



# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

## University Dropout Rate Hurts S.D.

**ARGUS LEADER, Sioux Falls:** College recruitment is a tough job in South Dakota these days.

Besides getting kids to sign up for classes and choose a dorm, now the focus includes retention more than ever. State universities are working to bring freshmen back as sophomores, and in the early stages of the efforts, they're losing ground, slightly.

The state's six public universities have focused on helping students feel that they belong on campus and can get academic or social help when they need it. The universities have new software to earlier identify at-risk students, require seminar courses to help freshmen get acquainted with campus and have overhauled the way they help struggling students with math courses. It's all part of the retention effort, which leads to a higher graduation rate.

So far, the average number of freshman students who return as sophomores is 72 percent, the same as last year. The system overall, which accounts for students who transfer to other regional universities is 75 percent, dropping a percentage point from a year earlier. Results are mixed among the schools, as well. For example, Black Hills State University made improvements from 59 percent last year to 65 percent this year. The University of South Dakota, on the other hand, saw its rates fall from 78 percent last year to 75 percent this year.

We don't have an easy solution to help solve the problem but applaud the Board of Regents for looking seriously at the reasons behind the state's dropout rate. The regents thinks retention is so important that they are considering awarding schools bonuses for doing well. Student success not only helps the six schools but also provides a well-educated and trained people for the state's work force.

We would like to see the regents continue to lead to turn the problems around and bring all of the state's public universities into an era of retention success. The state needs to continue to aggressively pursue reasons behind the dropout numbers and look at multiple solutions to help students stay in college in order to be prepared for professions that can raise their standard of living and quality of life.

That's important on an individual level and for the entire state.

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The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

### TODAY IN HISTORY

#### By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Oct. 15, the 289th day of 2012. There are 77 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Oct. 15, 1917, Dutch dancer Mata Hari, convicted of spying for the Germans, was executed by a French firing squad outside Paris.

**On this date:** In 1858, the seventh and final debate between senatorial candidates Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas took place in Alton, Ill.

In 1860, 11-year-old Grace Bedell of Westfield, N.Y., wrote a letter to presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln, suggesting he could improve his appearance by growing a beard.

In 1928, the German dirigible Graf Zeppelin landed in Lakehurst, N.J., completing its first commercial flight across the Atlantic.

In 1937, the Ernest Hemingway novel "To Have and Have Not" was first published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

In 1945, the former premier of Vichy France, Pierre Laval, was executed for treason.

In 1946, Nazi war criminal Hermann Goering fatally poisoned himself hours before he was to have been executed.

In 1951, the classic sitcom "I Love Lucy" premiered on CBS with the episode "The Girls Want to Go to the Nightclub."

In 1964, it was announced that Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev had been removed from office.

In 1969, peace demonstrators staged activities across the country as part of a "moratorium" against the Vietnam War.

In 1976, in the first debate of its kind between vice presidential nominees, Democrat Walter F. Mondale and Republican Bob Dole faced off in Houston.

In 1991, despite sexual harassment allegations by Anita Hill, the Senate narrowly confirmed the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, 52-48.

In 1997, British Royal Air Force pilot Andy Green twice drove a jet-powered car in the Nevada desert faster than the speed of sound, officially shattering the world's land-speed record. NASA's plutonium-powered Cassini spacecraft rocketed flawlessly toward Saturn.

**Ten years ago:** ImClone Systems founder Sam Waksal pleaded guilty in New York to charges stemming from the biotech company's insider trading scandal. (He was later sentenced to more than seven years in prison.) Iraqis turned out for a national referendum on whether Saddam

Hussein should remain their president for another seven years; Saddam won with a reported 100 percent of the votes cast. Five Japanese kidnapping victims who'd been abducted in their youth by North Korean spies finally returned home, tearfully hugging their aging parents for the first time in nearly a-quarter century.

**Five years ago:** Americans Leonid Hurwicz, Eric S. Maskin and Roger B. Myerson won the Nobel economics prize. The Colorado Rockies beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 6-4 in Game 4 to sweep the NL championship series and advance to the World Series for the first time in franchise history.

**One year ago:** Italian riot police fired tear gas and water cannons in Rome as violent protesters hijacked a peaceful demonstration against corporate greed, smashing bank windows, torching cars and hurling bottles. Iran's Foreign Ministry dismissed U.S. accusations that Tehran was involved in a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington, saying the claims had no "legal logic." The Texas Rangers finished off the Detroit Tigers to become the American League's first repeat champion in a decade with a 15-5 win in Game 6 of the ALCS. Former Hollywood superagent Sue Mengers, 81, died in Beverly Hills, Calif.

**Today's Birthdays:** Former auto executive Lee Iacocca is 88. Jazz musician Freddy Cole is 81. Singer Barry McGuire is 77. Actress Linda Lavin is 75. Rock musician Don Stevenson (Moby Grape) is 70. Actress-director Penny Marshall is 69. Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Palmer is 67. Singer-musician Richard Carpenter is 66. Actor Victor Banerjee is 66. Tennis player Roscoe Tanner is 61. Singer Tito Jackson is 59. Actor-comedian Larry Miller is 59. Actor Jere Burns is 58. Actress Tanya Roberts is 57. Movie director Mira Nair is 55. Britain's Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, is 53. Chef Emeril Lagasse is 53. Rock musician Mark Reznick is 50. Singer Eric Benet is 46. Actress Vanessa Marcil is 44. Singer-actress-TV host Paige Davis is 43. Actor Dominic West is 43. Rhythm-and-blues singer Guinewine is 42. Actor Chris Olivero is 33. Christian singer-actress Jaci Velasquez is 33. Rhythm-and-blues singer Keyshia Cole is 31. Tennis player Elena Dementieva is 31. Actor Vincent Martella ("Everybody Hates Chris") is 20.

**Thought for Today:** "The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking." — John Kenneth Galbraith, Canadian-born American economist (1908-2006).

### FROM THE BIBLE

The **LORD** is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Psalm 9:9. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

# The Obama Challenge

BY BILL O'REILLY  
 Creators Syndicate

President Obama is in trouble. Poll after poll shows Mitt Romney gaining ground almost everywhere, and Gallup even has the governor ahead by two points nationally. Also, reports say there is a low-level panic going on inside the Obama re-election headquarters in Chicago. So it's crunch time for the president. He must perform well in the debate next Tuesday night or begin auditioning for a cable pundit job.

Anyone who knows Obama understands that he likes being the underdog and will most likely deliver a rousing performance at Hofstra University. Obama is certainly aware that another emotional no-show will doom him. In Denver, he looked like he spent the pre-debate hours at a medical marijuana shop.

But the "town hall" debate format on Tuesday gives a slight advantage to Romney. The candidates will field questions from undecided voters selected by the Gallup organization. After the question is posed, Obama and Romney will have two minutes to answer it. The moderator, Candy Crowley, a CNN correspondent, will then jump in to "facilitate a discussion."

What this means is simple: The regular person asking the question will most likely frame it in a general way allowing the candidates to pretty much say whatever they want.

For example:  
 Question: "My cousin Otis has been unemployed for eight years. How can you get him a job?"

Answer (President Obama): "If Otis had worked at

an American car company, he'd be employed today because I saved that industry."

Answer (Mitt Romney): "I had a cousin named Otis, too, and when I turned the Olympics around, I gave him a job.

You get the idea.

What will most likely happen during the town hall is that Obama will hearken back to the first debate and list all the "lies" he and his handlers believe Romney told. Only he won't call them "lies." He'll imply that and try to paint the governor as a charlatan who changes positions the way Lady GaGa changes costumes.

But the governor should easily be able to counter because he has to know what's coming. All he has to do is watch MSNBC, which chronicles his "lies" daily. So Romney will most likely retort with the old Reaganism: "There you go again." He can't actually say that, but he'll use words to that effect and continue portraying the president as a clueless socialist.

In the end, the town hall debate will be less punchy than the Denver back and forth. The smart money is predicting a draw, with both candidates bloviating at will. It will be almost impossible to pin them down.

Next up: foreign policy in Boca Raton, Fla. With the Libyan fiasco hot in the news, that debate could be quite a challenge for the president.

*Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."*



Bill O'REILLY

# Smile When You Say That

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — After two debates, one presidential and one vice presidential, we can fairly conclude that Obama and Biden are happy warriors.

They just smile and smile and smile.

Whereas President Obama's smile during his debate with Mitt Romney seemed to be an afterthought, proffered as recompense to relieve the strain of his lackluster performance, Vice President Biden's was an Uzi. From the time he sat down next to Paul Ryan, he was locked and loaded with the pearliest chompers since Matt Dillon donned horse veneers to impress Cameron "There's Something About Mary" Diaz.

No matter what Ryan said (except when he told a personal story), Biden smiled. Like the Cheshire cat, he smiled. Like an Ultra Brite model, he smiled. Like someone trying to seem friendly, bemused, stunned to hear such malarkey from his debate opponent, fill-in-the-blank, he smiled. But Biden's was no friendly smile. It looked like one, otherwise known as acting, but it was no more sincere than Biden's repeated references to Ryan as "my friend."

It was a tactical weapon intended to intimidate and out-psych his wonky opponent.

As we all learn, usually painfully, a smile isn't always a smile. The difference between a smile and a grimace, after all, is a matter of a few muscles. Or as Shakespeare had Hamlet say: "That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain."

No, I'm not calling Biden a villain, but when someone employs a smile with purpose, as he obviously did, there's good cause to examine the behavior more closely. What did he intend? What impression was he hoping to make? What was the effect on his audience?

Post-debate commentary has included the likelihood that Democrats, deflated since Sub-Obama's encounter with Uber-Romney, saw Biden as a mirthful wonk-slayer. A Goliath in years and stature, he slew young David from Accounting. Which is, of course, not the way the story is supposed to go.

Non-Democrats, including Republicans and independents, likely saw Biden as dismissive, rude and unnecessarily condescending. A man confident of his facts doesn't have to deflect a weak argument with a sneer or a smile. A senior statesman can afford to be gracious, especially if he believes the facts are on his side.

But were they? Fact-checkers are furiously whittling away, but one obvious and potentially harmful error

was the vice president's incorrect assertion that our murdered ambassador and staff in Benghazi hadn't asked for and been denied additional security. In congressional testimony the day before, State Department officials admitted exactly that.

Biden did render a satisfying "gotcha" of his own when he reminded Ryan that the Wisconsin congressman had written the Obama administration two letters requesting stimulus funds. Ouch.

Ryan, persistently respectful, managed to maintain as close to a poker face as one can under the circumstances.

Biden's smile, though it may be the most remembered part of the debate, probably didn't work as intended. Democrats may have overlooked the inauthenticity of the smile, not to mention Biden's repeated interruptions, because he was projecting the aggression they were feeling. As their agent, he was compensating for the president's perceived weakness. The anger they feel is really toward Obama, of course; Ryan was merely his stand-in.

Research on smiles is extensive and fascinating. Sincere smiles, which have a name — the Duchenne smile — are related to health and longevity, among other things. But studies also show that different kinds of smiles convey different messages. Our deep brains instinctively decipher smiles and generally know what they mean. A sincere smile conveys confidence, humor and contagious well-being. An insincere smile is hostile — and creepy.

When Biden and Obama project a Duchenne smile, it is indeed a sunny day. They both are blessed with dazzlers and both obviously have recognized the advantage this gives them in politics. Obama's legendary likability most likely is linked to his billion-buck grin.

To receive a warm smile is its own reward. To be on the receiving end of an insincere smile, or one that doesn't fit the message being delivered, is psychological trickery. Think of Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." She smiled even as she delivered psyche-crushing information. The disconnect between what her victims were seeing and what they were hearing and feeling was torturous. Similarly, the teacher who smiles and says "Johnny made a bad choice" is confusing and potentially enraging.

Finally, a politician who smiles while trying to take you down may be a pro, but he's no friend.

"Who do you trust?" Biden asked Americans as he looked directly into the camera.

Well, now, funny you should ask.

*Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleen-parker@washpost.com.*

is something about watching Fox News that leads people to do worse on these questions than those who don't watch any news at all." And, "MSNBC didn't do all that much better."

The people that view these biased programs tend to do so to reaffirm their preconceived beliefs; that being the righteousness of their candidate or party and the evils of the opposition. In effect, according to the study, they are being dumbed down.

I think we already have an excess of dumbed down people with strong far-right and far-left political views. They are so dad-blamed sure that they are right; that the possibility that they are not being objective never occurs to them. This in a large part has contributed to polarization of the country and caused the lack of civility and no compromise attitudes in Washington.



Kathleen PARKER

### YOUR LETTERS

#### Both Sides Now

Charles Snyder, Apple Valley, Minn.

In a recent letter (*Press & Dakotan*, Oct. 8), Tom Welter took the Democrats and Robert Reich to task. In closing he wrote, "Yanktonians deserve better than Robert Reich and Leonard Pitts liberalizing your community newspaper. I cannot believe I am the only voice who believes that."

Most newspapers strive for some semblance of balance. But it seems that Mr. Welter, in his more perfect world, would have the *P&D*, and I assume other papers too, limit themselves to printing conservative columns only.

A poll focused on how informed citizens are was conducted by Farleigh Dickinson University and published by Forbes on Nov. 21, 2011. They stated, "There

### CONTACT US

PHONE:  
 (605) 665-7811  
 (800) 743-2968  
 FAX:  
 (605) 665-1721  
 WEBSITE:  
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 EMAIL ADDRESS:  
 news@yankton.net

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