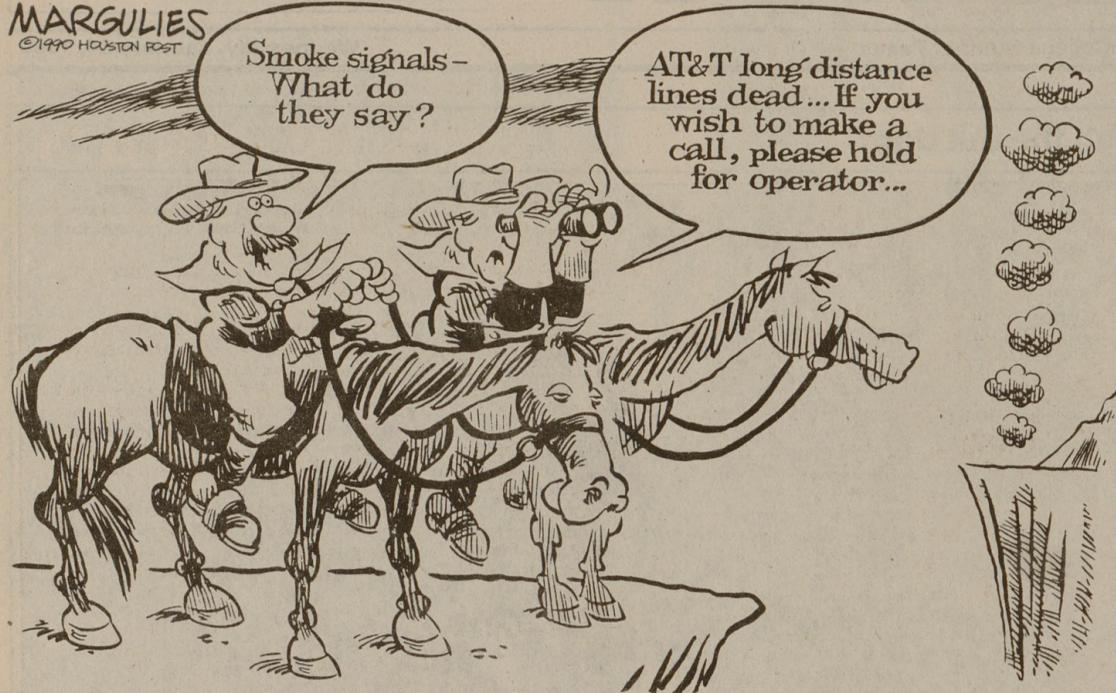


MARGULIES
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Research, teaching at A&M: not only separate, but unequal

We will not forget that teaching and knowledge dissemination are co-equal to the knowledge generation and research mission of this institution. ... Both ... will be emphasized, rewarded and recognized.

— President William H. Mobley

Texas A&M is one of the top research institutions in the United States and aspires to "world-class" status. In recent decades it has changed its main emphasis from undergraduate teaching to research. The administration insists, however, that teaching is just as important as research.

Sure it is. Everyone who believes that, stand on your head.

Anyone who works in an academic capacity at any BSU (Big State University) knows what the situation is: Publish or perish. The explosive proliferation of scholarly journals in recent years is a testimony to this simple fact: Research is king. The key questions in hiring and firing are: Who brings in grant money to the university? Who publishes the most? Do they have a large number of graduate students working for them?

When was the last time a good researcher was fired for rotten teaching? Compare that to the many who fail to make tenure for not doing enough research, regardless of the quality of the instruction they provide. Now it's probably true that if all other factors are equal, a person's teaching will be considered in deciding tenure or promotion. But make no mistake, research is the bottom line.

The administration also claims that teaching and research goals do not conflict. Not so. Spending a lot of time and energy on research does not significantly enhance undergraduate teaching; moreover, working hard as a teacher means that one will have even less time for research.

I'm not claiming that professors don't care about teaching; on the contrary, many professors, instructors and graduate students fulfill their duties very well. The number who care is actually quite surprising considering how poorly they are rewarded for it.

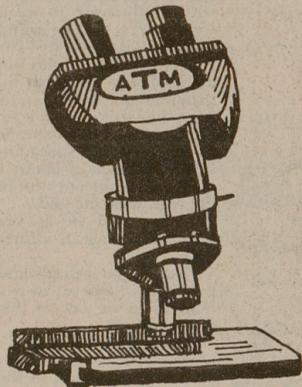
Universities lobby state legislatures for money under the guise of education; they speak of the importance of our economic competitiveness and of providing educational opportunity for all. Money is then spent attracting research faculty who do little or no



Jeff Farmer
Columnist

teaching; when things get tight, class sizes are increased.

I know that what I'm saying is pretty controversial; I'll probably catch a lot of flak for it. If there is a student out there who thinks I'm wrong, and that A&M really *does* emphasize undergraduate teaching, I hope they write me a letter.



In fact, I encourage those who agree with me to write me as well, with suggestions on how to improve the situation. (I'll listen to anything, from eliminating grades to eliminating the administration.)

This sorry state of affairs is certainly not entirely the fault of the establishment. It's a general rule in politics that people will get the worst possible government that they will tolerate; likewise, students receive mediocre education largely because they do not demand better. There are a few simple things that any student can do to improve his or her own experience at the BSU (and to improve things for those who follow as well).

Take classes from good instructors. Find out who is capable and who isn't,

and don't sign up for a class from Dr. Boring.

If you are stuck with someone who doesn't know their stuff, or can't make it clear, find out about their qualifications. If they violate ethics or university regulations, complain. If students create enough trouble for the department head, maybe teaching will get a higher priority in the future (but don't hold your breath).

Be a quality student. Don't say stupid things in class, like, "We don't want that fancy explanation, just give us the formula."

This encourages your professor to lower the level of instruction. Instead, inquire about their research, on which they are undoubtedly an expert.

Be a conscientious evaluator. Many professors look at their evaluations later; we can always hope that someday deans will as well. Don't trash the instructor because you spent the semester at the Chicken, or praise him or her because you got an easy A. If you have a problem with the instructor, don't be too emotional or your opinion will be disregarded. Be fair and accurate, as well as ruthless.

Help your state legislator understand the issues. Make sure that your representative understands that throwing money at a university doesn't ensure that undergraduates get a good education. The supercollider is sexy and will provide jobs, but it may not improve education just by its presence (though the research environment will be superb).

Confront the administration. Next time you meet with a dean or a president, ask them how many people have been denied tenure for poor teaching in the past two years.

Make them back up their rhetoric with some facts. Talk to the alumni; they attended at a time when teaching had a higher priority. After all, you are a student — this place supposedly exists for your benefit.

These are a few things that anyone can do, but they are not enough. Much more serious reforms are needed. If you think you have a good idea, write me.

Let's refuse to settle for mediocrity.

Violence was heart-breaking

EDITOR:

January 20, 1990 is a date that shall always pain my heart. I saw a heart-breaking display of violence, stupidity and cowardice. There was black-on-black violence at a party sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha. This should not happen again, therefore I make this plea: Change your ways, *everyone*. If we do not come together we shall *never overcome* ourselves.

The second point I shall make concerns the Alpha Phi Alpha's attitude following the fracas. I understand that they all were upset, but that is *no* excuse to verbally abuse me personally. I deserve a refund on the party fee I had paid only six minutes before the party was terminated. When I requested a way to contact them at a later date to discuss a refund, I was met with a barrage of curses. This is inexcusable for a group of so-called *gentlemen*.

Therefore, unless this problem is rectified, I personally do not foresee a time in the immediate future when I will be giving donations to attend any of your functions. That's a promise.

Roy David Jr. '91

Pageant party was a fiasco

EDITOR:

In regard to the fiasco which occurred at Alpha Phi Alpha's Ms. Black & Gold pageant and party, I don't think that all of the blame should be placed on the football players who thoroughly embarrassed the fraternity members. A lot of the blame should be placed on the member of the fraternity who does not attend this school. He was taunting the players about a skit performed at the pageant aimed at depicting the players as mindless flunkies that never go to class.

This was a blatant example of stereotyping and was utter disrespect for those players that do go to class and get an education. How would the Alpha Phi Alpha feel if someone did a skit depicting them as "A Phi Gay!!"

The Alpha Phi Alpha should strongly consider making restitution to those poor, cheated partygoers who were "gypped" out of their money when the Alpha Phi Alpha's made off with it at the first sign of trouble.

Think about it: Why should everyone else have to be treated unfairly because of the actions of a few?

Ernest G. Hayes '91

Columnists need lessons in altruism

EDITOR:

In the last few days, some columnists have been discussing capitalism. All of these columnists have made one error in their analyses. Their error was the widely held assumption that the ethics of altruism and Christianity are the only valid basis for morality. One of the columnists made a further mistake by trying to integrate capitalism with the ethics of altruism.

Altruism is the ethics of self-sacrifice. The basic principle of altruism is that man has no right to exist for his own sake. The opposite of altruism is not greed and thievery; taking from others is just the other side of the same altruist coin. This altruist coin is flawed because it only allows us to view men as either sacrificers or as profiteers-of-sacrifice.

In order to step out of this moral trap we must allow a concept of a man who supports his life by his own effort, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others for himself. This is a man who does not give the unearned or take it, a man who deals with others by *trading*, that is, giving value for value.

The true opposite of altruism is the ethics of individualism, which holds this kind of man as a possibility and advocates the code required for a rational human society. This ethic of rational selfishness was first discovered by Ayn Rand, and is part of her philosophy called *objectivism*. If you have an active mind and care to see a unique defense of the ethics of egoism and the real moral basis of capitalism, read some of the essays by Ayn Rand.

Kevin Copps
Graduate student

Corps commander sets things straight

EDITOR:

This letter is sent in the hope that it will clarify the position of the Corps of Cadets on campus unit runs.

Most runs occur before 6:30 a.m. These runs are for the physical conditioning of cadets and there is little interference with traffic. Clapping and "jodying" in the immediate vicinity of dorms or the Health Center is prohibited at these times. On the rare occasion that the entire Corps conducts a run on campus it can lead to traffic congestion; therefore, these runs are held only after 5:30 p.m. and only three or four times each semester.

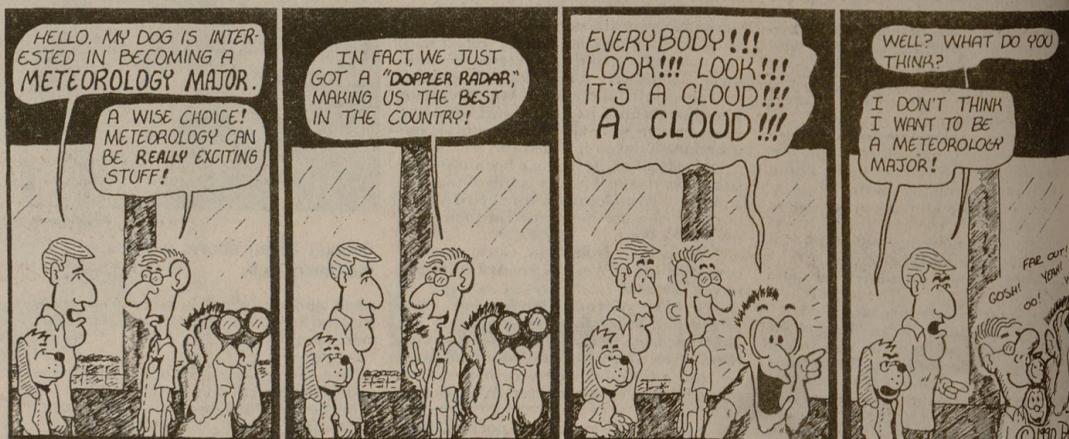
Some units (specifically the Ross Volunteer Company and Fish Drill Team) must conduct drill practice at various areas on campus in the afternoon, often before 5:30 p.m. and do interfere with campus traffic. However, these units run in a block of no more than 50 people and don't take any more than a few seconds to clear through an intersection.

Being considerate and understanding towards all Aggies is something the Corps of Cadets takes very seriously and we apologize for any inconvenience. We also greatly appreciate the considerate and understanding attitude the majority of students and faculty members take towards unit runs on campus.

Matt Poling
Corps Commander

Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.



The Battalion

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