

OPINION

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'Other education' supplants real one

When I first came to Texas A&M, I was thrilled at the start of each semester with the anticipation of buying my books. Although that was usually the only time I seriously looked at them, I consoled myself with the thought that what I lacked in study habits was compensated by the "other education."



JENNI HOWARD
COLUMNIST

The "other education," as it is known, walks outside of classrooms and into learning skills that will help us where material information cannot, such as leadership development, teamwork and time management. To get this education, we usually become involved in various activities and get the proper experience that will show future employers we can indeed be "leaders."

However, if the focus of education remains solely on improving prospects for a future job, we will miss much of what we need to learn.

As a fifth-year senior, I've come to realize that while developing my leadership skills will get me a long way in my career, I should have paid a little more attention to what was going on in class and also to what was going on in the world.

True leaders are desperately needed in today's society. However, what America also needs is a better-educated public. By this, I mean a public that is more aware of the issues our country is facing, and of the significance of events that are taking place around us every day.

With so much emphasis on being busy, it seems America has run out of time to learn.

You don't have to look far to find a student too busy to know what is going on in the

world these days. Some students are too busy studying, but there are also many students who are too busy participating in extracurricular activities to devote a decent amount of time to learn the material in their classes or to keep up with current events.

Many students may say they are able to balance the load successfully, pointing to good grades, but with the abundance of multiple choice and partial credit tests these days, one wonders about whether students really need to master the material to make the grade.

The most striking example of America's need to learn more is its lack of knowledge of current affairs. Take, for example, the 1992 National Election Study conducted by the University of Michigan. In this study, Americans were asked to identify the political offices held by Dan Quayle, Boris Yeltsin, Tom Foley and William Rehnquist. Only 5 percent of the population could identify all four individuals.

It's impossible to be knowledgeable about every issue that we will encounter, but we should take it as a personal responsibility to educate ourselves as much as possible.

As students, we will never have more time to learn with a wealth of resources than right now. What will change when we graduate is that earning — not learning — will be our main goal.

While it is understandable to prefer staying busy with extracurricular activities, ignorance should not be a satisfactory trade-off for "leadership development."

Leadership skills may carry us up the corporate ladder, but they will be no good if they leave us with leaders who were too busy to learn about the problems they have to solve.

Jenni Howard is a Class of '96 economics and international studies major

Mexican police still horsing around

Amnesty International, where are you now?

For too long, the Mexican government has ravished its country with corruption and barbarism. President Ernesto Zedillo promised change. He promised to get the bad guys and bring 'em to justice.

Well, Zedillo has been in office for 20 months now, and he did get some bad guys. He just can't bring himself around to the justice part.

The Michoacan state police found its scapegoat bad guy in a most unusual taxi cab vandal — a horse. The unfortunate animal has been imprisoned for over one year without trial.

At least there is some evidence of justice in Mexico. Even the politically protected group of policemen who rather unwillingly massacred 17 peasants in June about 60 miles north of Acapulco (accidentally shooting some of the wounded point-blank in the head) received attention from Zedillo and a special investigation of the Mexican Supreme Court.

They aren't being held without trial for an indefinite period of time. They aren't being treated like animals.

Obviously, our equine friend is an animal and does not have the high-ranking connections of Mexican policemen. He (identified as a male after his arrest) has never officially been given a reason for his detainment.

One month before the police

massacre in Aguas Blancas, the suspect allegedly darted into traffic and vandalized a 1977 Nissan taxi with his head and buttocks.

The driver of the cab was infuriated by the more than \$200 damage to his car's trunk and a sizable dent in the front passenger side. Ruthlessly, the man pressed charges against his Nissan's assailant and the animal was arrested.

The Michoacan police must have been inspired to quick action by Zedillo's tough-on-crime stance, but once they had the suspect in custody, an apathetic mist fell on the unnamed horse's case. It was as if the police simply forgot about their prisoner.

Perhaps the animal's imprisonment is similar to that of the suspected drug cartel leader Juan Garcia Abrego. This unfortunate businessman had been intimately connected with former President Salinas. As a drug lord and general bad guy, Abrego was a prime catch for a Zedillo-led administration trying to look like it is creating a "nation of law."

The cinnamon-colored horse might also have connections in the old Salinas administration. He probably remembers those decadent days of galloping with the traffic under the protective hand of his high-ranking friends.

Those days are over, though. The power of Salinas, just

like that of Catherine the Great, was destined to be crushed — and with it those poor souls who had trusted the former president for protection.

Zedillo is the new boss in town. His boys get speedy trials and humane treatment. His boys are allowed to alter video footage of 17 murders so that poor leftist peasants look like raving guerrillas.

Not so for Abrego and our



horse friend. At least Abrego has been sent to the United States for justice. The unnamed horse continues to roam its compound — a field of impounded cars in Mexico.

The officers saddled with equine duty offer him the scant sustenance of grass and water. They sinisterly claim that "he lives there quite happily."

But he is restless in his cage, enraged that he has been de-

tained against justice for so long. The cinnamon-colored horse has expressed his "happiness" by destroying the mirrors on the impounded cars.

He is probably just fantasizing that those mirrors are the silent, uncaring members of Amnesty International.

Marcus Goodyear is a Class of '97 English major



MAIL CALL

Tenure proposal will hurt everyone

I am writing this letter to help shed some light on the issue of allowing students opinions to carry weight when considering a professor for tenure. I believe there would be several negative effects of such a policy.

First, professors would have incentive to give out higher grades even if students did not put out the needed effort forth in a course. Since these evaluations would carry weight and have an effect on the professors livelihood, why should he or she not just make the course as easy as possible for the students and get the best possible review from his or her students? If you followed this line of thinking in the work force, then an executive would give raises and promotions even to substandard employees just to get the best evaluations. Does such a policy make sense to you as a potential executive?

Second, Texas state universities would lose the best new professors. The reason is quite simple. If I have just received my Ph.D. and I wanted to find a university to work for, will I choose a university that puts more pressure on me than any other institution in the country for the same money or less? Probably not.

Furthermore, you should know that A&M's rankings are determined by, among other factors, quality of research. That's right — research, not teaching. So 10 years after such a law or policy becomes a reality you will see a drop in your University

ranking, i.e. your degree will be worth less. I did my undergraduate work at a university that once had a top-tier law school, second only to t.u. in the state of Texas. Now it is a second-tier school just like SMU and U of H. I knew some lawyers who had gotten their degrees when St. Mary's was a great law school, and when they talk about their degrees they are quick to point out that they got their degree before St. Mary's went downhill. Do you want to have to do that five or 10 years down the road?

My advice, just live with the difficulties for a few years and reap the rewards of high rankings in the future. Besides, it seems to me that those undergraduates who have the 2.5 average and lower are always the ones complaining. Those students who have 3.0's and better rarely complain. This is not to say that they never have had a bad professor, but that the occasion is the exception not the rule at A&M.

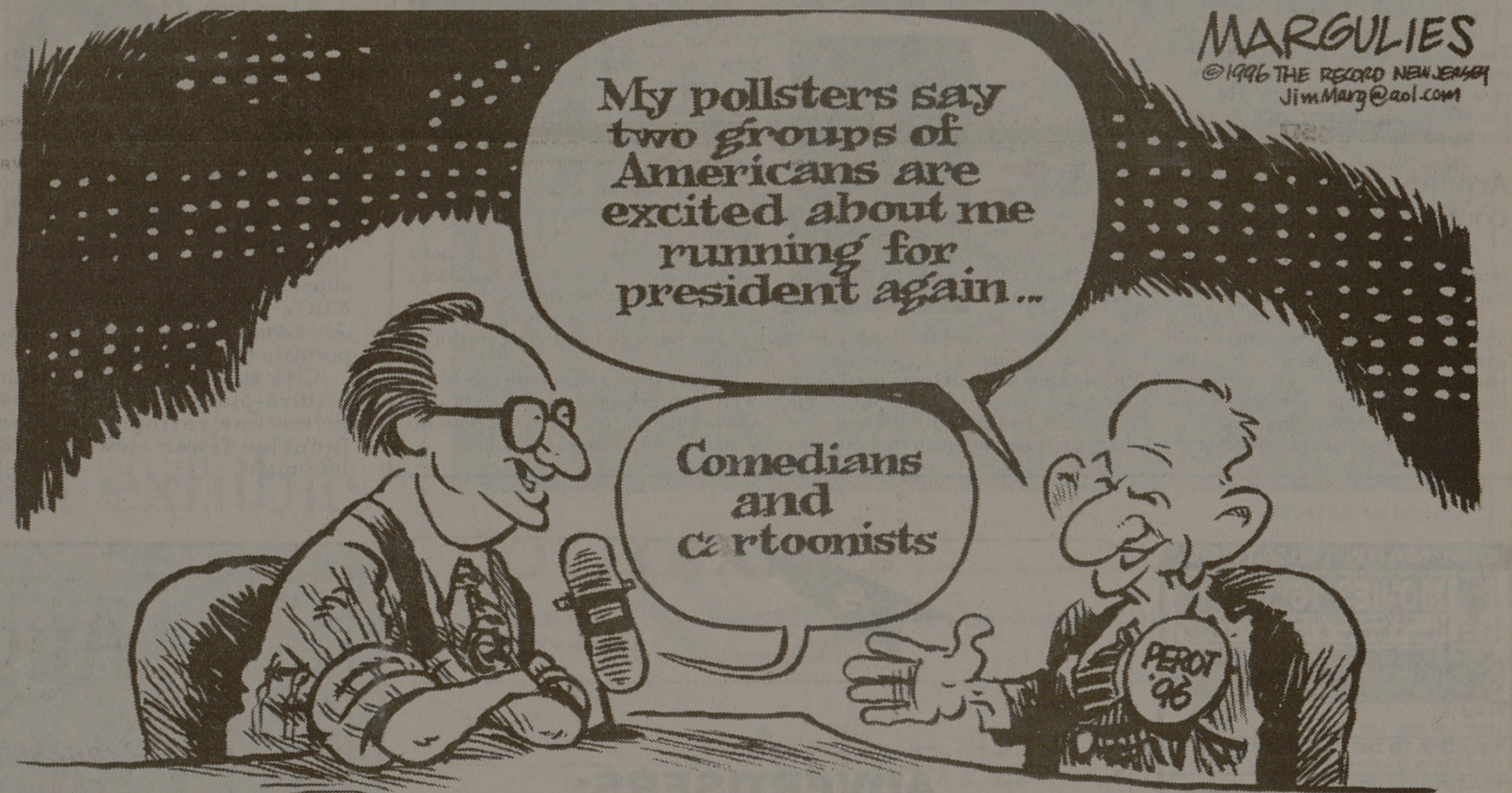
Robert Ramirez
Graduate student

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MARGULIES
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IRC allows Net surfers to meet, keep friends

My best friend of seven years is moving from my hometown to New York City. Yet, I have a feeling I won't miss her much. It's not because I don't love her or we're mad at each other, but because I basically talk to her daily over the computer.



ROSIE ARCELAY
COLUMNIST

Texas A&M allots each enrolled student \$500 for computer access, which entitles a student to use the computer facilities and have various e-mail accounts and other goodies that come in the package. Thanks to this, I can talk to my friend as much as I want for virtually nothing. We both subscribe to an e-mailing list composed of friends we've met through yet another service provided by these accounts: IRC.

The Internet Relay Chat is a fun way to chat with people. You can meet people from around the corner and from around the globe. Except for the occasional lag, it is a live interactive medium run by different IRC servers, which you can access through TAM2000 or ACS accounts.

But it is a double-edged sword. It is more addictive than going to the Chicken every night; even worse, you will stop going to the Chicken to "get on" IRC, especially the first few months you try it. I've known people who have spent hours on end just trying to figure

out all the commands.

It is also risky. There are people on there whose intentions are not the best because the system is not regulated. A lot of people will ask you for "netsex," and profanities abound. But these problems are minimal. In reality, the benefits override the losses — at least for some people.

"IRC is addictive like a drug," said Amy, a former A&M education student and an IRC regular. "It is very easy to let it overwhelm you and let it take control of your life, but you have to make the choice to turn off the computer and go study. It is how I met the love of my life, and for that I am thankful for it."

Ann, another IRC regular, said, "Most people laugh at you when you say it's an addiction. But try stopping for a while — a month or so. See how much you think about it, and almost crave it. You'd think you were smoking cigs or something, or an alcoholic trying to stop drinking."

Dean, another IRC addict, said, "IRC is definitely a double-edged sword. (But) IRC is probably the largest gathering of intellectuals in the world, as long as you can look past the dunderheads."

IRC has done everything from improve typing speed to create a new computer jargon. "Prolly," "kewl," and "np" (no problem) are some of these new vocabulary words, which can occasionally trickle down into everyday writing. I occasionally write a few hehehe's or :) on pen-and-paper letters to my friends and parents.

It can also create a network of close friend-

ships. Channel #texas is home to mostly A&M and UT students (no, there isn't much talk about the rivalry; and if there is, you might get kicked off the channel), former students, people from other Texas universities, and those who are out of state but still want to keep in touch.

Kari, a former computer science student who currently lives out of state, said, "#texas is a very special channel because we all know one another. On most of the other channels people do not become addicted so easily. This is because #texas is to intelligent, otherwise shy people what fraternities can be to popular, outgoing people. It gives them a way to meet people and explore society at their own pace. Many of us value IRC, and the only way we can talk to friends in Texas cheaply is IRC."

Because of the few problems with the IRC, some people are afraid the A&M administration might want to limit students' privileges. But IRC, it can be said, is a pure form of the First Amendment. It is a way to meet new people with varying opinions in an environment where you can express yourself without limitations or fear of repercussions. Therefore, taking it away would be limiting our freedom of expression. "It isn't IRC which makes students fail, it is students who make students fail," said Kari.

Dave, an A&M graduate, agrees: "At A&M, if you aren't going to make the grade, IRC isn't going to be the cause."

Rosie Arcelay is a Class of '98 history major