

STUDENT FREE PRESS

AUGUST 18, 2008

An Independent Publication by Macon State College Students

Vol. 1; Issue 1

OP/ED

Dr. Bell lend us your ear

Dear Dr. Bell:

At a luncheon I attended last spring, you extended an invitation for the students to visit you if we had concerns about MSC. I assumed it was a sincere invitation...until now.

I am sure that you are aware of the discontent of the *Matrix* staffers last year. (If not, please refer to the editorials in our final issue and the May 3 article in the *Telegraph*).

After a year of being subjected to the condescension and poor judgement of the Publication Coordinator, the authoritarian decisions of Dean McCraney and Student Life's subversive attempts to censor the student press, is it any wonder that we wanted to meet with you instead of Dean McCraney?

Imagine our concern when our first planning session was met with the announcement that printing of the *Matrix* had been postponed indefinitely. Once again, it appears that MSC administration is trying to squelch the voice of its students.

By postponing the publication, all MSC students are suffering. The award-winning publication provides information for the MSC community. It also provides an opportunity for journalism and CIT students to build their portfolios with clips of their printed articles. Clips are essential for students seeking media internships which ultimately lead to employment.

While this issue may seem trivial to the powers that be, it is a very important issue to us. The rights of a free student press are at stake. We urge you to honor the invitation you extended to students last year. We ask you once more Dr. Bell, please lend us your ear.

Respectfully,

Jenny Murr, Former EIC
(On behalf of *Matrix* staff)

"... School officials fail to teach the First Amendment when they talk about the First Amendment, but discourage free expression, deny religious liberty, and censor the student press. Far too many schools are failing to teach, practice and model the First Amendment."

Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar
Freedom Forum First Amendment Center
Vanderbilt University

Matrix students start independent publication

By Jenny Murr

Matrix newspaper bins sit empty on Macon State College's campus despite increased student participation this year. On Aug. 11, Publication Coordinator, Ray Lightner, announced that the student publication was indefinitely postponed. In response to the announcement, *Matrix* staffers voted to create an independent student newspaper.

Lightner told *Matrix* staff and faculty advisors that Student Life was creating new bylaws which were being reviewed by attorneys. This decision comes after a year of discord between Student Life and the *Matrix* Editorial Board that led

"The lifeblood of University is the free and open exchange of ideas. Indeed, it cannot exist without it. Thus, the suppression of the student press is in fact suppression of the student body itself, and is therefore toxic to the institution."

**--James Fraley, CIT senior
Former Managing Editor
*Matrix***

members of the *Matrix* editorial board to resign their positions of leadership at the end of the spring '08 semester.

Disappointed by Student Life's decision, students voted to start an independent publication. The *Student Free Press* will operate without the \$24,000 budget from MSC Student Life. *Free Press* staffers will provide operating costs until advertising revenue can be raised.

Alex Bender, MSC Business student, is the only student to apply for the current editor-in-chief position. "I originally had been under the impression that the *Matrix* would, in fact, be returning in the



fall and made the decision to remain at MSC to continue working towards a degree and to work with the *Matrix*. Finding out that the *Matrix* was postponed indefinitely, and only a week before fall classes are to commence, is quite disheartening," Bender said. "At this juncture, it's almost too late to make arrangements to attend another school that will be running a student publication in the fall. The experience that will be lost by not having a college paper at MSC is immeasurable, not only to myself but to everyone who anticipated being involved with the *Matrix*."

MSC has supported the student newspaper since the 70s. Until his retirement last year, Dr. Larry Fennelly served as adviser to the *Matrix*.

After many fruitless meetings with Dean McCraney last year, *Matrix* staff members requested a meeting to discuss postponement of the paper with Dr. Bell. Mr. John Cole, Vice President for Institutional Advancement denied their request.

The *Student Free Press* will be available every other Monday and will provide students with information about campus and community activities. Students interested in working with the *Student Free Press* should email maconstudentfreepress@gmail.com.

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