of us, in all seriousness, took the debate to heart as Biden stressed that this is easily the most important election since 1932. We completely agree. The problem is, we don't have a Franklin D. Roosevelt up for election.

All we want is someone who is going to go into Washington, D.C., and start taking names. Get us out of this financial crisis, don't take our entire paychecks to fix things and, most importantly, get our men and women out of the Middle East.

Whoever can do that, you have our vote. But we're not yet convinced that anybody can get the job done.

MAN ON THE STREET

THE WORD AROUND CAMPUS

"How did the Student Union construction affect you?"



ASHLEY GRENIER
Micro and Molecular Biology, Freshman

"I always forget that it's closed and then have to backtrack and walk around."



NICOLE GOODBREAD
Biology, Freshman

"It's annoying because I have to walk around to the other entrance, and it adds time and walking distance."



TRAVIS BROOKS
Computer Science, Senior

"It wasn't really inconvenient. It was more amusing than anything else."



ERIN GARLOW
Accounting, Senior

"It's an inconvenience, but I'm not going to cry about it."



MIKIMARU HIRAMA
Political Science, Sophomore

"I didn't really mind taking a few extra steps."



JENNIE HAYES
Interpersonal/Org. Comm., Junior

"I was initially worried that the front entrance of the Student Union being closed would affect [SGA] voting, but it hasn't at all."