

OPINION

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THE BATTALION
Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

TENURE TRACKS

Including student evaluations will improve the system of tenure.

Many professors are wary of a new bill in the state legislature that would allow University administrators to use student evaluation forms to evaluate professors for tenure. But, like a child who feels he needs a security blanket to remain safe, many of their fears are unfounded.

According to the bill, if professors receive poor evaluations for two consecutive years, their tenure status is reconsidered. Many professors maintain tenure protects their jobs from vengeful students who earn bad grades in their classes.

But the bill only threatens the tenure of professors whose tenure should be re-evaluated in the first place.

Students have been using evaluation results to determine whether they want to take a professor's class. The new proposal only allows administrators to use the evaluations as

well. Under the bill, the results would be used in conjunction with other methods, ensuring that poor student evaluations don't carry excessive weight.

The bill also doesn't unreasonably infringe on academic freedom, as some have claimed. Academic freedom is important, but so is competence.

The language in the bill should be specific; administrators and professors should know exactly what constitutes a poor evaluation.

The effects of this proposal should only be positive. Students will be properly included in the evaluating process. And professors who need to improve their teaching will be gently nudged to do so.

Meanwhile, competent teachers don't need to worry — they can keep their security blanket of tenure and let the quality of their teaching speak for itself.

Singing Cadet-less

The men's choir should change its name



DAVID BOLDT
COLUMNIST

In 1940 The Battalion held a singing contest that was publicized throughout Texas A&M University. A small group of men calling themselves the Singing Cadets entered and won. The name stuck and is still used today to represent the most renowned and respected men's choir at A&M.

When I was in grade school, my father, being the fanatical ol' Ag he is, would take my family to see the Singing Cadets perform every time they were within a 30-mile radius. Even though I didn't always want to go, I always left the concert with a good feeling.

After I came to A&M, got to know a few of the members and learned more about how the organization works and what they do, my respect and admiration for this organization have only increased.

I have but one problem with the Singing Cadets: the name "Cadets."

The Singing Cadets began at a time when A&M was an all-male military institution. Since all Aggies at the time were cadets, the name was a natural choice for its original members. But since then, times have changed. Bob Boon, the Singing Cadets' highly respected director from 1964 to 1995, said,

"Nonregs were first admitted into the organization when they were admitted into the school in 1964, and since then the percentage of nonregs in the Singing Cadets has risen with the student body population."

That's certainly how it should be. An organization such as the Singing Cadets that represents a school with a population of 42,000 — only 2,000 of which are members of the Corps of Cadets — should naturally have a small percentage of cadets. In the past year there have been fewer than 10 cadets in the 60-member choir. But continuing to call themselves cadets when most of them are not is disrespectful and unfair to the thousands of Corps members who have gone through the torment of earning the right to be called what they are — cadets.

Boon said somewhere along the way a name change was considered. "We were becoming well known and decided a name change would hurt the publicity of the organization." That is certainly understandable. But if its name no longer represents the organization, the name needs to be changed. One wouldn't refer to this summer's mostly nonreg population living on the Quad as the Corps of Cadets just because they live there temporarily.

Matt Ward, Singing Cadets vice president and a member for four semesters, said, "The school and the organization are based on traditions, and changing the name would break that." Yes, this fine school is based on tradi-

tion — a tradition of an all-male military school — but we do not refer to nonregs as cadets. We are all referred to as Aggies.

Every year approximately 600 men and women show up at Corps Freshman Orientation Week, and over the course of four hard years they are molded into leaders for the state and nation. The title of cadet is earned over the course of the grueling nine-month fish year. Only at a few selected institutions, such as West Point and The Citadel, can members call themselves cadets. My rank in the Corps is not captain, but cadet captain. Referring to myself as a captain in the military would be extremely disrespectful to all the men and women in the U.S. military who have earned that rank, just as it is disrespectful for the mostly nonreg Singing Cadets to refer to themselves as such.

The Singing Cadets' own Matt Ward said, "The name makes us work harder to uphold a higher standard because we are representing A&M, the state and sometimes the nation." I have no doubt, after everything I have seen and heard about this organization, that this is true. As a whole, the Singing Cadets are as a whole a fine group of gentlemen. But the fact remains that the vast majority of them have not earned the right to be called cadets. Certainly an organization as renowned as this can survive a name change.

David Boldt is a Class of '97 marketing major

PETA gets unethical treatment



DAVID RECHT
COLUMNIST

PETA has a bad rep. Over the years, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has been in the spotlight for attacking alleged injustices to animals across the globe.

The most noteworthy cause is the opposition to animal experimentation by large multinational corporations, such as Gillette. PETA has held demonstrations and discouraged the purchase of goods by organizations in violation of its standards, much of which has been covered by the media. In turn, the average American falsely views PETA as a conglomerate of militant activists.

This does not mean PETA has never espoused values and actions that are slightly out of the bounds of mainstream thinking. Following are some of the major activities of PETA over the past several months that have been brought to popular attention by the press:

- PETA encouraged members to write to the president of Acura in response to a great corporate injustice. The company ran advertisements for the Acura automobile that included the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile. PETA's notification to members described it as a "hot dog shaped car that is used to travel across America to persuade children to eat the flesh of pigs."
- PETA attacked Manhattan's prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art for the use of traps and poison in the museum's attempts to exterminate rodents on its grounds.
- The organization appealed to the local government of Montreal, Quebec, to ban horse-drawn carriages in the downtown district. The notice explained the horses were exposed to "extreme conditions" such as heat and humidity.
- It is these type of stories that comprise almost all the media coverage of PETA. However, there is a more mainstream side. Not all of the organization is as alternative as the media's portrayal. Further study of PETA's activities lead to less controversial causes:
- Leading up to the big Fourth of July holiday, it published information relating to the safety and protection of pets in relation to fireworks, heat and solitude.
- PETA discouraged the giving of pets as Christmas gifts, because children frequently neglect them.
- PETA brought to light a case in East Bernard, Texas, in which four teens brutally tortured and killed a cat, including hitting it with a baseball bat and running over it with a truck.
- Nothing wrong there. Everyone wants domestic animals to be safe and well cared for, and the reckless torture of animals is unacceptable in all facets of society. It is the first three actions where disagreement is likely. If man has an inherent dominance over animals, why can he not eat them for nourishment, separate himself from those that carry disease, and use them for transportation? Some think that one should, and PETA thinks that one shouldn't.
- Although one doesn't have to agree with everything PETA says, there is an important lesson here. Sometimes the media don't give the whole story. People want to read about fiery demonstrations and spirited confrontations, which results in neglect of everyday humanitarian efforts. As a result, mainstream America has a sphere of interest that overlaps that of PETA. Even though one may not value animal rights to the same degree as PETA, there is a common desire to see the reduction of needless animal cruelty and neglect.
- Whether one wears fur or enjoys beef, he or she can stand together with PETA in meeting these goals.

David Recht is a Class of '97 civil engineering major



MAIL CALL

Llano offers good-natured humor

I would like to take a second to commend Stephen Llano on his ability to add some life to the Batt. His July 9 column in particular has to be the funniest I've ever read in the Batt. In two years, his column is the first I've read on a regular basis; I actually look forward to getting a newspaper on Tuesdays.

I also admire his ability to discuss issues that concern our community. He is able to tie the University (President Bowen, Dave South, the naked girl) and the community (Lollapalooza, the local radio stations) into his work in a harmless, but humorous fashion. I believe that Llano is having a little fun with his column, not bashing everyone he mentions. I have heard that some people disagree with some of Llano's columns and even find them offensive. You have every right to feel that way, don't get me wrong.

However, for those of you who may have taken offense to some of his columns (KTSR?), I ask you to take a second to look at the humor in them. Llano is not another Chris Stivdent in the making, bashing every aspect of Aggieland he could find. I'm pretty sure about that. It is my opinion that he is having some "good bull" fun by including certain individuals and groups into some of his columns. I mean, come on, the Aggie-ized version of Independence Day was pretty darn funny!

Thanks for making us laugh, Stephen.

From what I read, Bill Perry and Larry Crumbley's comments were also directed to the bill. The article makes it appear, however, that our administration, rather than Ratliff, is making the proposal. What has happened is that Texas A&M University's proposed post-tenure review document was confused by the reporter with the state legislature bill. Texas A&M University has no intention whatever of using student ratings to the degree that Ratliff's bill calls for.

Steve Oberhelman
Faculty Senate Speaker

Taylor adds nothing to political debate

David Taylor, with his sharp wit and acute perception of matters political, has come to represent everything that's wrong with American politics today. His insubstantial rhetoric strongly echoes that of most American politicians, who seem bent on blaming anyone and everyone else for the nation's woes rather than working together toward productive remedies for them. Taylor, in his columns, offers nothing in the way of solutions or even original thought, but rather carries on with the mindless and unproductive partisan bickering that has consumed Capitol Hill.

This is one taxpayer who longs for the day when the two parties can find a way to perform the tasks for which we pay them, and the likes of Taylor are no longer wasting space in our newspapers.

Ben Cain
Graduate student

Legislature is moving to change tenure

I read with interest yesterday's article on the use of student ratings in post-tenure review of faculty at Texas A&M University. When I chatted with the reporter, my comments were directed to the bill proposed by Sen. Ratliff's committee on higher education. That bill calls for possible removal of tenure if a faculty member receives two consecutive years of negative annual reviews, based on peer review and student evaluations.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

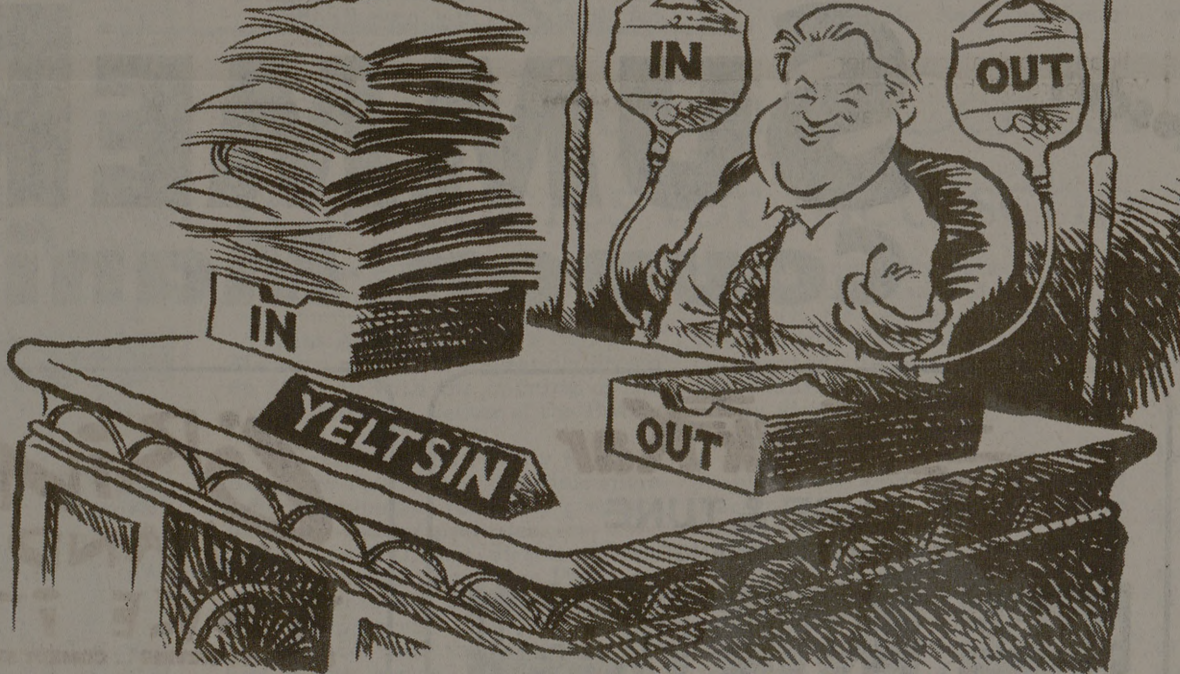
We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to:

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MARGULIES

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Landmark does not belong to a state

In the future, Texas, California, New Mexico and Arizona might argue over who owns the Rio Grande. That is, if historical precedence has anything to do with it.



STEPHEN LLANO
COLUMNIST

Immigrants of immeasurable numbers and backgrounds attempt to cross this physical landmark daily in the search for a better life.

Currently, all American eyes are focused on the supposedly huge influx of immigrants into this country. And those eyes are not friendly. Many have forgotten the great waves of migration from Europe near the beginning of the century. They didn't have the Rio Grande or Border Patrol; they had Ellis Island. Many believed the waves of immigrants would poison the country. At the time, no one would consider arguing over which state laid claim to it. Sound familiar?

But today, New York and New Jersey are about to go to battle over the island.

New Jersey has provided utilities to the island because of its proximity. But New York claims a historic right to ownership, laced with a little common sense. Of course, common sense is a

very, very relative term.

In the 1800s, New York state, expanded its claims to territory all the way up to the Jersey shore, according to the Associated Press. New Jersey allowed New York to sign an agreement giving them ownership of the 2.75-acre island, as long as New Jersey maintained ownership of all land underwater.

So it seems New York is winning. But the Empire State fails to bring up the fact that in the 1890s, 25 acres were added to the island. This land was not shipped in, it was raised. That's right, it was New Jersey's land down under.

But New York also claims that one in three of the 16 million immigrants to the United States settled in New York between the years 1892 and 1924. From 1908 to 1909, people who lived on Ellis Island voted in New York.

New Jersey retorts with its own statistics: Ellis Island is a mere 1,300 feet from the Jersey City shoreline, while Manhattan lies two miles away.

If this arguing between the two states seems childish and stupid, that's because it is. The words from a colonial history expert testifying for New York sum up the maturity level of this debate.

"New Jersey's always been in the shadow of New York, and that's a big shadow," said Dr. Leo Hershkowitz. "New Jersey wants a little bit of that limelight."

Shame on New Jersey — trying to steal New York's toys.

At the beginning of the century, Ellis Island served as a gateway for most of the backbone of immigrants to this country. A monument as historically significant as this shouldn't be left in the hands of jealous states who just want to attract tourists or print "Home of Ellis Island" on their glossy brochures. Let's make the island part of the United States of America, not part of a state's platter of amusement parks. Immigrants did help to build the economy and the social fabric of New York as well as New Jersey. And Connecticut. And Maine. And Florida. Alabama and Wisconsin. The list can go up to 50 entries. We all should have some say in what happens to the historic gateway to America.

The federal court is expected to hear this issue in about three weeks. But that ruling will not be permanent; it can be reviewed by a higher court and reversed. Hopefully, the court will conclude on the side of America: that this landmark is too important to be claimed by one state. It should be a U.S. landmark.

But if one side ends up prevailing, Texas better research the winning strategy. Who knows what the Southwest will think of the Rio Grande a hundred years from now?

Stephen Llano is a Class of '97 history major

David Recht is a Class of '97 civil engineering major