

EDITORIALS

Access for all

A&M removes barriers to disabled

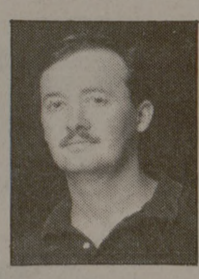
Texas A&M University administration demonstrated laudable concern on the part of disabled individuals last week through its sponsorship of a well received open forum. The forum specifically addressed issues regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which was recently established to prohibit discrimination against the disabled in the form of employment opportunities and access to public places. With the exception of a few minor problems, such as steep wheelchair ramps and narrow doors, our campus is hailed among disabled persons for its success in providing easily accessible facilities. This university not only visibly demonstrated its commitment to disabled faculty, staff and students through the open forum, but also created two important committees.

An ADA Steering Committee will ensure that A&M is in compliance with every facet of the act, and an advisory committee partially comprised of disabled individuals will serve as a sounding board for the public. Both disabled and non-disabled students should be proud that this University is not ignoring the interests of those most effected by the implementation of the ADA. While the physical accessibility at A&M is already above average, the administration has proven itself capable of listening to the concerns of disabled individuals. Through such a joint effort, this institution will not only succeed in achieving university compliance with ADA regulations, but will have demonstrated commitment to all individuals.

Strolling the halls of bureaucracy

A&M's puzzling policies engender great frustration

Being alive compensates, marginally, for what life is about to do to you, or so I'm told. My misadventure began with an attempt to get on payroll as an employee of Texas A&M — yes, the Batt actually pays us for this. Like any other well developed bureaucracy, A&M is a collage of departments and sub-departments working in concert to confound and frustrate its hapless victims. There is nothing at all personal about this state of affairs. The people that work in these departments simply interpret mandates and regulations from "The Beyond." Mars, I'm guessing. On my first visit I learned that my student identification number is not considered an equivalent to my Social Security number, even though the former is derived from the latter. I had to come back with the real McCoy card, no ifs, ands, or buts.



MATTHEW DICKERSON
Columnist

The next day I got off for lunch from my full-time job for the second time. I parked in what seemed like Iowa, except this was a field of shimmering metal. I started my hike to Reed McDonald with hopes of polishing off my payroll paperwork with enough time left over to pick up a burger and coke. Ha! At Reed McDonald, I under went the traditional rite-of-forms. So far, so good! Off to the Pavilion with my paper work for "processing". Processing? Isn't that done to cheese? Now the Pavilion must be the center of this concrete and asphalt vortex we call campus — the dark, throbbing heart of the A&M Bureauscape. There is no student that does not make at least one pilgrimage to this bureaucratic Mecca. After some confusion as to what particular window to poke my face through, I found the right office. I was then told that I wasn't taking enough hours to be processed properly. I had to go back to Reed McDonald to be "reclassified". Not so bad, I still had time to get some lunch. After having my papers re-worked at Reed, they sent

me hoofing back to the Pavilion. After waiting another 20 minutes for "processing," I was told that the Pavilion did not process "affiliated students". That is done at the YMCA building. I sprinted. I was directed to a room where a handful of people were watching what appeared to be a safety film on changing chlorine gas for a swimming pool. This could not be the right place! However, I was informed that if I wanted to be paid, I would have to watch this film. I got up and left, clawing at the air in a generally sour mood. I hiked to the car, somewhere over the horizon. No lunch. The film? I watched it the next week, baa, baa. Somewhere at this university there must be a case of paper devoted to my records — or else my paper work has been converted into confetti for a bureaucratic party. A bureaucracy is perhaps the highest, most evolved form of self-organizing ignorance. When properly functioning, a bureaucracy is linked to a cobweb of conflicting lines of direction and authority. It is as indefatigable as it is ubiquitous. There is no escape. So it is easy to become anesthetized to the pervasive bureaucracy that makes up this fine institution (I write "institution" with tongue tucked firmly in cheek). Call it lack of imagination, but I see no solution to this problem short of napalm, so we might as well celebrate it. If something like I have described happens to you, chin up! Bring a date, book, or chain saw to your queue. Use roller blades for those inter-departmental shuffles. During the spring and summer semesters, bring a towel and get that tan you always wanted (this could almost get fun). Greeks could use this for some kind of T-shirt. The Corps of Cadets could commemorate queues and start another tradition. The possibilities are endless. Write up your suggestions and send them to the editor. Now, I realize that this column might stir the heart and ire of some visionary bureausymp secure in the knowledge of his or her indispensable role in preserving Truth, Justice and the American way. This person might feel the urge to write a letter — or form? — in response. In which case they may commence queuing up at the proper ministry at the proper time (to be announced later).

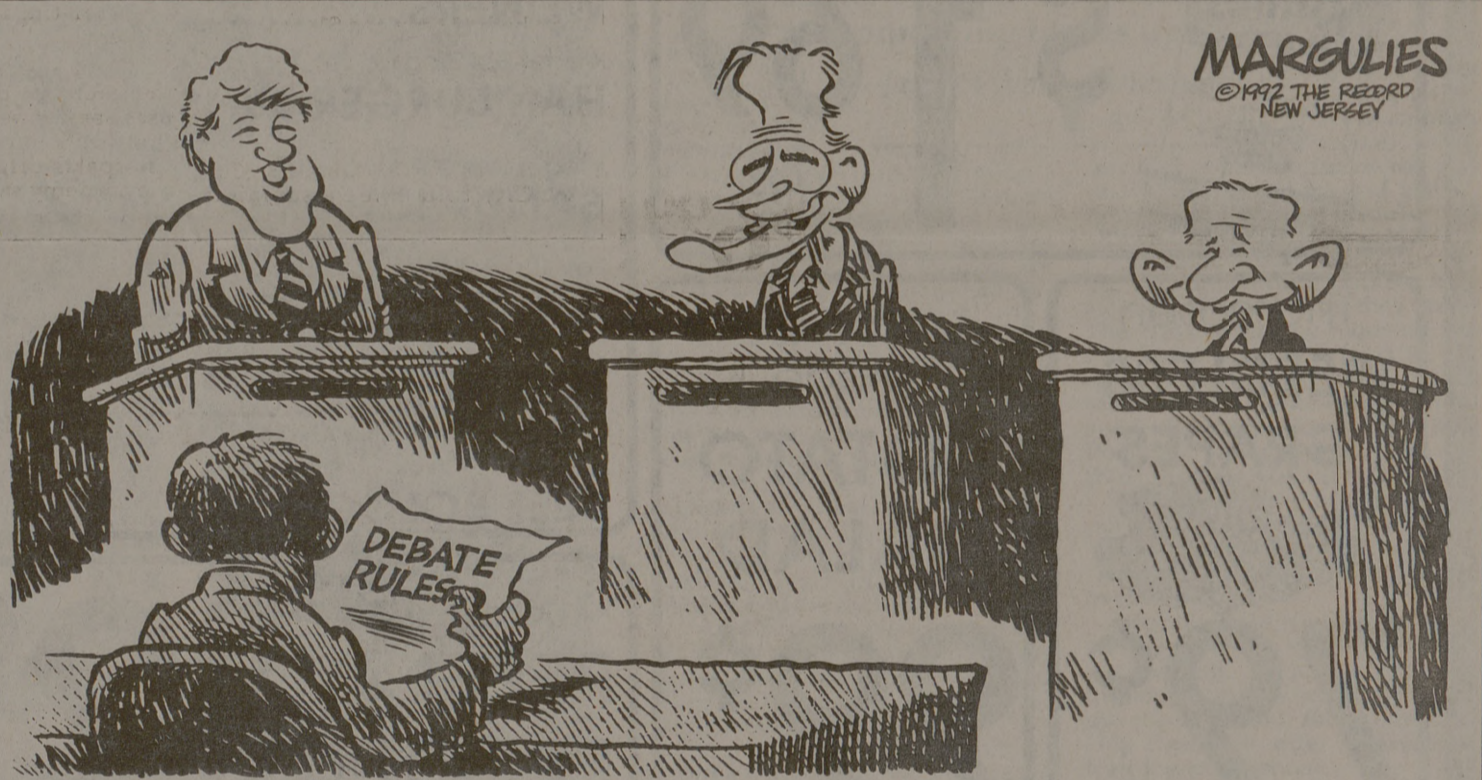
Dickerson is a sophomore economics major

Cutting the red tape

Program steers aid to those in need

Through a new Department of Health and Human Services program, over three dozen local, state and federal agencies will consolidate their application process under one roof in a few selected areas. The "Client Access Pilot Program" opened its first office in rural Schleicher County in the city of Eldorado. Two other such offices are planned for Lubbock and Dallas in the near future. This program aims to cut down on the bureaucracy surrounding the delivery of Health and Human Services aid programs. These services include free immunizations, food stamps and utility bill aid. The beauty of this particular program is that it makes services more accessible, particularly to rural Texans, while decreasing costs and

helping to prevent fraud. Some experts have estimated that only one of every eight social services dollars is actually spent on people in need; the other seven are spent funding the massive bureaucracy involved in delivering social services. Besides cutting red tape, the consolidation program should also cut down on fraud. One office and one application process make it impossible for people to go from office to office falsifying information for long periods of time in order to bilk the system of much-needed funds. If the Client Access Pilot Program proves successful, it may actually please everyone, including reformers. Each segment of our government bureaucracy could profit from such an ingenious approach to problem solving.



"Each candidate will be allowed an opening sound-bite, then they may respond to questions with a memorable slogan or withering put-down, and finally have the chance for a closing zinger..."

MAIL CALL

Fraternity offers clarification, apology

Due to the strong controversy surrounding Sigma Alpha Epsilon's party on Oct. 2, we, the brothers of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, feel that some clarification of the events that occurred that night needs to be made. We would also like to offer an apology for our mistakes. All fraternity/sorority mixers (parties) have themes. Thematic parties imply costumes and decorations. The theme for Sigma Alpha Epsilon's party on Oct. 2 was "Jungle Party." The party-goers dressed up in costumes related to this theme. Some dressed as Tarzan or Jane, some as wild game safari hunters, some as wild game, and some as jungle natives. At no time during the entire night were those who were dressed as natives chased by those who were dressed as hunters. Approximately 70 percent to 80 percent of the party-goers were dressed in a Tarzan type of outfit. Therefore, the claim that the theme of the party was a parody of an African slave hunt where the actives, all

dressed as slave hunters, were chasing slaves around is completely ludicrous. To think that any large collegiate organization which is constantly under public scrutiny would have a party with such a theme is insane. With that issue aside, another related issue still needs to be addressed: cultural sensitivity. I am afraid that Sigma Alpha Epsilon, along with many other organizations across this campus and across the nation are guilty of being culturally insensitive. What Sigma Alpha Epsilon is guilty of is depicting jungle natives with some of the costumes. Sigma Alpha Epsilon sincerely apologizes to those whom these costumes offended. The fact that we did not assume that such a costume would be offensive was ignorant on our part. The fact that it is offensive to some people is all that matters. So the issue here is of cultural insensitivity due to ignorance to cultural feelings. This situation can be compared to the controversy surrounding fans of the Atlanta Braves who, during games, wave their arms in the motion of a tomahawk while humming a Native American tune. Native Americans found this action offensive to their culture because they felt that it portrayed them as savage warriors. This never even crossed the minds of the fans when they first started this form of cheering. Similarly, we were not taking into consideration the feelings of those who might find some of the costumes offensive. At least something positive has come of this incident: Hopefully, from now on, campus organizations will be more culturally sensitive with their activities and policies. Sigma Alpha Epsilon cer-

tainly will. But please understand that our theme was in no way a slave hunt parody. Such a racist theme would not be tolerated or condoned by Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Again, we sincerely apologize for our insensitivities.

Ken Monk
Class of '92
Kelly Kubiak
Class of '93
representing Sigma Alpha Epsilon

Fellow Greeks claim party wasn't racist

We are sorority members who attended the Jungle Party two weeks ago on Oct. 2. We think the accusations by Mr. Salem against Sigma Alpha Epsilon are completely unsubstantiated. The party was not a "celebration of one of the most terrible crimes against humanity ever witnessed." It was simply a party with a jungle theme. The pledges were not dressed up as slaves. Yes, their faces were painted black, they were wearing grass skirts, and they carried spears, but it appeared to us they were dressed more like members of a tribe than like slaves. Many other members also followed a tribal theme by painting their faces white. Some actives were dressed in hunting fatigues but their intent was not to hunt slaves and we never saw them chasing any pledges. As Mike Hebert pointed out, many members of SAE are involved in numerous organizations on campus. The

same holds true for our sorority. Having such an extensive involvement in activities outside the Greek community, we understand A&M's tradition of promoting multiculturalism and try to promote this idea in every activity we participate in. With this in mind, if we had felt this was a "parody of hunting slaves," neither organization would have condoned this. If the Interfraternity Council feels there is indeed a problem, the Greek system as a whole should be looked at because many functions have what could be considered questionable themes by the likes of Joe Salem. Greeks have enough negative publicity without unsubstantiated claims of racism. We feel the SAE's are a respectable chapter and would not initiate acts such as those described by Joe Salem. We support the SAE's and hope further exploitation of this matter will cease.

Jana Cox
Jennifer Petteway
Class of '94
accompanied by four signatures

the most positive role that one (especially an organization) can perform is the avoidance of the negative. With the racial tension throughout the United States — in fact, on this campus — your so-called problem was incredibly inappropriate and negligent of cultural awareness. Perhaps it did not seem morally unjustifiable, and granted, Joe Salem from Dallas may be ignorant of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and the Texas A&M Greek system. This only demonstrates why it is so damned important to portray a positive image in your community and everywhere else you carry your organization's symbolism. What is done is history, such as is slavery. But, I ask that you (and others) make amendments to engage in cultural awareness, and think of others besides yourselves in the future.

Jason Cooke
Class of '93

Fraternity needs dose of cultural awareness

How are "We, the People" supposed to win the human race by running the race backwards? You mentioned the positive activities of your fraternity, which are all wonderful, but sometimes

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