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ANDREW TRULL

Top 10 list, Candidate Nelsen style

BRENT NELSEN DIDN'T WIN the Republican nomination for South Carolina Superintendent of Education this year, losing to Mick Zais, former president of Newberry College. But Nelsen, a longtime Furman political science professor, discovered a few things on the primary trail that may well come in handy the next time he teaches a course on politics — or runs for office.

After originally declaring that he was considering a run for governor, Nelsen decided a few months later that he was better suited to run for the state's top education position. While he didn't win, he maintained his good cheer and sense of perspective throughout.

And if nothing else, perhaps now he can arrange a booking on the "David Letterman Show" and present his top 10 list of "Things I Learned While Running for Statewide Political Office." Nelsen compiled the list for the political science department's fall newsletter, and gave *Furman* magazine permission to share it with a larger audience.

OK, Paul Shaffer, drum roll please:

10. Political science professors know nothing useful about running for office.
9. People who know about running for office are expensive. All the money you need for TV will go to them.
8. Many people will promise to raise money for you. Don't believe them.
7. South Carolina is a big little state. Dunkin' Donuts has the best "road" coffee.
6. Tea parties are led by plumbers and church ladies.
5. Primary campaigns are not about ideas. (See #4.)
4. Political reporters in South Carolina won't care about you unless you compare poor people to stray animals or are accused of adultery. [I didn't and I wasn't!]
3. In a down-ticket race (anything below governor), most people will know nothing about you when they walk in the voting booth (unless #4 applies).
2. In a down-ticket race, most people who know anything about you will know only one thing. If that one thing is that you teach at a "snooty left-wing socialist factory" that dissed President Bush at Commencement — a perception I often encountered — you're Republican toast.

And the #1 thing Brent Nelsen learned while on the campaign trail:

1. I still LOVE politics. But politics is a drug. Say no to drugs!