



## **Barker Addresses Students, Faculty at Town Hall**

**By: Amanda Carey, Editor**

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One thing is for sure- President Barker maintains his stance that Clemson is the number university in the country. In a town hall meeting hosted by student media on November 18, Barker answered "Without question," when asked if he still stood by his summertime ranking.

"If the question had been what was the best research school, or the best funded, I'd answer differently," said Barker. "If the question was what school had the smartest students, I'd answer differently." But for Barker, the undergraduate, "holistic" experience is what puts Clemson University over the top.

To an audience of about 75 students and faculty, Barker answered questions for two hours on topics ranging from e-portfolio, to the quest for Top 20 status, to parking on campus. But it was the unpopular e-portfolio that sparked the most contention.

One student in particular, senior audio engineering major Justin Pino, really challenged Barker. Pino asked questions like why a general education e-portfolio is required on top of his major portfolios, and if Clemson really wouldn't allow him to graduate if he didn't complete it. Barker referred most of the inquiries to Provost Doris Helms, who answered with an air of exasperation. "If you don't pay your parking tickets, you won't get a diploma," said Helms. "We will hold your diploma if you don't complete an e-portfolio."

But Pino wasn't satisfied with that answer. "No, I still think I could graduate without doing it," he told The Observer after the event. And indeed, in a post-meeting conversation with Helms, The Observer learned that the university had agreed to a compromise for December 2009 and May 2010 graduates.

Essentially, those students can still officially walk at graduation and be considered a graduate, but no actual diploma will be issued if the e-portfolio was not finished.

According to Helms, this is because the university faculty has not adequately prepared students to complete the new requirement. In fact, Barker revealed that as of the night of the meeting, only 50 percent of December graduates had completed the portfolio.

As a result, it comes down to how much current seniors value a piece of paper they can frame and hang above the mantle. But Barker and Helms, of course, pushed the students in attendance to complete the "very doable requirement," saying it would only take about two hours to complete. "You may not appreciate it now, but you'll appreciate it later," said Helms.

Barker was also challenged on the fact that Tillman Hall's namesake, Ben Tillman was a radical racist, even for his time. When specifically asked if Clemson officials would or have ever considered renaming the iconic building, Barker said that there had been discussions, but said that Clemson history didn't stop with Tillman.

History is there for everyone to see and know, and Clemson's especially should be laid out for everyone to see. "Trying to hide that just doesn't seem right," said Barker. This was of course, only minutes before Barker, in response to another question, said Clemson hasn't done enough to encourage diversity on campus.

Barker also addressed Clemson's facilities, saying that plans were in the works to build an Academic Success Center building next to the library, a Life Sciences building, and a new IT building. Plans were put on hold however, because of the budget crisis. Barker said they would be reevaluated in January.

Baker also informed the audience that Clemson University had received \$14 million in federal stimulus money. Ten million dollars of that, he said, would go toward renovating Lee Hall, home of Clemson's architecture program.

But according to Barker, the stimulus money isn't the only "improvement" in Clemson's finances. Since the budget crisis hit, university officials have been working toward finding and implementing new cost-saving measures to increase efficiency.

Let's just hope that the new implementations will be effective. Surprisingly, tuition increases were not addressed at the meeting, but if changes in Clemson's financial practices don't change soon, the amount of money students pay each year just might go up again.

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