

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

BUCKS BRANCH OUT

A&M should be commended for installing new Aggie Buck system.

In a rare reminder that it does keep the students' interests in mind, the University administration has responded rapidly to the recently passed Texas law requiring the use of public university debit cards to be allowed off campus.

Consequently, Texas A&M students are buying their textbooks this fall in off-campus bookstores with Aggie Bucks.

The University, which did not have to comply with the law until August 1996, has already implemented a process by which private businesses can gain access to the Aggie Bucks system.

By doing so, it has provided students a greater selection in purchasing textbooks and supplies this fall with Aggie Bucks.

The expansion will end the Barnes & Noble near-monopoly on textbooks and will allow many students to avoid the crowd at the Texas A&M Bookstore.

Also, the expansion of Aggie Bucks off campus will offer other benefits for students.

Primarily, they will be able to carry less cash on them. This convenience will mean fewer crowded ATMs around town, and less hassle by utilizing the debit system rather than cash.

Another benefit is the increased safety and peace of mind by students not having to carry as much cash on their person.

Parents should also take satisfaction that Aggie Bucks cannot be used to purchase alcohol or tobacco.

Hopefully, the system will continue to expand to other businesses around the community, such as restaurants and grocery stores. The more the availability increases, the more the students will benefit.

If the current progress of the expansion is any indication, Aggie Bucks will soon be honored in other off-campus locations.

The University administration, in particular the Division of Finance and Administration, deserves much commendation for its quick response to the law and dedication to making this asset an even greater one for Texas A&M students.

SINK OR SWIM

The University should act swiftly to re-establish scuba classes.

Texas A&M System's Internal Audit Department investigation of the Department of Health and Kinesiology's scuba program has led to the cancellation of scuba diving classes until the Fall of 1996.

Although the University acted responsibly by quickly dismissing the faculty members involved, the students will continue to pay the price for the faculty's misconduct.

The cancellation of scuba classes has taken away the opportunity for many students to participate in one of the most highly demanded kinesiology courses at A&M.

While the kinesiology department is currently examining other college scuba diving programs to see how they avoid the conflict of scuba instructors owning scuba shops, it is unsure how long such an examination will take.

Dr. Robert Armstrong, head of the Department of Health and Kinesiology, said that if a scuba diving pro-

gram could be created without a conflict of interest existing, the department may offer scuba classes as soon as Fall 1996.

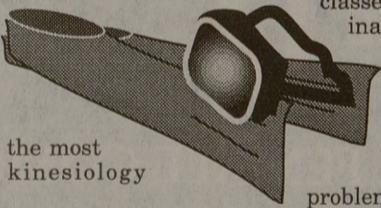
In the interim, the department has decided to replace the 12 fall sections of scuba with alternate aquatic classes.

However, it is doubtful that all students will be satisfied with the substitution of these other aquatic classes in place of their original choice of taking scuba diving classes.

Therefore, the department should take swift action to remedy the situation.

Surely many of the problems that resulted in the past could be solved by employing instructors who don't own area scuba businesses.

Texas A&M has a responsibility to its students to provide a diverse and quality education to the students that it serves. The University should make every effort to eliminate the conflict and re-establish the popular scuba classes.



OVERSTUFFED

A new system for assigning dorm rooms is desperately needed.

For the second year in a row, the Department of Residence Life and Housing has grossly miscalculated the number of students to whom it grants on-campus housing. Consequently, many students are beginning the semester in uncomfortable, cramped living conditions.

Obviously, the system the department uses to allocate rooms is flawed, as is evidenced by the 300 empty rooms at the beginning of last year and the 700 overassignments this year.

Now, many people are being packed into study carrels or television lounges, and many other students face the unpleasant reality of being squeezed into a small dorm room with two other students.

Even the Corps of Cadets has been affected, with seniors being forced to

room with lowerclassmen.

The resident counseling programs the University is offering is the bare minimum to compensate these students. However, the programs will probably offer little consolation to those who barely have enough space to move around in their rooms.

In the future, the Department of Residence Life and Housing should re-evaluate the process it uses to make room assignments. Perhaps it should begin earlier and determine how many students will be returning before it makes offers to other students.

No matter what changes it decides to make, it could hardly make the system more inept. The guessing game the University is playing now is unacceptable, and it is easy to imagine that there are at least 700 students who would agree.



The voices of Texas A&M ...

Guest columns and Mail Call perfect for expressing ideas

The opportunity is yours. A medium exists for you to voice your opinions, revelations or anything you feel strongly about to much of the student body at A&M.

This fall more than 25,000 readers a day will pick up a Battalion.

If you write in to the The Battalion, you can make an impression on these people.

Think about it: that's almost equivalent to the entire student side of Kyle Field reading your words.

There are two ways for readers to participate: Mail Call and guest columns.

Mail Call is one of the most popular sections of the paper, and letters to the Editor are always appreciated. Maybe you think some columnists have gone off their rockers, or you have "Good Bull" or an interesting story to share, write a mail call letter.

If what you have to say will take more space than a letter, write a guest column. Every Monday and Friday, a space is left vacant on the Opinion page specifically for guest columns.

This is your chance. Perhaps in the past you saw an important issue that you believed merited coverage go unmentioned in the news. It happens. The media does not see everything.

Be a third eye for the media — expose issues that might otherwise go untouched.

Or if an issue has been reported on, but you hold a unique point of view, share your thoughts on the Opinion page

Mail Call:

- A column infuriates, pleases, shocks or appalls you, so you write a letter to the Editor.
- Letters to the editor must be kept under 300 words.
- Drop the finished product off at The Battalion, 013 Reed McDonald, and include your classification and phone number. The clerk will check your id to make sure the letter is authentic.

KYLE LITTLEFIELD
OPINION EDITOR



Regretfully, not all mail call letters can be run because of space constraints.

Guest Columns:

• You get an idea you think would make a great column, so you give the newsroom a call at 845-3313 and ask for the Opinion editor or Assistant opinion editor.

It is always a good idea to discuss your idea with the editors before actually writing to make sure your column topic is timely and newsworthy.

• After you have talked with the editors, drop by the newsroom and request a copy of the Fall '95 Guide to Writing Guest Columns.

• Now you are ready to compose your column, which should be approximately 550 words long.

• The editors will edit your column for style, clarity and word length.

Make sure the editors have your phone number in case there is a question about your column.

It is the Battalion's practice to include the columnist's classification and major at the end of a column, so you should include this information on the printout of your column.

And finally, the best part. You are sitting in class a day or two later, and you see something that looks familiar to you. It is your name by your column.

In between classes, a friend may tell you he or she agreed with your point. Or maybe you have upset a lot of people. But no matter what, you still have made many people think.

You can be satisfied knowing you have affected this campus in some small way.

The ball is in your hands now. Come by the newsroom, pick up the Guide to Writing Guest Columns and let your views be known to the many Battalion readers. Or write and submit a mail call letter.

This fall, take advantage of the opportunities available to you.

After all, The Battalion is your student newspaper.

Kyle Littlefield is a senior journalism major.



Equality remains an elusive ideal

Without a doubt, our country has come a considerable way concerning social issues of race and gender; however, these social conditions are far from equal.

With so many people, it is difficult to comprehend the lack of equal opportunity. Unfortunately, our society has the tendency of imprisoning individuals behind steel bars of difference, such as skin color and gender.

Using discrimination and prejudice as icons that belong to a different world is a gross error.

The negative effects of discrimination and prejudice become obvious when the relatively small number of ethnic minorities is compared to the overall student population, or by observing the percentage of women professors employed by the Texas A&M system.

Nevertheless, many individuals feel equality has reached its zenith in our social and political environment.

Some believe that a need no longer exists to press social agendas, such as affirmative action, further.

Unfortunately, this "equality" is one which remains largely unequal and false.

Affirmative action programs are continuously accused of promoting reverse discrimination.

Affirmative action is an attempt to provide opportunities for women and ethnic minorities in order to overcome past patterns of discrimination.

Its ultimate design is to create an atmosphere in which women and ethnic minorities will be better able to compete with white-male-dominated America.

They have an advantage provided by past acts of discrimination and prejudice.

JUAN HERNANDEZ
COLUMNIST



Many times these were at the expense of women and minorities. Women and minorities were often forced to do

without basic human dignity.

Regardless of past injustices, as well as current, many voices speak out and accuse affirmative action of being reverse discrimination.

While discrimination of any type is not justifiable, it seems that many political candidates are using affirmative action simply as a means of being heard.

These politicians draw affirmative action so that the public believes whatever is heard without actually taking the time to investigate the accusations.

For example, a minority student is often seen as an unqualified person simply filling a quota. This assumption is almost always false.

However, affirmative action is truly engineered to create a population in which the level of opportunity is equal across races and genders, not to fill quotas.

Regardless of the many assaults affirmative action has sustained, it remains a positive step toward addressing a situation needing our immediate attention.

It is clear that affirmative action as a social agenda has not failed us. We as human beings have failed each other.

We must now take the time to analyze the ultimate goals of affirmative action and then attempt to restructure its overall procedures to improve it as a tool to achieve these means.

Therefore, we must promote an exchange of ideas in order to advance our society to a higher state of equality.

Creating a society in which equality is a strong supporting pillar is, by all means, a difficult task. However, all feats can be accomplished as long as we desire them strongly enough.

The equality sought by social agendas, such as affirmative action, is obtained through tolerance and reciprocity, which do not mandate the ideology of loving each other.

Rather, the idea is to be open-minded to difference, whatever that difference may be.

Unfortunately, our society has the tendency of imprisoning individuals behind steel bars of difference.

This is an equality which is all too often associated with only a Utopian society: However, it is very possible to create an equality for all in our great country.

It begins by conserving and modifying current programs like affirmative action.

No one should ever be discriminated against or made to feel inferior to another — that is the issue which should be attacked by our political candidates, as well as by the citizens of our America.

Killing a social program such as affirmative action would jeopardize losing the equality we currently possess to a tidal wave of negative backlash.

Juan Hernandez is a senior psychology major.