

Recognition criteria subjective, unclear

If nothing else, students are indebted to Gay Student Services for calling attention to the haphazard methods Texas A&M University uses to determine which student organizations will be recognized and which will not.

Texas A&M administrators have used highly subjective criteria to deny recognition to various groups for years — most often citing a group's "social nature."

GSS took the University to court over Texas A&M's recognition criteria, winning on appeal to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The Court rejected the University's reasoning, stating: "At (the) heart of the First Amendment is the freedom to choose, even if such choice does not accord with the state's view."

The Court's decision applied to GSS but has relevance to other groups of Texas A&M students as well.

Dr. John J. Koldus, vice president for student services, says recognized organizations are allowed to use University facilities and services, can advertise on campus and use on-campus mail. Recognized groups are required to maintain accounts at the Student Finance Center.

In normal circumstances, Koldus says recognition is based on whether the organization duplicates another group and if it is predominately a student organization. Koldus also says a

group must tie in with University goals and objectives.

According to Texas A&M's preliminary long-range plan, the University exists to assist "its students in their search for knowledge, helps them understand themselves and their cultural and physical environments, and attempts to develop in them the wisdom and skills needed to assume responsibility in a democratic society."

Student organizations by nature help students "understand themselves" and provide development possibilities.

The Greek system at Texas A&M is a prime example of this.

More than 10 percent of the students at Texas A&M claim membership in Greek organizations, yet the University has steadfastly refused to recognize the Greeks' presence. The "social nature" of the groups has been cited as a reason for the denial.

But we're hard pressed to find a reason to deny recognition to Greek organizations under the criteria Koldus lists.

To prevent discrimination in recognizing student organizations and to clarify requirements, Texas A&M must take a serious look at the subjective methods it uses in the process.

Vague references to "social organizations" and objectives just aren't enough.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



YOU HEARD ME, JIM... I HAVE AN AMERICAN HERE WHO ADMITS TO USING A STIMULANT BEFORE EACH OF HIS EVENTS...

Readers' Forum: GSS at A&M Pandora's box opened by recognition

Editor:
Over the past several years, I've been exposed to the subject of gay rights through media and demonstration. From people I've conversed with and from what I've seen, I've come to accept the gay population for what they are, a controversial group who have found sanction in the technical loopholes of our Constitution. If God wanted men to sleep with men, then I suppose he would have made Adam another spouse named Jody.
Well boys and girls, it seems that a new subject is hot on the press this week, SEX. But this time it is in our own backyard, Texas A&M University. The question here seems to be: "Should our money (taxes, tuition, etc.) support a Gay Student Service?" If the answer is yes, then why doesn't the University list GSS on our tuition fee slip next to Health Center fees? After all, the money we're paying for an approved education and degree is now being funneled for a group most don't even support. I hardly call this freedom under the very same Constitution they quote from. If the GSS wants funding, they should acquire it from their members, not at the expense of students and taxpayers.

In recent issues I've enjoyed articles by Steve Thomas, whom I think is an effective writer and competent speaker. Steve brings out some very interesting examples that some may discount as ridiculous, but in actuality could conceivably be constructed. He uses the premise that if the University recognizes one sexual group, then all of them have a fair shot at being recognized. Example, what if the Bryan-College Station Society for Necrophiliacs wants an organization acceptance, how does the University tell them no and the gays yes? Or better yet, should we have a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan on campus and enforce all foreign students and blacks to support the organization through financial funding? I think the point begins to become more clear. I have no problem with homosexuals entertaining themselves in the privacy of their own living establishments, but why all the push for funding and facilities? It begins to take the shape of an organization for recruitment as would a cult or the U.S. Air Force. This is where they begin to overstep their "freedom."

I guess we now see the priorities public higher education in this state. Deny harmless Greek organizations recognition, but recognize the homosexuals. It begins to become apparent at the double standards in this state. On one page of a newspaper, *Circle for Decency* picket 7,300 7-Eleven stores for sales of what they term "pornographic" magazines — read *The Battalion* and homosexuals are being recognized on campus. So if this University, which prides itself on traditions, wants to recognize gays on campus, why don't we just put a nice segment of GSS film and literature at the freshman conference films along side the films of the Corps of Field and Reveille? Let's see how many students are enticed then. The decision this school is about to make is a mistake in capital letters but as with everything else, they'll learn the hard way. And to The Battalion Staff as said, "The University should've recognized the group years ago." I only surmise, have them save you a seat at the next GSS assembly.
Steve Patti

Funding arguments absurd, offensive

Editor:
In the past I have enjoyed the work of columnist Steve Thomas on your opinion page, but his article Tuesday, "Taxpayers shouldn't fund sexual groups" truly offended me.
Mr. Thomas usually defends his opinions from a rational, physical basis (as he did with this one), but this article contained some rather outrageous and immature material also. Since his comments on "atypical sexual factions" are tasteless enough to speak for themselves, I must refute his factual argument.
First, taxpayers in this country pay for all types of services to minority groups (such as gays and lesbians) and ideological camps that they may neither support nor condone. Just as in our legal system, although we may not agree with every statute, we do agree that the body as a whole is worth more to society than its absence. Otherwise, we allow some of our personal opinions to be submerged for the good of the group.

Second, Gay Student Services is not a sexual group; it is a minority group. That minority is not even based on our sexual orientation, but on others' prejudice towards it. Our sexuality does not reflect on our social interaction, rather some members of society prefer to regulate our interactions so the status quo will not be disturbed. (Referring back to the last paragraph, I am willing to subjugate some of my freedoms to the state, but I will not tolerate the removal of a basic component of my existence.)
Third, as the argument presented by Mr. Thomas applies to Texas A&M, student groups on this campus do not receive any money from taxpayers unless they seek private donations (SCONA, Endowed Lecture Series, and OPAS). Some campus groups are funded in part by student service fees and the profits from their own activities. (Several groups turn quite a large profit from their programs.)

At the fall rate of \$54.50 per semester, a student spends \$436 in eight semesters toward this fund. Even more shocking, that means that gay students pay \$327,000 annually (based on the 3000 estimate reported in *The Battalion*). Although campus gays certainly take advantage of other activities paid for with this money, one very important one has been denied consistently — their own support group, GSS. Now you tell me who is not getting equitable returns on their money. Of course this is not even computing the Student Complex fee or the thousands of Texas A&M students who support the group but are not gay.
Finally, Mr. Thomas, as a white, presumably middle-class male, perhaps you should experience prejudice a little bit before you begin denying rights to those that live with it. Besides, just how many student groups are denied recognition for being heterosexual?
J. Cary Stegall

High culture often a foreign language

SANTE FE, NEW MEXICO — It's quite unnerving to listen in on a conversation that you can understand absolutely nothing about.



Donn Friedman

It could be a discussion between two physicists about the relative value of relativity or it could be at a pueblo with two Indians speaking in a tongue foreign to your ears.

It's quite disturbing to me when I can't understand what people are talking about. Are they talking about me?

But some people must enjoy befuddlement. What else could explain the full house at the Sante Fe Opera's performance of "Il Matrimonio Segreto."

In a state where more than 85 percent of the terrain is above 4,000 feet, they call it high culture.

"It's relaxing," I was told. Not being one to argue, I fell in and out of the state of sleep three times during the first act.

"Read the story in the program," I was told. "It'll make the story easier to follow."

I did as I was told. The plot of "Il Matrimonio Segreto" — translated, the Secret Marriage — went something like this:

Boy secretly marries girl. Rich dude rides in and courts girl. Rich dude and secret husband fight for her affection.

Family really goes for the rich dude. Finally rich dude is told of secret marriage, so he marries another wench who just happens to be hanging out at the castle. Everyone lives happily ever after.

Sounds like you could fit the whole story into a 30-minute sit-com episode or maybe a 2-minute Music-Television video.

Two hours 15 minutes later the first act ends. There's another coming up.

Some people seemed to be able to follow what was going on; they laughed at the opera singers' acting from time to time.

"Opera is an acquired taste," I was told, and as much as I wanted to experience high culture under the stars in the mountains of New Mexico, I couldn't bear another two hours of utter confusion.

I left at intermission, leaving the second act for those people who could watch and understand, those people who could act as if they understand and those with the best reason for attending the opera: so they could fall asleep in high culture rather than in front of their color TV.

(Donn Friedman is a senior journalism major and *The Battalion's* roving columnist covering the plains of Texas — with a few side trips.)

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