

Editorial Cartoon



Is it already time to revamp VAMP?

On the first day of my freshman year, I expected to live out rumors that as I walked the halls, upperclassmen would shove me into lockers and offer to sell me an elevator pass. Those looming doors of Entrance 1 petrified me. I could have used some guidance to help me adjust, to lessen my anxiety about my new environment.

While the Viking Advisory and Mentor Program (VAMP) has that aim, the program could use some work.

On paper, VAMP is about helping freshmen feel socially comfortable and providing a mentor-student relationship. At the same time though, the program gives upperclassmen superficial leadership positions, filling an extra space on college applications with minimal effort.

I'm not saying VAMP mentors don't work hard or that they don't make a sacrifice by giving up half of their own lunch periods. But in other clubs throughout the school, members spend a year or two working their way up, while simply being a member of VAMP automatically equates to leadership.

Colleges tell applicants they want students who are not only involved but also hold leadership positions in their activities. The problem with VAMP



Elise Dirkes-Jacks

is that there is no middle ground. Students do not have to work their way up, so these positions should hold less meaning on an application.

But while mentors benefit from the program, not all freshmen are as enthusiastic to participate in it. A student with only 25 minutes for lunch is likely to be resentful when he knows his friend has the full 50 minutes.

Granted, some students are grateful for a forum to have their questions answered and to build relationships with upperclassmen they can trust. I think I would have been part of this group myself when I was a freshman. To me, 25 minutes of my lunch would have seemed a nominal cost to reduce my high school-induced stress.

It is true that a student who was not selected may now join, but the initial choice should be the student's rather than the result of a random selection.

Even if every participant appreciated

the extra guidance in September, the odds are slim that they will feel the same way in May. By then, they will have mastered their locker combinations, found the quickest routes between classes and discovered their niche.

VAMP has definite potential. At its core, helping freshmen feel more comfortable in high school and giving upperclassmen a chance to share their experience is not a bad idea.

Perhaps fewer freshmen would have dropped the program if they had to give up their lunch only two or three times a week instead of four. The more bitter students are about losing their social time, the less likely they are to take advantage of the support VAMP offers and the less likely they are to stay in the program altogether.

It would also make more sense for VAMP to function only during first semester. If freshmen still need their mentors after that, they can always contact them on their own time. If the mentors are really interested in helping students instead of helping themselves get into college, they shouldn't mind at all.

Although VAMP isn't perfect, it shouldn't disappear from Fremd. With a few fundamental changes, it could provide a very positive experience for future freshmen.

VIKING VOICE

What are you looking forward to in the new school year?



“I cannot wait to get accepted to colleges, get senioritis, graduate and have a wild night at prom.”

-James Chung, senior

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Hopefully conducting the orchestra later in the year, because I am interning in freshman orchestra right now.

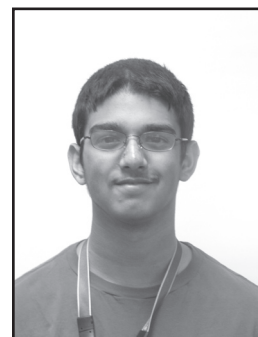
-Lia Pagones, junior



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Trying new, interesting classes that I was not able to take last year and becoming more involved.”

-Susmit Sukthanker, sophomore



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I am looking forward to dances, new clubs, meeting new people and learning new subjects that are available to me.

-Amy Byrne, freshman



Compiled by Arjun Thakkar

Quinn's lottery deal a repeat of Daley's blunder

It seems that Illinois politicians are intent on repeating one another's mistakes. Just a year after Mayor Daley's botched parking meter lease deal, Gov. Pat Quinn is taking the same missteps that will end up costing Illinois taxpayers billions of dollars.

The city of Chicago and the state are desperately seeking ways to make up their record deficits.

On Sept. 15, Quinn announced the state would delegate management of the state lottery to the private Northstar Lottery Group. Quinn's actions mirror those of Mayor Daley, who in December of 2008 leased the parking meter system to a private company in an attempt to alleviate an ailing budget deficit.

In the time since, it has become clear that the taxpayers were cheated out of billions of dollars in the parking-meter deal. Chicago drivers will end up paying private companies 10 times what the city government received when it sold the contract, netting nearly \$10 billion in profit for the companies.

Inspector General David Hoffman has come out with a scathing report on the city's lack of honesty and independent research, causing the city to underestimate the value of the parking meters.

The governor and his office have shown an equal disregard for transparency and thorough analysis, causing suspect circumstances under which only three companies' bids were considered, one of them being thrown out immediately without any reason given. The names of the committee members evaluating the bids have not been released either.

In addition, the Northstar Lottery Group is composed of three companies who are under contract for providing services to the lottery. With the awarding of the contract to the Northstar Group, the companies it is composed of will essentially be able to award contracts to themselves.

The sum that the government has received from contracting out the lottery has also been cut into by the amount it has had to pay to the consulting firms who took a cut out of the profits in the deal.

At the end of the day, Quinn is sacrificing long-term taxpayer revenues for quick budget fixes in the form of an upfront lump-sum payment. Aside from its minimal impact on the actual budget deficit, Quinn has shrouded the process behind a cloud of secrecy, the exact opposite of what we need in the wake of the political chaos that the state of Illinois has had to deal with recently.

EDITORIAL

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