

EDITORIALS



Restrictive cell phone use policy illogical

w. **Suhail Ansari**
Editorials Editor

Of the four students that were sitting at a study table in the Information Resource Center (IRC) after school on Sep. 8, three students, including this columnist, used their cell phones to contact their parents about getting home. It was quite a spectacle as one used a book to cover his phone and another a sweatshirt in order to avoid the penalty of getting one's phone taken away.

Of course, students would have been allowed to exit the IRC to use their phones in the hall, but those three library patrons felt that any disruption of their studying were not warranted.

Why the prohibition? According to IRC coordinator Penny Swartz, "The IRC is an instructional area, and so there is no cell phone use [allowed] from when we open to until we close." She also went on to say that although cell phone use such as texting might cause no harm to other patrons, it sets a detrimental precedent.

Students and alumni apparently disagree, as evidenced by a Facebook™ group titled "I'm convinced IRC stands for Insane Rule Coercing." The group consists of 118 members, almost all of them West students or alums. One West alum asserts on the page, "If I had one brain cell for every useless, arbitrary rule the IRC [staff] have ever enforced, I would be a genius."

Such criticism is not entirely fair, as the IRC was one of the first areas in school to allow mp3 player usage while studying. According to Swartz, the IRC helped initiate mp3 player usage throughout study areas in the school because of student requests based on what she termed "a logical argument."

However, cell phone use after school in a high school library is just such a logical policy.

Since one is allowed to talk to his/her neighbor in a low voice in the IRC, why can't students use their cell phones for a few minutes and talk in a low voice

Librarian Leah White in *Library Journal* (LJ), a librarian trade journal with one of the highest circulation of any librarianship journal, explores cell phone use policy in libraries in the May 2009 issue. White says that cell phone use in the library does not necessarily disrespect other patrons and she observed, "This boils down to a concept that library leaders like Michael Stephens, professor of library and information science at Dominican University (and an LJ columnist), have long advocated: trust the user." It is important to note, however, that White does not fully endorse the absence of restrictions.

Since one is allowed to talk to his/her neighbor in a low voice in the IRC, why can't students use their cell phones for a few minutes and talk in a low voice? Cell phone ringtones shouldn't that be a large issue since most students put their cell phones on silent or vibrate during the day. Furthermore, teenage cell phone users in the IRC are not carrying out long conversations about last night's football game or plans about next weekend since those things are usually discussed through texts. Texting is virtually a victimless crime as it is a silent activity, something that can be used to communicate with parents or members of an academic group.

Swartz argues the slippery slope claim, saying that cell phone use would be abused by students. However, such a precedent has not been established with the mp3 players as they have yet to cause disruption. The IRC would better serve the student population if it allowed students to utilize their cell phones.

The Ohio State University library system, serving one of the largest enrollments in the country has not adopted such a restrictive policy, citing that cell phones can enhance the delivery of information to library patrons.

In addition, Duke University librarian Jean Ferguson said that no restrictive cell phone use policies have been enacted at her university's libraries. In fact, it has been mandated by the Provost that all areas of the campus are cell phone accessible for safety reasons. Ferguson did not find excessive or loud usage disrespectful to other library patrons to warrant any restrictive policies.

No one, least of all this writer, is advocating use of cell phones during the IRC's busiest traffic times, during school. However, for those few students who frequent the IRC after school, a change of policy just makes sense.

Silent moment omission maybe not that bad



w. **Zoe Ljubic**
Editor in Chief

Tragedy struck the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks that killed an estimated 3,500 people left millions mourning. Fear became prominent in Americans' eyes. Sadness and grief entered their hearts. The terrorists that hijacked the four planes provoked a wave of bigotry and discrimination direct at Muslims. Americans feared that another attack would strike, and paranoia was at its height.

A Muslim friend of mine spoke of the intimidated feeling she had living in America in 2001. She explained that as she walked into a grocery store with her mother or father, bystanders would stare at her and her family. At the airport, she was searched privately. Luckily, none of this happens to her today. She isn't looked down upon because she is Muslim anymore.

Last fall, the United States elected a President named Barack Hussein Obama. If one need any further evidence that time heals all wounds, imagine a person with that name *running* for elective office in 2001 or 2002, much less *winning*.

Last year, the American flag was at half-mast on the flag pole at West, and there was a moment of silence during homeroom

It is amazing how within a span of eight years, many Americans have come to view this terrorist attack as a much less oppressive force. I suppose that is an inevitable and ultimately positive direction for the country to take.

However, in our desire to heal and to move forward, we must not forget the lessons of that day.

Last year, the American flag was at half-mast on the flag pole at West, and there was a moment of silence during homeroom. In

2007, a memorial service was held before school to honor those who served the nation that day, those who died and those who lost loved ones. Although it has yet to become a national holiday, the attacks are remembered throughout the U.S. each Sept. 11.

As much as I lament the fact that the school did not mark the day, there is something to be said for the fact that many Americans apparently have moved on from this national nightmare

This year, many of the local junior high schools and neighboring private high schools, such as Resurrection and Loyola Academy, had a moment of silence to honor those who died on Sept 11. Niles West did not. According to Principal Kaine Osburn, the district office did not issue any directive to commemorate the day as it has done in the past. In a recorded address to the student body, Osburn said that he originally included a moment of silence in the daily announcements but forgot to include it. He apologized for what he called "an oversight."

The school day went on as any other normal school day and, while I was upset enough to question Osburn about the omission, upon further reflection, I have decided that maybe that isn't such a bad thing to no longer make a big deal of Sept. 11.

After all, Obama recognized Sept. 11 as a day of service, rather than a day of remembrance. Perhaps that is why District 219 did nothing in remembrance of the attacks this year.

As much as I lament the fact that the school did not mark the day, there is something to be said for the fact that many Americans apparently have moved on from this national nightmare. Although we should remember and honor the victims of the tragedy, it is a good thing that Americans no longer weep from sadness. It makes me happy to see that my Muslim friend need not fear how she is viewed, because Americans are finally able to come together and get along. We are finally able to go about our everyday activities without being scared. It is a relief to see that eight years after the tragedy, America is able to look past the terrible damage.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that District 219 will choose to mark the anniversary in some way, no matter how brief or upbeat, on Sept. 11, 2010.

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WestWord

west opinions

North game highlights need for journalistic integrity



Hillary Lindwall
Managing Editor

As a reporter, it is my job to let the public know when a major event occurs. This summer, I attended a journalism program at Northwestern University, where I increased my knowledge of the ins and outs of reporting and learned strategies to improve the skills I already had.

One of the most important things I learned is that as a reporter, people trust what I have to say. It is of utmost importance that I have my facts straight, or I lose my credibility. Without credibility, there is no reporting. No one would want to get news from someone who does not have correct information.

Because of the new respect I gained for credibility, I was very surprised to learn that the so-called professional media did not have their facts straight when they reported the fight at the Sept. 4 Niles West vs. Niles North football game. Both WBBM Newsradio 780 and www.yourseason.suntimes.com reported rumors that a gun was pulled during the fight. However, in a note that West Principal Kaine Osburn mailed to parents, Osburn said that there were no

guns present at the fight.

Although both sources said that the rumor that there was a gun could not be confirmed, they should not even have reported the rumor.

This incident brings to mind a similar incident that occurred on Sept. 11 of this year, in which CNN reported trouble on the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.

What was actually a routine Coast Guard drill caused a 9/11 scare when an overzealous CNN reporter monitoring a police radio band mistook the drill for a terrorist attack, thereby scaring the wits out of D.C. and suburban Virginia residents.

After the incident was cleared up, CNN claimed that it was necessary to report the scare even though it was only a rumor. They said that it would have been irresponsible if they had not reported the story because the public should be informed when such events occur.

To me (and to White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, who lambasted the reported at a briefing), it seems as though CNN's argument is unstable and an obvious cover-up for a mistake. They should have checked their facts before they caused a 9/11 scare.

It is very surprising to think that professionals can make what I consider to be a rookie mistake. The first rule of reporting is to make sure that all of the facts are correct. By saying that guns were brought to the football game, our schools now have tarnished reputations. Without the facts, the news does not exist. Without the news, the world will be left in the dark and uninformed. It is extremely necessary for the media—high school, college and professional outlets—to double and triple check their facts before they report a story.

Common Application not common enough for seniors

Editorial

When applying to medical school, virtually every respected American university accepts the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS). These independent institutions of higher learning have all figured out a way to centralize, using a non-profit consortium to allow ease of application to participating schools. This service allows students to produce one excellent document representing their years of diligent undergraduate work to submit to all schools, as opposed to several mediocre applications to submit to individual schools.

several teacher recommendations. Member colleges are allowed to provide supplements, which can be extra essays, according to www.commonapp.org.

The other, competing application is the Universal College Application, which was founded in 2007 by some of the same developers that made the Common Application, according to *Business Week*. They wish to cater to a larger market that does not require essays and teacher recommendations; this is why many public schools do not use the Common Application.

When colleges wish to measure objectively students' suitability for college level work, they employ just two standards: the ACT or the SAT. So why has the college application system not followed suit in standardizing?

If colleges and universities were to confine themselves to the aforementioned two forms, just as they do with standardized tests, applicants' lives would be so much easier, and the college selection process would be streamlined.

Unfortunately, many institutions do not use standardized applications and force students applying to a variety of schools to enter redundant information several times. Several hundred other institution-specific applications exist, many which ask the same questions and virtually the same type of essay questions.

If a West student were to apply to a few Illinois schools, (s)he might consider University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), University of Chicago (U of C), Northwestern University (NU), Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I). U of C, NU and IIT all use the Common Application. The public schools employ their own. Even more counterintuitive is the fact that UIC and U of I—two institutions in the same system—require separate applications.

This process of applying with several different applications dilutes the creativity and motivation of the student. What the colleges need to do is move towards centralization. The Common Application and Universal College Application should be the standard application for all institutions of higher learning in the U.S., allowing students to produce one or two brilliant documents as opposed to several diluted ones.

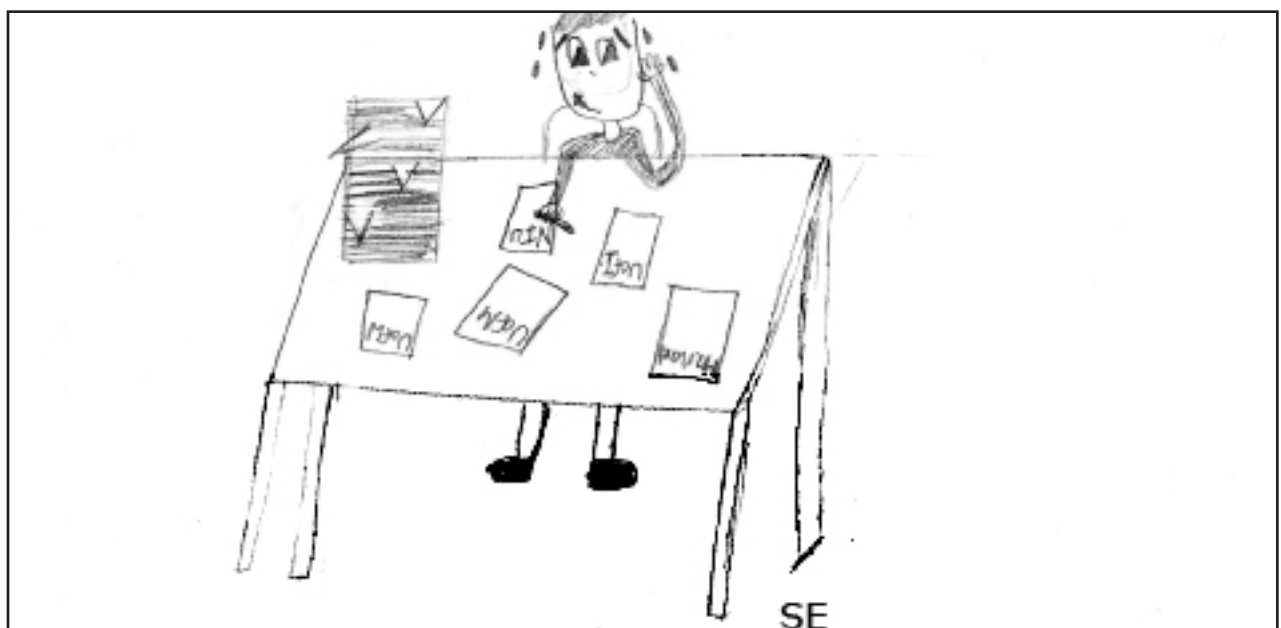
This process of applying with several different applications dilutes the creativity and motivation of the student

Although the AMCAS has been around for years, undergraduate programs, some that can be just as competitive as medical school admissions, have yet to standardize the application process.

The best attempt of this has been the Common Application, which was founded in 1975 by 15 private colleges and has now grown to include 391 institutions, according to www.commonapp.org. One can apply to Mills College, a small college of about 1,500 students, or Yale University, a member of the Ivy League, using the same form.

The organization is run by a board of trustees, whose members are all volunteer representatives from the member colleges; the trustees also rotate between the member colleges.

The requirements to join as a member college include being a non-profit accredited institution, to look at students holistically and to treat the application equally with other institutionally endorsed forms. This application includes an essay section and



Should all colleges accept the Common Application?

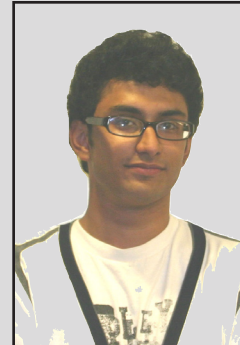
Staff



Kaine Osburn

Yes, because it makes life easier and it reduces stress.

Senior



Irfan Qurashi

No, because some colleges specialize in different areas, so they need different materials.

Junior



Reem Ghawi

Yes, because if you are filling out the same thing twice, it would be more efficient [with the Common Application].

Sophomore



Kathy Kastanes

Yes, because it is easier for the student.

Freshman



Amir Durakovic

I think they should all use the Common Application. Why should students have to fill out the same information over and over?