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Bowdoin College

Racer-X ignites Ivies blast



Karsten Moran, *Bowdoin Orient*

Assistant Professor of Music Vin Shende performs in a packed Morrell Lounge in Smith Union last night. Shende and Professor of English Aaron Kitch are members of the popular Portland-area band Racer-X.

Plus-minus: three years later

by Mónica Guzmán
ORIENT STAFF

A faculty-approved change to the grading system passed amid a wave of student controversy three years ago still has some students and faculty members debating its impact on Bowdoin's academic environment.

And it all has to do with those little pluses and minuses.

In April 2002, the College faculty voted 45 to 29 to add "+" and "-" to the grading system, essentially doubling the selection of marks professors could use to evaluate student achievement from the previously-used five-point scale that included only A, B, C, D, and F.

"The change did what it was intended to do," said Physics Professor Steven Naculich, who, as chair of the Recording Committee, initially presented the measure to the faculty in 2002. "It allowed a little more flexibility in grading."

The grading scale now includes 10 possible marks, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, and F.

The proposed change was met with strong opposition from the student body in 2002. Students organized forums and protests and even conducted a campus-wide opinion poll before the Faculty vote in which 69 percent of respondents expressed

their objection. Among their concerns were worries that the change would increase stress and tarnish Bowdoin's relatively uncompetitive academic environment.

"I didn't like the change. I feel that a plus/minus system increased the competitiveness and general stress of the student body unnecessarily," said senior Chris McCabe, who would like to see the old system come back. "Several students that I've talked to about it...chose Bowdoin in part because of the lack of a plus/minus system."

One of those students is Jackson Wilkinson '05. Wilkinson not only disapproved of the new grading system, which took effect in his sophomore year, but even considered transferring schools in no small part because of it.

"I rarely heard people speak of grades in any specific way" before the change took effect, Wilkinson said. "Now...the check, instead of the check-plus, you got on that one homework assignment comes into play, and that one question you got

wrong on the midterm becomes a topic of debate. I've seen it, and it just all seems so pathetic to me, and not something I think fits into higher education."

Claire Falck, a senior who recalls the controversy in her first year, does not see a problem in the new system.

"I think that there's definitely a grade awareness at work at Bowdoin, but I don't think that there's anything necessarily wrong with that. If you're going to have a system that involves grades at all, you might as well have [one that is] as specific and accurate as possible," she said.

"I doubt that adding pluses and minuses increased grade awareness in any significant way," Falck said.

Associate Professor of Philosophy Scott Schon, who initially supported the measure but changed his mind in response to student opposition, said he has not seen much of an impact on academic culture since the changes went into effect for the 2002-2003

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Dean Jim Kim to leave College

by Joshua Miller
ORIENT STAFF

Jim Kim, Assistant Dean of First Year Students and Freeman Grant Coordinator since July 2003, has decided to leave the College at the end of this academic year.

"I love Bowdoin. I love working at Bowdoin. I love the people I've met here. Professionally, I couldn't be happier," Kim said.

But, "as I look at Bowdoin, for

me, I think it would have been a great place during college and would be a great place after I've started a family. This has been a great opportunity, but it has come at a time right between those two, and so the timing just feels off."

Although Kim has no definite destination when he leaves Brunswick at the end of July, he has a general idea of where he is headed. Kim is "going to look for a city or a more urban location."

Students and Kim's fellow administrators are sad to see Kim go.

"Dean Kim is an invaluable member of the Bowdoin community," said Appleton Hall head proctor Thomas McKinley '06, who has worked with Kim on numerous occasions. "He will be greatly missed."

"He is a really friendly face around campus and has taken the

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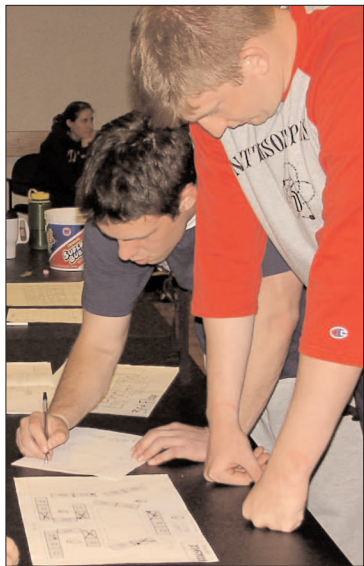
Students try beating odds in lottery

by Anna Karass
ORIENT STAFF

Once again, both students and the Office of Residential Life are dealing with a shortage of off-campus housing, although it is proving less severe than last year's shortage.

Interim Director of Residential Life, Kimberly Pacelli, admits that housing resources have been stretched, but she believes that the additional beds from the School Street and Elm Street apartments, as well as those on the fourth floor of Coleman, have significantly eased the housing strain. The apartments on Elm and School streets were rented from the Maine State Music Theater at the end of last summer after the housing waitlist climbed to 78 students.

"This year and last year, housing has been tight. But this year we went ahead of time to rent the properties [Elm and School streets] and take Coleman fourth floor and make it upper-class," said Pacelli.



Benedicta Doe, *Bowdoin Orient*

Students make their choice for housing in the lottery this week.

For Jen Xu '07, living in Coleman as a sophomore was not appealing at first, but she now concedes it has its

benefits. "I was dismayed to find out that I would be living in Coleman. However, the triple on the fourth floor is quite roomy for two people and I'm happy with its central location on campus," Xu said.

"My only gripe is that it is not chem-free, meaning many noisy parties and plenty of pricey dorm damage," she said.

The Housing Lottery inevitably disappoints some students, who, after entering multiple lotteries, end up in a widely-loathed Chamberlain double. First-year Ben LeHay, while admitting that the system is fair, laments moving from a two-room triple in Winthrop to one of Chamberlain's cramped doubles.

"[The lottery] is fair. But it isn't that great for underclassmen. I mean, I'm basically going downhill from this year," he said.

In general, however, students seem more satisfied with the results of this year's lottery than those of

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Karsten Moran, *Bowdoin Orient*

Competitors Truc Huynh and Jaques Guana, both seniors, campaigned for the mock congressional seat in Smith Union last night.

by Kira Chappelle
ORIENT STAFF

Bowdoin students have one more election to think about before they leave for the summer, but this one isn't for BSG and doesn't have national implications. Seniors Jaques Gauna and Truc Huynh will square off in a mock congressional election, a yearly event for Professor of Government Chris Potholm's seminar students.

On May 11 students will be able

to vote for either Gauna or Huynh in Smith Union. The mock election has been a campus feature every spring since Potholm hatched the idea 15 years ago.

At the beginning of the semester, Potholm divided the students in his advanced seminar in International Relations, Conflict Simulation and Conflict Resolution, into two teams to debate, build coalitions, and practice for the mock election

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