

Texas A&M needs to set new priorities

The reason the University of Texas outshines Texas A&M in many academic areas — despite our claims to the contrary — may be its priorities.

A new \$32 million fund, started by a "mystery donor" who chooses to remain anonymous, will be used to attract top scientists and researchers to UT. Thirty-two chairs have been endowed at \$1 million each, to provide salary bonuses and finance research in eight areas: physics, mathematics, molecular biology, computer engineering, computer-assisted design and manufacturing, microelectronics and materials engineering.

UT President Peter T. Flawn said the donor believes the future of the nation depends on strong programs in science and engineering.

And University of Texas Regents Chairman Jon P. Newton said the fund represented the university's commitment to "brains over bricks."

They've outdone us this time. While UT is establishing priorities for stronger academic programs in crucial areas, Texas A&M is still concentrating on the bricks.

It seems we have a Board of Regents — not to mention a certain former student — with a concern for the appearance of quality, rather than true academic excellence.

When Texas A&M was trying to recruit Nobel Prize-winning physicist

Sheldon Glasgow from Harvard University, the emphasis was on how many Nobel Prize-winners we could chalk up on the stats, rather than on the knowledge this man would bring with him.

The whole episode degenerated into a "who's got more" contest, with Texas A&M comparing itself to — as usual — the University of Texas.

Take a look at the reasons for building the Albritton bell tower. Every top-notch school has one, Albritton says — as if a stack of brick and mortar will improve the academic atmosphere of a university.

It's time to face the facts. Texas A&M does not have the reputation for excellence it craves.

But that reputation won't come overnight. It will only be built through years of commitment. Not commitment to appearances and statistics, but to real excellence — the abilities to impart knowledge and to search for new knowledge.

The people holding the purse strings need to learn to be patient. They're going to have to be willing to pour money into areas where they may not see immediate results.

Only then will we be headed in the right direction.

Books, not bell towers. Brains, not bricks.

— **The Battalion Editorial Board**

Political Forum Day a chance to learn

Students have a rare chance to hear many different political viewpoints today at the Memorial Student Center. MSC Political Forum has invited more than 100 political groups, ranging from the Communist Party to the Moral Majority, to its annual Political Awareness Day.

Controversies may be brewing throughout the day, if last year is any indication.

At the 1983 event, a transsexual, formerly a member of the Corps of Cadets and representing the Houston Gay Political Caucus, was the center of a controversy. A handful of students reacted immaturely to viewpoints that differed greatly from what they believed. The incident was an embarrassment to Texas A&M because it demon-

strated the lack of tolerance that some students still have.

But it was a boon for the Political Forum because the incident successfully challenged some attitudes.

The 1984-85 Political Forum chairman, Kevin Brannin, wants students to understand the committee's reasons for sponsoring controversial groups. He said the committee tries to challenge students to evaluate their beliefs by comparing them to other viewpoints.

Perhaps this year students will remember that the event offers a wide range of viewpoints but endorses none. The day is simply a learning experience for all.

— **The Battalion Editorial Board**

Mining for the oysters in Chesapeake Bay

"Are you an overt oysterman or a covert oysterman?"

"I'm a covert oysterman," he said. "You don't think I'd be throwing mines over the side if I was overt."

"Are those things explosive?" I wanted to know.

"I hope so. How else are we going to shake up the oysters?"

"But good heavens, man," I cried, "some sailor could hit one with his boat and be sunk."

"Well, we have to practice somewhere," he said. "Would you want us to drag for oysters with duds?"

"No. But suppose you damage a foreign ship? There would be hell to pay."

"We've informed all shipping nations we're mining for oysters in the Chesapeake and they sail at their own risk."

"But why the Chesapeake?"

"We might want to go after bigger shellfish off the coast of Central America, and we have to make sure our mines work."

While we were talking, two Latin Americans came on deck with plastic packages, and one said, "Senor, here are five more tortillas we assembled. They will explode as soon as they hear a sound!"

"Do you know what I think?" I said. "I don't believe you're looking for oysters at all. I believe you're testing mines for use in Nicaragua."

"You must be crazy. Why would an oysterman want to mine Nicaragua?"

"Why would he want to mine the Chesapeake?"

"I told you, it's the easiest way to dredge. Jose and Pedro have large families to support."

"What you're doing is illegal and I'm going to report you to the authorities."

"The authorities know what we're doing."

"What authorities?"

"Suppose I told you the president of the United States knows?"

"Then I would say you were crazy, or he was crazy."

"You'd better get going or I'll dump one of these mines on your boat."

"If you do I'll go to court and sue you."

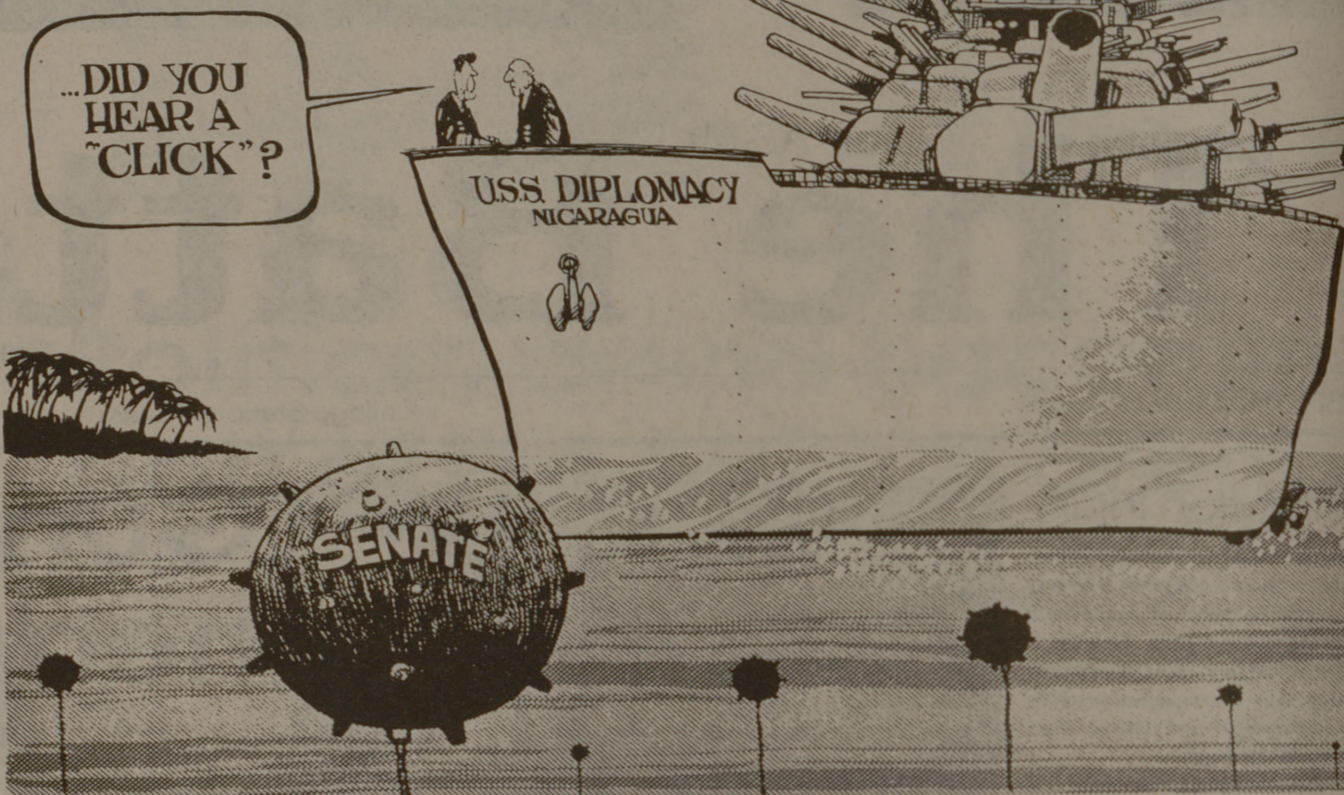
"We don't recognize the courts, and don't write your senators, because we don't recognize them either. If you're a loyal American who believes in your country you'll forget you ever saw me dropping mines off the sides of the boat."

Pedro came back on deck. "Senor, Jose wants to know if we can come topside to see what happens when a boat hits one of our tortillas."

The skipper got red in the face. "I told everyone to stay below decks until we located an oyster bed."

Pedro grinned. "Excuse me, boss. I forgot where we were."

The captain said to me, "I've got to pull up anchor. Now get the hell out of here. If I don't bring back any oysters tonight the company will kill me."



Parking solutions offered

We have followed, with some amusement and much confusion, the discussion of lack of parking, increased parking fees, rude cyclists, inadequate bicycle parking, and related topics in The Battalion, and have witnessed various pedestrian-auto-bicycle accidents on and near campus in the past two years.

We would like to offer some suggestions to alleviate the parking and safety problem. To be successful, the ideas presented here would require the cooperation of University and city planners, students, faculty and staff. All these parties have something to gain from the solution of the problem.

We offer some alternatives which would enhance the safety of all. Rather than encourage more cars, by building more parking lots, the University and the city of College Station should reduce the cars going to and through campus.

We suggest:

- Encouraging an increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic. This can be implemented in several ways.

- Build real sidewalks so pedestrians and those using wheelchairs do not have to contend with autos and bicycles. Nagle Street, College Main north of University Avenue and Jersey Street near Wellborn are three examples of heavily used paths without adequate sidewalks. Improvement of crosswalks and crossing lights for pedestrians will increase safety and make walking to campus easier.

- Designate specific bicycle lanes on-

- and off-campus. Make some areas of campus off-limits to bicycles. This will improve the flow of bicycle traffic and separate it from pedestrian traffic.

- Increase and redesign the bicycle parking. A recent study on bicycle parking by a class in urban design showed how this can be done. Place the racks where the bicyclists use them, not in odd corners, and greatly increase the number of racks.

- Encouraging bus usage. The present bus system does an adequate job, but there is room for improvement.

reader's forum

The cost of bus passes could be reduced. Presently, a shuttle bus pass is more expensive than a parking tag. Rate increases for next year will raise both rates, but there is still no cost incentive to use the bus. Reduced costs would increase the number of bus riders.

Enlarge the bus system and extend the hours of service. More routes and added route flexibility could be obtained by the use of the smaller buses such as those used for the intracampus shuttle. Making the bus system available to more people will reduce the number of people who need to drive to campus. The present system operates until 10 p.m., yet the main library closes at 1 a.m. Many students do not leave campus until then.

Build bus shelters off campus. This would make buses more convenient and comfortable to use during inclement weather.

- Reducing automobile traffic campus.

Accept the recommendations in the recent consulting study which suggest closing some streets to traffic during class hours and making streets one way. Those streets with reduced traffic could be used by bicycles and bicycles, reducing the pedestrian-bicycle problem.

Do not allow cross-campus traffic making the campus open only to vehicles that have business on campus, ice vehicles and those with parking permits, noise and traffic would decrease.

We feel that the entire community would benefit from a coherent, graded and cost-effective program which considers the traffic problems concerns pedestrians, bicyclists, cyclists, and drivers.

The University must play a role in the solution to the problems discussed here. It must not force people park off-campus and frustrate local merchants and businesses.

University planners must also be sensitive to pedestrian, bicycle, and wheelchair users when planning facilities.

Building more parking lots will create traffic and noise and reduce safety and beauty of the main campus area.

Many of the ideas listed here are simple, would cost much less than building parking lots and structures, and would also enhance the safety and convenience of the people on and near the campus.

Jim E... Ken W... Graduate student

Letters: Change honor qualifications

Editor: I hope I am not too late for another letter concerning the Dean's Honor List. Since I am an out of state co-op student, I get my Battalion's about two weeks late.

David Bueche believes students taking less than 15 credit hours do not deserve dean's recognition.

I think he should consider my case. I took 14 credit hours my first semester at Texas A&M. Eleven of these hours were honors courses including calculus and chemistry. I made a 4.0 by spending "a good deal of time studying" and "accepting such a challenge" as taking honors courses.

Would you categorize me with "those who kick back and relax during their school years," David?

Let's look at this another way: 14 hours times 4 grade points is 56 total grade points. If I had taken one more hour, maybe P.E., and received an F, my G.P.A. would still be 56 grade points divided by 15 hours which is 3.73.

That is certainly high enough for the Dean's List, right? So if I wanted to play the game right, I could have signed up for an extra P.E. class and not even showed up for it. Would this make me more deserving of recognition?

Now I agree with David that an 18-hour course load does not compare with a 15-hour load. I propose that honors be awarded according to how many total grade points a student makes in one semester without dividing by the hours.

For example, if 52 grade points were required for honors, a student taking 15

hours and achieving a G.P.A. of 3.73 would also qualify, as would another student taking 18 hours for a G.P.A. of 3.73. This sounds like a more equitable system to me. Does anyone have a better idea?

C. M. Fletes Class of 84

The Battalion

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