

OPINION

Student could be an asset to city council

A Texas A&M student is considering running for a seat on the College Station City Council. It's about time.

Mike Hachtman, an A&M junior, has been the Student Senate liaison to the city council for two years. This position, although a non-voting position on the council, has placed Hachtman in an informed and responsible position.

Many people feel students have no place on the city council because they are transient and, therefore, probably aren't concerned with the long-term effects of city legislation. However, Hachtman has demonstrated his interest and concern for the College Station community with his two years of experience on the council.

Students may live here for no more than four or five years, but they are an important part of the community and its economic structure. True, most students don't pay property taxes here. But they do pay sales tax. And they are affected by electricity costs, phone and cable costs, road repairs and upkeep, traffic laws and enforcement.

As a city councilman, Hachtman would be representing all students — not just himself, not just current students, but all students to come.

The fear that more students will follow Hachtman's example and take over local government is far-fetched at best. Being a city council member is a time-consuming job. There is not going to be a rush of students eager to become city councilmen. Only those truly concerned with the city, with fair representation of students in the city, would consider running. Being a student is a full-time job in itself.

Hachtman is an exception to that rule. He has proven he is not apathetic about the community. And if given the chance, he could be an asset to the council and the community. He could provide fresh insight from a different, but important, perspective — that of more than 33,000 A&M students.

If Hachtman does decide to run, it may show those in the community who fear student involvement that while many students are here today and gone tomorrow, their concerns for their community are not.

The Battalion Editorial Board

Budget cuts would spell trouble for A&M and local community

Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series on the effects of the proposed budget cuts on Texas A&M.

Reader's Forum
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Much has been discussed in recent weeks about the impact of potential budget cuts on the Texas A&M community. The "crisis" over higher education funding originated from the recommendations of the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) which were issued last December. The LBB, a panel of key legislators chaired by Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby and vice-chaired by House Speaker Gib Lewis, called for a reduction of nearly 26 percent from the funding of state colleges and universities — including a 20 percent cut from Texas A&M University.

While more recent proposals have reduced the severity of these reductions, none have called for less than a six percent decrease (which represents almost \$133 million under the 1985 biennial level statewide), and almost all of these call for a substantial increase in tuition. Although a six percent reduction may seem much more desirable than a 20 percent cut, such a reduction would still have serious repercussions to Texas A&M and other state universities. The impact of any budget reduction would extend into all aspects of student life — academics, student services and even the community around us.

The effects of a sizable budget reduction to the academic environment at A&M would be devastating and immediate. Any reduction in faculty salary expenditures would leave the academic deans with two undesirable options — across-the-board salary reductions or staff cutbacks. The repercussions of a salary decrease would include an effective reduction in faculty size, particularly in the Colleges of Business and Engineering. One top University official stated that such a salary reduction in these highly competitive fields would send faculty away toward higher-paying jobs in industry or at other universities. Moreover, the lost faculty would come from two sectors vital to the University — prominent professors who currently

enhance our reputation and young professors who represent our academic future. These, in particular, are the faculty members whom we can least afford to lose.

The impact of any loss of faculty upon the students can be easily seen. A smaller teaching staff could only support a limited student body, and this would call for enrollment cutbacks. Furthermore, existing class sizes would increase, resulting in an overall decrease in the quality of education. Also, academic opportunities such as specialized course offerings and summer programs could be jeopardized by staff reductions.

Other academic sectors affected by funding cuts include graduate programs and library facilities. Fewer graduate teaching positions would receive funding, resulting in a further increase in the work load of the remaining faculty. The consequence of this is decreased availability of faculty members for assistance to individual students. Cutbacks in library funding would result in service decreases in a facility which is presently inadequate for the needs of the University. Both of these factors would negatively affect academic life at A&M.

While the majority of the cutbacks would affect the academic environment at A&M, student services would also be affected. Departments such as intramurals, the MSC, Beutel Health Center and student activities are funded from student service fees and not state allocations. However, any cutbacks in state allocations would be reflected in the University-wide budget guidelines — which must be followed by all University departments. Thus, even though the funding for these areas would be intact, their expenditure levels would have to be decreased. The result, of course, would be a decline in the quality of student services offered.

Another potential problem lies in the area of University bookstore profits. These profits currently provide funding for a number of student organizations, as well as vocal music groups and University art exhibits. However, these funds might be reallocated in the face of a budget crisis — which would result in a disastrous setback for student services

and student organizations. Even this would cause an increase in service fees, further increasing the cost of an education.

Perhaps the most serious (and permanent) impacts of the "budget" would be economic in nature. To reduce the severity of the budget cuts, many legislators have called for stiff increases in tuition. The reasonable tuition plans under consideration in Austin would increase tuition to \$12 per credit hour in 1985 and \$18 per credit hour by 1987. Out-of-state tuition would increase to \$180 per credit hour in 1987. In a period of decreasing availability of financial aid, this tuition increase would mean a college education beyond the reach of a large number of students.

A serious ramification of the cuts in students and faculty that result from budget cutbacks is the economic impact on the local community. A decline in the number of students and faculty who live in Bryan-College Station would decrease the amount of money that the University pumps into the local economy. It has been estimated that for every dollar cut from the local economy will suffer a net loss of \$2.50. Due to the role of research in attracting industries (and their tax bases) to the area, each dollar from such activity will produce a net \$4 from the local community. Decreases in research spending would severely damage the efforts to make Texas a national high-tech center.

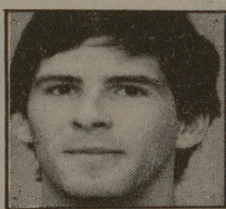
A final impact which bodes ill for the long-term future of A&M lies in the loss of our endowments — the Permanent University Fund and Available Funds. Money from the Available Funds is intended to finance long-term research at Texas A&M, and it is most likely to be committed to the most basic academic programs. Such a reduction would undermine the trustworthiness of our endowment — resulting in damage to the long-term future of Texas A&M.

In tomorrow's article, the editorial board will discuss the steps being taken to prevent these decreases, as well as actions that students may take to assist in these efforts.

Mike Kelley is the Student Government vice president for finance.

Big 'D' traffic is a big pain in the carburetor

The feeling of insignificance can sweep over a person at the strangest of times, for no apparent reason, and in the most unexpected ways. Humor, I've discovered, is the only way to survive.



Ed Cassavoy

Free-floating anxiety and the feeling of being swallowed up by a huge blob of quivering confusion is not something I look forward to. Who does?

But no sane human being can avoid feeling sometime in his life that he is facing something bigger than himself.

Journey to Dallas sometime. Anytime. As you roar — and enjoy it while you can — over the last crest of the hill you cannot help being affected by the incredible beauty of the Dallas skyline.

But then your eyes drop to the other thing. That twisting, turning, immobile, all encompassing monster called Dallas traffic.

Crawl along the lanes and watch the world unfold. Scream, yell, weep or drop your head in silent befuddlement; it doesn't matter, because it won't go away.

You are trapped in a automotive treadmill, and a slow one at that.

Why? Why? Why? is the question that swims around your groggy brain. Torture yourself with theories about the origin of the problem. But you might as well look for the beginning of a circle.

Fume and groan over the traffic jamming into two lanes. The huge electronic arrow mindlessly pushing you over the precipice. A tiny line of orange cones squat between you and freedom.

Slowly, so slowly, you move your way through five radio stations or 10 traffic reports. As far as the eye can see, that one open lane sits contently. For no apparent reason it appears that the lane is blocked off.

Mile after terrible mile you go. And then you see it.

The reason.

There, nonchalantly, obscenely, two trucks are sweeping the gutter along the side of the highway.

Ah, now it all comes clear. The Universe does have an answer. Here is the face of Oz, the man behind the Iron Mask, Batman without his hood.

Now as you grind by those two nameless, insignificant men hunched behind the steering wheels of those trucks comes an answer to all your questions.

Go to Houston.

So you do. And now you feel safe. Dare I say happy?

Foolish mortal, you've just switched masters. You are wrapping yourself in new chains. You've got a new drug.

Houston, city of the perpetual rain cloud, the city without a downtown.

The traffic is definitely there, but it's different.

I think Houston has developed a level of traffic jam sophistication that Dallas lacks.

Houston challenges you to literally ride the rollercoaster.

It seems like you are all one big continuous steam roller. Once you are in the flow of traffic, you hug the bumper of the sucker in front of you. In your rear view mirror you are treated to a clear view of the grill ornament of the guy behind.

You are in the belly of the beast.

Whip along at 80 plus miles an hour and drive by the skin of your teeth. One brake light, one merging car will destroy this glorious adventure. And your new paint job as well.

So you trudge on home, home to the land of a million police forces. Bryan city police, College Station city police, University police, DPS, sheriffs.

You are safe in College Station.

The traffic is fairly sane, and your blood pressure stays mercifully stable.

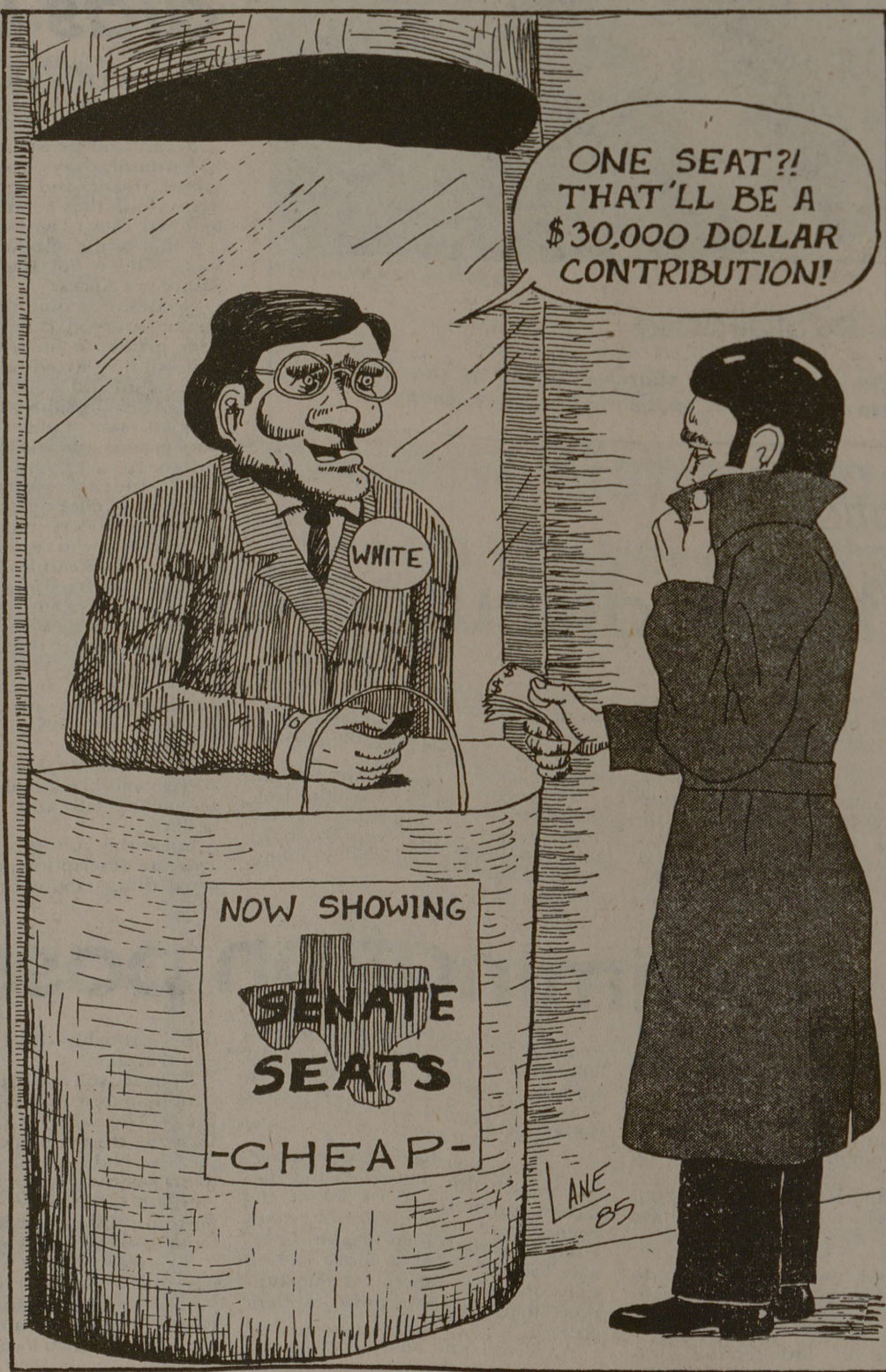
You sigh with relief and aim for that special place on campus. You mind the stop signs, duck campus cop speed traps and avoid the flurry of doors thrown open into your path.

Cruising up to your destination, you have survived. You've won. You are an important person again. You are significant.

But there is one itsy bitsy, insignificant detail to solve.

Something more precious than gold — a parking spot.

Ed Cassavoy is a senior journalism major and the city editor for The Battalion.



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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory for students in reporting, editing and phone work within the Department of Communications.

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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for style and length but will make every effort to preserve the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and include the address and telephone number of the author.

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