

Today's universities forget the importance of 'learning'

When I was a kid, I used to read for fun. On days when my teachers didn't give me too much homework, I would grab a book from the library and read it. Maybe if I did not have much time, I would watch some television.

JOSEF ELCHANAN

Columnist



trying to figure-out the weak points in the enemy's strategy. Some try to call the game by lofty names and explain its importance, but it really continues to be just a game. It is academics.

Every year our leaders at this institution and the others like it around the country tell us that it is dishonorable for students to cheat. They tell us that we must understand the material, not just prepare for tests. They want to give us their knowledge for the betterment of humankind.

In reality, undergraduates have become the cash cows of academics. Very few of the professors in this university sincerely care about the needs or desires of the student body. They justify this position by saying that they know what is good for us and must maintain the reputation of excellence of this institution. While it certainly is true that many professors look to their students as the future of humanity and treat them as such.

Many of them also look at students as a distraction that must be accepted while they conduct research and write papers. Why this is true, I cannot understand. In the business world, where we all are preparing to go,

the customer pays for a particular service and receives that service a large majority of the time. Not true at the academic institution. Here, I pay money every semester to take classes from professors who deliberately attempt to fail students. There are classes on this campus that have failure or Q-drop rate in the range of 15 percent or higher! Would anyone buy a product that had a failure rate of 15 percent and costs thousands of dollars? Probably not. Yet it seems that all universities run on the same principle.

This all probably happened from some person's mistaken idea that going to college means that

ness to explore came to "learn," a word that is hardly used anymore. Instead, it has become a place to hide for people with doctorates who do not wish to actually do anything but satisfy themselves. What a joke.

Just because you have a degree does not mean that you're all that bright. What it really means is that you have the ability to plug away at something until you finish your coursework and then can leave. It has nothing to do with intellectual curiosity or genius.

I feel sorry for the students and the few professors who continue to work so hard against the tide of uncaring bureaucrats that dominate this institution. It is not their fault. Who is to blame is ultimately the Board of Regents and the University President, who should be answering to us. Maybe one day someone will make the decision that our University needs something more than "yes" men and needs caring people who will turn Texas A&M into a place where young people go to learn, not just a place that sponsors research.

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Undergraduates have become the cash cows of academics. Very few of the professors in this university sincerely care about the needs or desires of the student body.

a person is educated. College has become an institution that supplies the business world with human resources. This never should have happened. College was supposed to be a place where people with intellectual curiosity and a willing-



What price will beauty wreak?

One wonders about women willingly wearing Wonderbras

What's up with the Wonderbra? It's everywhere: billboards, magazines, postcards, newspapers. Its arrival was more highly touted than the Eagles reunion.

ERIN HILL

Columnist



The Wonderbra's job - to squeeze your poor ribcage and push everything from your navel and up skyward - is accomplished with several pads, straps and lots of elastic. The advertising campaign tells us that no matter how bad our hair looks, we will feel fine and dandy if we bind ourselves in the Wonderbra. Oh really?

In an attempt to capture a piece of the market, following in the Wonderbra wake, the bathing suit companies are now offering spring swim wear equipped with Wonderbra-like inserts. I guess this means we don't have to wear life jackets anymore; the bra acts as a flotation device in an emergency.

There's even a pump-up swim suit on the market. Talk about ridiculous. "You too can pump your way to a starring role in 'Beach Blanket Bingo II!'"

(And choke on your own cleavage or get tangled in the tubing.) No comment necessary.

Padded bras were bad enough - the fake it if you can't make it lingerie movement - but these horrific new undergarments actually manipulate your body into something it isn't. The joke's on us, sadly enough: women are paying lots of money for the opportunity to be bound.

Manipulation. (Expensive manipulation, to boot.) It's everywhere, part of our daily routines.

It's been this way for as long as I can remember. Women are expected, encouraged and - at times - even delighted to be something they aren't. Willing or not, most women have participated in the great Cover Up called fashion.

In my quest for glamour, I bought a set of TruGlu nails, painted them bright red and applied them in the privacy of my bathroom. Sure, it was annoying that I couldn't dial the phone or turn on the stereo. I also had trouble unscrewing the lid off my toothpaste, turning on the water and unbuckling my clothes when it came time for bed, but I kept reminding myself that "People with long nails have more fun."

My dreams of perfectly polished, delicately manicured nails were short lived; however, since half of them fell off during my sleep, I woke up with red nails scattered on the floor and TruGlu residue all over my fingertips.

You can't escape the phenomenon. It is pushed on all of us, beginning when we start wearing make-up and piercing our ears. The seed is planted; girls are told that in order to be pretty they must DO something to themselves. "Au natural" doesn't cut it.

It starts with our face and hair, then moves on to our bodies. We're content for a time to experiment with colors and textures. A little eyeliner here, a little glitter there. But that ends in the eighth grade. Then it's on to perms and curling irons that crimp your hair like a waffle iron.

Next thing you know, you're coloring your hair and wearing shoulder pads. (Shoulder pads are almost as ridiculous as the Wonderbra, but less painful.)

Nylons that flatten your stomach are next on the list. And believe me, they do not flatten anything. They bunch around your middle and cut off circulation from the waist down. When that happens, a woman in search of a washboard stomach has no choice but to shop for a girdle.

The grand poobah of "Stupid Ways We Alter Our Appearances" is the high-heeled shoe. High heels pinch toes. They tire your legs. They are bad for arches. They change the way you breathe. They are hard to walk in. They make ankle sprains a constant fear.

They hurt. "High heels make women sexy." To date, the only thing they've been proven to do is make women taller.

"High heels make women look glamorous." High heels make women look klutzy. It's not that attempts to make ourselves look and feel better are bad. I enjoy lipstick as much as the next person, and my collection of earrings is important to me. Both men and women can increase chances of success in the dating game by wearing a fragrance, by shaving and by choosing clothes with care. That's a good thing.

Women shouldn't feel that they must alter the way they look in order to be beautiful though. The Wonderbra makes us feel that we must look like Barbie. Its whole purpose is to alter. Things like nails, hair dye and cosmetics (even the Wonderbra) are OK to enhance one's appearance. The problem occurs when those extras become requirements for beauty.

Being concerned with fashion isn't a sin. Being obsessed, however, is. And letting society dictate what you must do to look good is silly, just like my fake nails.

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EDITORIAL

HAIRY FIASCO

Both sides of case sacrifice education

Zachariah Toungate, a 12-year-old student in the Bastrop Independent School District, recently attained a favorable court ruling in his attempt to wear a ponytail to school. School officials argued that removal of the hair-length would encourage gang activity.

However, Judge Norman Lanford said the school district failed to prove how eliminating the rule would foster disruption in the schools or interfere with the education process. But the judge did not revoke the rule, claiming that legal precedent allows trustees to retain authority in managing schools.

A situation this petty should not prevent a child from his right to an education. It is not clear how male students could be disrupting classes by wearing the same kind of earrings or ponytails as their female counterparts. The courts obviously think such cases are a waste of time, yet are cautious in overruling the right of trustees. "Schoolboy hair length disputes do not rise to the level of constitutional protection which requires court intervention," Lanford said.

It is understandable that students who are scantily clothed or wearing shirts with obscene gestures and profanity can disrupt classes. However, it is not clear how male students

wearing earrings or ponytails detract from the education process. Such styles on males are no longer shocking, and by many are considered acceptable. It is the school district's attempt to grasp hold of and keep "traditional values" with which they grew up with.

Above all, today's parents should remain responsible for their child's grooming standards, and not the school districts.

Schools should not be responsible for dictating a student's clothing.

Furthermore, school districts and parents both should be focusing on their students' quality of education, instead of battling a grooming standards case. Lack of funding, high teacher-to-student ratios and providing other resources, seem more vital to a child's education. Until school districts improve the quality of their education through these means, they should not worry about the length of students' hair. And if hair length rules are all a child's parents have to worry about in the schools, then perhaps the courts can afford the time and money to worry about them.

If a student's hair is neat and clean it should be permissible. The only disruption created has been provided by these ridiculous complaints.



MAIL CALL

A&M, Batt show all life's aspects

I am responding to Jason McKemie's letter on

Nov. 18. I was disappointed to read his recent letter. I have taken pride in the young people of today being more educated, more informed, less homophobic and possessing more insight. I applaud Texas A&M University and The Battalion for presenting all aspects of "Life at A&M."

One of my best memories as an Aggie Mom is participating in a panel at a Division of Student Services meeting, fielding questions from some of the 250 faculty and staff members present, in a hope of furthering awareness about gay issues at

A&M and help dispel myths and stereotypes. Homosexuality is not a standard for morality. In the majority of world cultures, homosexuality is considered "normal." Gays have been a part of society since the dawn of history.

For example: Socrates, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, James I, Hans Christian Anderson, Leonardo de Vinci, Dag Hammarskjold ... the list goes on and on.

Gays do not "become or choose" - they simply "are created" by the same Divine Creator who created you and me.

So, get real, get educated and get on with your life! - always with Aggie Pride.

Sandra Martin
An Aggie Mom

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