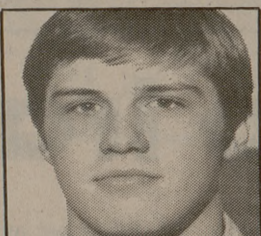


# Opinion

## Mergers ignore subtle benefits of smaller colleges

You work your fingers to the bone, and what do you get? Bony fingers, or so the old sort-of song goes. The implication is that hard work never bears any fruit. The Texas Select Committee on Education is on the brink of reducing state-funded higher education to similar skeletal remains.



Loren Steffy

Larry Temple, the committee chairman, has proposed merging six smaller state universities in an attempt to "enhance the delivery of academic programs and provide for more effective and efficient use of present and future facilities." Undoubtedly, saving the state a few bucks is the desired result. It's the latest rage in the business world, why not in academia? Merger mania has hit Texas colleges.

Under the proposal, North Texas State University and Texas Woman's University in Denton would be combined, the University of Houston-Downtown would merge with Texas Southern University, and Corpus Christi State University and Texas A&I University would become South Texas State University.

The merger malarkey has been tossed around for years. About a year and a half ago, one University of Houston professor even suggested that Texas

A&M annex UH, thereby cutting down on operating costs and boosting academic resources for UH while giving A&M a foothold in Houston.

Such a merger assumes that the Gestalt theory applies unconditionally to academia. A larger, more diversified university *must* be greater than the sum of its smaller, more specialized parts. But it depends on the definition of greater. In education, bigger — and for that matter cheaper — does not always lead to better.

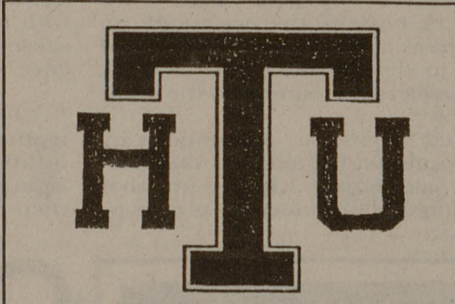
In an attempt to save a fast buck, the state is on the verge of shucking some of the less tangible benefits of smaller schools. Before making the "Big Decision" in favor of Texas A&M, I considered several smaller state universities, including North Texas State. The smaller campus seemed more personal, the instruction more individually focused.

In the end, I picked A&M for even less tangible reasons. I grew up in College Station. I knew the school, the town and the people. At the time, I hadn't decided on a major. For me, where I went was more important than why I went.

Many of Texas' smaller universities are recognized for quality, albeit special-

ized, curriculum. East Texas State, for example, is known for its drama program, UH-Downtown for serving mostly part-time students and TSU for being the pride of Houston blacks.

Which uncovers another short-sighted flaw in the committee's proposal — character. A school has a certain feel to it, a personality, an identity that distinguishes it from other colleges. True, merged colleges could develop a new identity, but it would be like the family hardware store trying to retain that personal touch after it's sucked up by a multi-national corporation. The committee may not understand such aesthetic concerns, especially when thinking in a dollar mindframe, but it plays an important role in selecting a place to continue education.



Texas Homogeneous University?

The weakest link in the proposal's chain of poorly planned provisions is graduate students. If the committee has its way, A&M and the University of Texas would be the only comprehensive graduate-research institutions. The measure spells a slow and painful demise for other state universities. With faculty retention already a problem, even at A&M and UT, siphoning off graduate programs will increase the migration of quality faculty from the smaller schools. Few faculty want to light at a school that has no pool

of graduate students to use as teaching and research assistants, especially when tenure is heavily rooted in publication and research, not teaching.

Temple's claim that combined universities would be more "efficient and effective" assumes that students share the same educational needs. Just as college in general does not appeal to every high school graduate, bigger schools are not always seen as better by prospective students. Some of the colleges the select committee is considering for mergers — for example, the poorly run TSU — certainly need improvements. But fine tuning is more in order than restructuring.

If we decide that students would be better off going to conglomerated universities, why stop with the proposed six? Baylor, Texas Christian University and Southern Methodist University, all being religious-oriented institutions,

could be merged into Texas State Protestant University. A&M and being the only schools left with a respectable faculty, curriculum and graduate programs could form Texas Homogeneous University.

And why stop with four-year Community colleges across the state could be merged into a huge state two-year schools, known as Texas Chance Junior Colleges.

If Texas is going to provide a defied education, it must provide defied educational facilities. If state are going to work their academic to the bone, they want to get more bony fingers for their labors. They state-funded education that treat programs equally, instead of some and slashing others to the bone.

Loren Steffy is a senior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor of The Battalion.

## Mail Call

### Certain disappointment

EDITOR:

What is going on? I started school here in 1983, stayed for three semesters and just started back after going to junior college for three semesters. This is not the same school that it was when I left.

I went home one weekend and explained to a friend of mine about all the great traditions we have here. He had heard some good things about Texas A&M and was interested in coming to visit. I told him that the best way to find how it really felt to be an Aggie was to go to Silver Taps and yell practice. He was especially impressed with my description of Silver Taps. The feeling of belonging I got made me decide to return here rather than go to the University of Texas at Arlington.

My friend is in a fraternity at Texas Tech, but after he heard about Silver Taps, he said he wished he had come here. We decided that the difference between Tech and A&M was the unity that the Aggies have. At Tech, the loyalties are to fraternities, and there is nothing to pull them together. I explained that the Corps of Cadets, while no longer the majority, still represents the way the majority of students feel about A&M, and that students can look at the Corps as representative of Aggie spirit.

Of course, while I was telling him this, I was thinking about the A&M that I remembered from my first time here. I was not thinking about the present where hardly anyone says "howdy," where students fight at yell practice and where no one comes to Silver Taps (Yes, I thought I had a good reason to miss Silver Taps, but on thinking about it I can't remember what it could have been). Maybe I need to call my friend and tell him to stay home. After all I told him, he is sure to be disappointed.

Lee Ann Rucker '87

### What about the Indians?

EDITOR:

The great state of Texas is in its last quarter in celebrating its sesquicentennial year. No doubt, we will have some valuable memories from these events.

To the Alabama-Coushatta tribes in Livingston, this year is shaping up to be a banner year. First, the tribes had to initiate litigation against the state government, who insisted that the Alabama-Coushatta were no longer an Indian tribe.

The federal ruling favored the tribes, but the state comptroller must have an upper hand. The comptroller refuses to release funds that belong to the Indians. Then the comptroller decided he would jump on the bandwagon of the tribes' effort for federal restoration. He decided that when the Indians were federally recognized, they would bring "BINGO" to their reservation and make tons of money, leaving the poor little treasury out in the cold. Who knows better what the Indians want than the Indians themselves?

Now the Indians have to improvise with the wicked hand of Sen. Phil Gramm. Whether the Alabama-Coushatta tribes are federally recognized, which means that the tribal land (reservation) will be protected by the federal government, the tribe's main objective, apparently rests on the desk of Sen. Gramm.

The Alabama-Coushatta tribes have been part of Texas since before it became a republic and state. The American people value the inscription of the Statue of Liberty that reads: "Give me your tired, your poor, your weak..." But what about the Alabama-Coushattas, part of the first Americans? Are we willing to welcome all immigrants and illegal aliens and permit them to stay, while we allow our first Americans — the Indians, the Alabama-Coushattas — to continue to struggle indefinitely?

Carol Battise  
Alabama-Coushatta Indian

### Reagan would never mislead us

EDITOR:

Politics and diplomacy are for governments. At least that is what President Reagan told us when he issued the executive order requiring all U.S. citizens to leave Libya. Private citizens had no right to interfere with U.S. foreign policy, in this case aiding the Libyan economy in the face of U.S. economic sanctions.

Yet for quite some time there have been private U.S. citizens interfering in a drastic way with another sovereign nation. By any standard of hypocrisy the president is long overdue to issue an executive order requiring these Americans to cease their political interference.

Current foreign policy dictates that the United States is not at war with Nicaragua. Yet this foreign policy is being abrogated by a few U.S. citizens who are waging war and dying.

The president soon will order all Americans out of Nicaragua for several reasons. The first is that, like all conservatives, his palms do not sweat when he hears the word "communism."

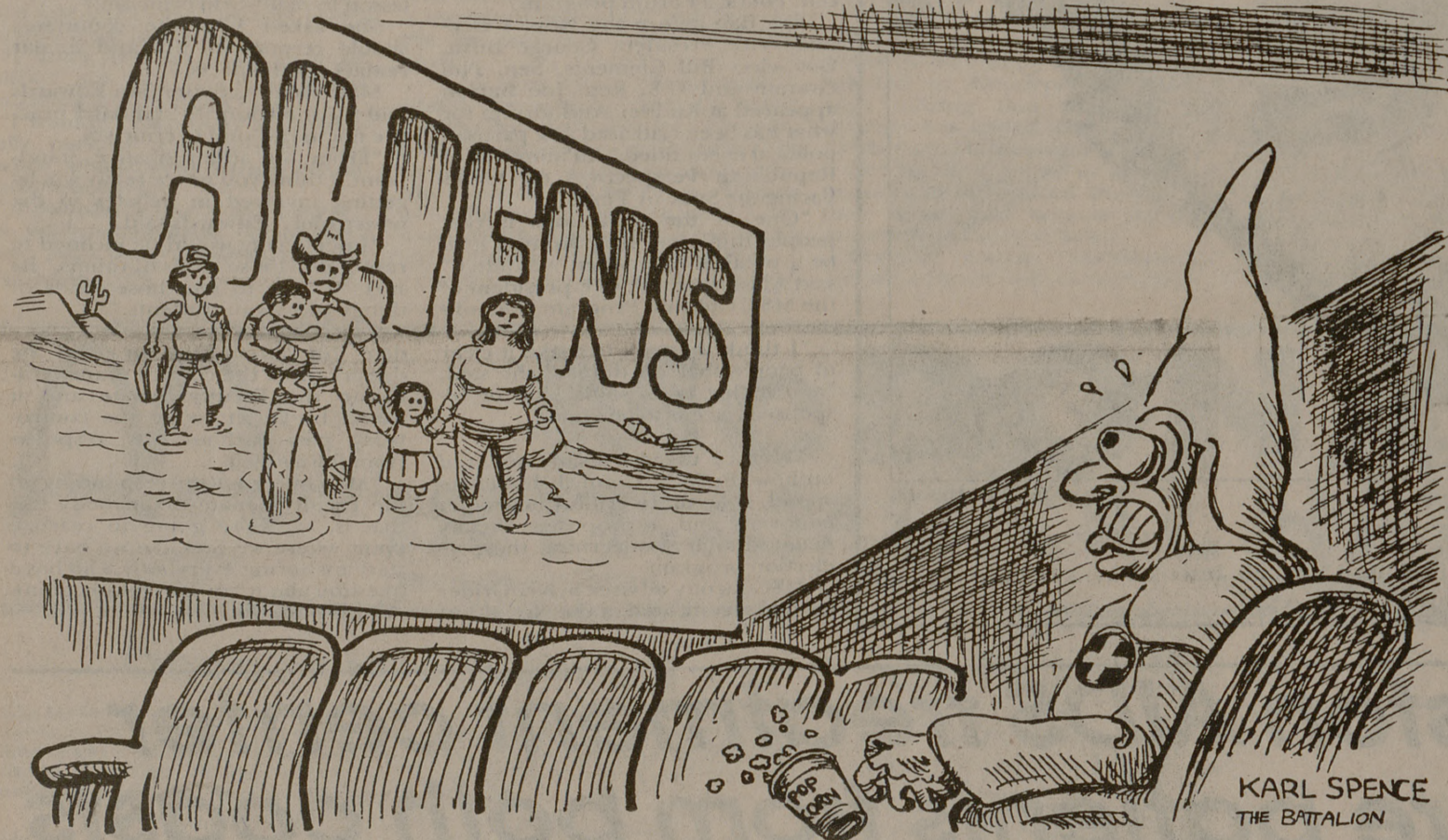
The second reason is that these Contra supporters are dragging the U.S. closer to the conflict, and Reagan shares America's current sentiments against another Vietnam in Central America.

The third reason is that the president believes individual Americans should not interfere with U.S. foreign policy. That is, unless these Americans are carrying out some unofficial foreign policy designed to prod the American people into accepting a full blown war.

But Reagan would never do that. He would never mislead us. That is the most important reason why he will issue the order. I just cannot understand what is taking him so long.

Dean M. Jen '87

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



KARL SPENCE  
THE BATTALION

## Solution to teen pregnancies is simple despite complaints

Let's go over this thing one more time to make certain I'm not missing anything.

• We, as a society, are quite concerned about the rise in the number of teen-age pregnancies. Right? Right.

• Other than the chastity belt, sterilization or doing away with sex altogether, the contraceptive is the best way to avoid pregnancy. Right? Right.

• Parents and church groups, both of whom say teen-age pregnancies are one of the nation's most pressing problems, are all for handing out contraceptives in school.



Lewis Grizzard

Right? Of course not, you immoral, heathen troublemaker.

Believe me, I've tried my best to understand all this. Parents in New York City became outraged when it was learned schools were handing out contraceptives to students as part of the school health program.

So were the evangelists. "The work of the devil!" they bellowed.

So why can't I get it through my thick head? If we really want to bring down the number of teen-age pregnancies making contraceptives easily accessible to teen-agers is a great way to start.

The only possible reasoning for not wanting to do this, as warped as it might be, is that if we give teen-agers contraceptives then they will be likely to have more sex since it would be safer.

Maybe so, but if we managed to stop

the birth of just one unwanted infant, we would have done the world a favor.

Parents and preachers need to admit something to themselves so they can deal with this matter in a much more adult sort of way.

Sex ain't going away. There wasn't any sex to speak of until some time after 1964, when I graduated from high school, but then came the sexual revolution and sex is here to stay.

Birds do it. Bees do it, and you can tell a kid not to do it until you're blue in the face, which, in most instances, simply will encourage the little darling's desire to find out what all the fuss is about.

Here is a legitimate, workable solution to the problem of teen-age pregnancies.

1. Make certain every child knows what makes babies, and teach them that as early as possible to avoid any confusion. What's the big secret here anyway?

2. Teach them that the majority thinking is it's not wise to start having sex until they are older, but be intelligent enough to know that's not going to stop sex between teen-agers and so load them up with all the contraceptives they want.

So more teen-age sex, perhaps, but fewer teen-age pregnancies.

What a great idea. Too bad I'll probably go to hell for thinking of it.

### The Battalion

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