Editorial:
Putting students deeper in debt

There is no way President Bush can be living in the same reality as the rest of us. If he were, he’d be able to understand the consequences of the vicious cycle he’s perpetuating with the preposterous budget-cutting bill he approved last week.

Mark your calendars, everyone, because you’re all going to want to remember Feb. 8, 2006. It’s the day that college students everywhere got pretty nicely screwed.

It’s bad enough that the average college student owes between $17,000 and $20,000 in loans by the time graduation rolls around, and the average Rider student owes more than $30,000 in loans when he or she receives that coveted diploma. But now, thanks to the ingenuous bill that will result in a $12.7 billion cut in federal student loans and a significant rise in interest rates, students will have an even harder time both affording tuition payments and paying off the loans they’ve accrued during their college careers.

President Bush was apparently thrilled when the House passed this law by a scant two-vote majority. It seems as though the money the government will save by making college more of a financial burden — thus denying many potential college students the education that would have been supremely beneficial in making their futures a little brighter — will go to paying off the growing federal deficit, funding the Iraq War and repairing the damage from Hurricane Katrina.

Okay, so funding the post-hurricane recovery efforts is a worthy cause, and the Iraqi population deserves freedom just as much as the citizens of any other country do. But what about the future of America’s students? Is it fair to deny a financially strapped high schooler the chance to receive the very college education and life experience that may help him transcend his humble and seemingly hopeless beginnings? Is it fair to leave recent graduates even deeper in debt after dumping them into the real world? Many of us aren’t heading right from the commencement ceremony to a lofty job that will magically make our student loans disappear within a matter of months, so we ought to be a little concerned about this bill’s ramifications.

The rising interest rates of student loans will supposedly stay at fixed rates, no longer fluctuating based on that year’s market value, and a very meager portion — about $3.75 billion — of the money saved by this new bill will be funding a program that will offer grants to a very select group of students. This latter point, unfortunately, is utterly useless to the vast majority of students. And even the varying interest rates we are used to have not been even remotely close to this new fixed figure.

Rider’s SGA has taken the first step in opposing the increasing interest rates, and we should all support this movement in every way possible. We’ve all gained an invaluable experience because of what we’ve learned both in the classroom and from college life in general. It’s unfair to deny both the younger adults tell government what they want and their kids pay for it. Deficits are when adults tell government what they want and their kids pay for it.”

— Richard Lamm

On the Bright Side:

The Freshman Experience’s true nature

Parents, teachers and the administration all say I need to make the most of my time at Rider. Orientation’s big message to all the freshmen was “get involved.” After my first semester, I realized the message should have been “hit the books,” since it costs too much to let freshman year slip away because of a $20 bottle of Bacardi.

Many of my friends learned this lesson the hard way. Some lost their scholarships, many are on academic probation and a few even failed out. Where is their motivation? Yes, college is a place for good times, but those good times can only come after one does the work. In Conover, many freshmen were cracking the seals of their liquor bottles before cracking open their notebooks. It seemed Conover was branded with the motto “The heck with class; where is the party?”

When I asked how people did in their first semester, I heard “academic probation,” which is given to students who have a GPA below 2.0. I could not believe how many freshmen were on it, and — even worse — how many didn’t care or found it funny.

The grim reality about the Freshman Experience is that there was not one moment last semester that was conducive to academic achievement and intellectual stimulation. Not enough attention was paid to grades, making the Freshman Experience was created to help its residents merely survive instead of succeed.

There is a solution that would make Conover a better place for students. They need to be inspired by those who have been there. “The Faculty-in-Residence help create a climate conducive to academic achievement, scholarship, and intellectual stimulation.” In reality, Conover has done the opposite for many students in their first semester. Many have taken drinking as their favorite pastime and have let it override the importance of schoolwork.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Christmas is the time when kids tell Santa what they want and adults pay for it. Deficits are when adults tell government what they want and their kids pay for it.”

— Richard Lamm

The Rider News welcomes letters on all subjects of interest to the Rider community. Letters must be typed and include the name, address, phone number and signature of the author for verification. Send to The Rider News via e-mail (ridernews@rider.edu), campus mail or hand delivery to the Ridge House. All letters must be received before midnight on the Monday preceding publication, or else they will be held until the following week. The Rider News reserves the right to edit all letters for space and clarity.