

GUF Proposal

Students present the only outlet for funds

Here we go again. It seems like every time we turn around, administrators are trying to squeeze more money out of us students at Texas A&M. This semester, the fee increased from \$30 to \$32 per semester hour — and will keep increasing until it reaches \$40 per hour in 2000. And the Texas A&M Board of Regents will vote yet another General Use Fee (GUF) increase in January. If approved, the fee will increase from \$24 to \$34 per semester hour. For example, the increase will cost a student enrolled for 12 hour an extra \$120 per semester. The revenue generated by the increase will produce the money needed to give the faculty and staff at A&M the pay raises they deserve. It never ceases to amaze me that Aggies go on an uproar after being asked for more money, each of us is on a limited budget, but it doesn't seem to stop us from going out drinking three nights a week or blowing huge amounts of money to embellish our wardrobes. Students on this campus need to rest assured that their money is well-spent by the administration. Rising operating costs, inflation and decreasing state funding are just some of the reasons why students are asked for a little more support.

Staff Writer



Brandon Hausenfluck
Senior international studies major

One major misconception students have about A&M's finances is that the money we pay each semester for tuition, fees, etc., makes up the better part of the budget. Not true at all. Of the University's total annual budget of \$648,276,211 for fiscal year 1996, only \$46,367,277 came from tuition and fees. That's not even 14 percent of the budget.

This campus has been ranked as one of the most efficient in the United States by several publications. Business Week determined that Texas A&M is the best buy of American colleges when evaluating quality vs. price. We pay less for tuition and fees than 75 percent of our peers.

If the Board does not approve the GUF increase in January, A&M's academic infrastructure and ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff will suffer greatly. Yes, \$10 is a steep increase, but we might as well get it out of the way. The fact is, A&M faculty and staff are underpaid, overworked and in need of some immediate gratitude.

The student body needs to rest assured that President Bowen and the administration are not suggesting the increase for fun. And it's commendable that they are keeping payroll a high priority. "Some staff members barely have enough money to put bacon on the table," said Vice President for Finance Bill Krumm.

This GUF increase is vital to Texas A&M if we plan on being competitive with other first-class institutions. Our only alternative is to not increase fees, thereby contributing to the devaluation of a Texas A&M education for our younger brothers and sisters and our children.

College life is full of sacrifices. If our utility bills are too high, we turn off the air conditioner. If gas is too expensive, we car pool. And if pitchers of beer are \$4 at The Chicken and \$3.75 at Fitzwilly's, we go to Fitzwilly's. Students are professionals when it comes to cutting corners.

Although the increase seems like a stout one, Texas A&M administrators need and would appreciate support from the student body on this issue. And although money is less than plentiful to college students, it is important that they choose to put their money where it is needed most.



EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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STUDENT SENATE

After asking for student opinion, the Senate voted against it.

The Student Senate joined a long line of Aggie jokes Wednesday night just by being itself.

In a move that should embarrass students more than this year's football team, the Senate voted 36-17 to not even discuss implementation of run-offs for yell leader elections.

Last spring, when the Senate could not decide on whether to have run-off elections for yell leaders, it threw the issue out to the students through a referendum, asking to know what the students wanted.

Not surprisingly, after a year of irresponsible behavior on the part of the yell leaders, a record number of students showed up to the polls. Of the 10,000 students who voted, 62 percent favored a run-off.

Head yell leader Chris Torn says this is only because students were not educated on the issue, which he might also use to explain the dismal 17 percent of the votes he received (10 percent lower than in his victory as a junior).

Although calling the electorate ignorant lacks any semblance of validity, it was an effective way for Torn and the Senate to justify maintaining the status quo.

The system used to elect yell leaders rewards groups that organize and stand behind a few candidates. "Independent" candidates stand almost no chance of winning, unless, of course, 10,000 voters show up to the polls and drown out the Corps bloc.

Although the Corps deserves credit for producing many great campus leaders, it should not be given a corner on the market. Run-off elections could have given students a chance to find the most qualified candidates.

Although the system does not work, this does not translate into a personal attack on this year's new yell leaders.

Every year groups change, and new members are often unfairly burdened with the defense of past actions.

Similarly, there are senators who deserve credit for speaking up and trying to represent students. Unfortunately, the group speaks as a whole, and what it has said should anger every student on this campus. The Senate has said that it does not trust the people it represents.

The Senate could learn a lot from Carl Baggett, student body president.

He says he does not just consider himself the president of Student Government, but of the entire student population. But padding resumes seems like a more prevalent motivation for many of the senators.

Perhaps the members of the Senate should grow up and realize that this is not like student council in high school (well, sometimes it's not).

Occasionally the Senate has a real chance to effect change.

It had a chance Wednesday night. All it had to do was implement what the overwhelming majority of the students said they wanted.

But the senators couldn't even do that.

This spring, many of these senators will campaign to hold onto their jobs.

They may tell potential voters they will represent them, but their actions prove that they are not interested in representation.

It would be nice if a few students would emerge out of the "ignorant" masses to change that — and a whole lot more.

Drastic fee increase will break the students

Janet Lee — Queen of Generics, Goddess of Frugality. Her blue and white label beckons shopping cart. If the 10 per semester hour increase of the General Use Fee is approved, Janet Lee and I will be a first name basis.

Night News Editor



Helen Clancy
Junior English major

a big impact on students who must subsist on savings.

The GUF increase is expected to generate \$11 million for pay raises, which will undoubtedly help raise the quality of education at Texas A&M.

Presently, 37.5 percent of Texas A&M employees make less than \$20,000 a year. The reason behind the increase is highly justified, but it does not ease the burden on the captive student.

The problem with the increase lies not with its purpose, but with the size of the increment. Although t-sips presently pay a \$32 GUF per credit hour, they will only shoulder a \$2 increase in 1997. Adjusting to a mere \$2 increase is much easier, even if their fees have been consistently higher than at Texas A&M.

Because Texas A&M ranks ninth in tuition and fees when compared to other Big 12 Universities, students have learned to expect reasonable fees and gradual increases. Low cost is one of A&M's main attractions.

However, the disparity between our fees and fees at other universities is not an excuse to devastate students with a 42 percent increase. Students depend on consistency, and an increase of this proportion cannot be planned for financially.

When tuition began to increase this year

by \$2 per credit hour, students could plan ahead for the rising expenses. If the General Use Fee had been increasing all along in smaller amounts, the burden on students would be much milder.

Administrators claim that they have no choice but to turn to the students. This is understandable, considering that only one-third of the state's endowment



goes to the Texas A&M University System, while two-thirds goes to the t.u. System.

However, some students have seen the General Use Fee triple since they enrolled here, and like an endless cycle, the excuses never change. "Consumer-funded education" is the state Legislature's special way of passing the buck.

The increase might put a Band-Aid on faculty and staff raises, but in the same breath, it creates undue financial burdens on students who depend on college loans and part-time jobs to make ends meet. Perhaps administrators don't realize the impact this decision will have on these students.

Someday, I'll be able to afford putting more than two dollars of gas in my car at a time, but until then, Janet Lee and I have a good thing going.

Legal ambiguity says aloha to gay couples wanting to marry

For a brief moment, it seemed as if Hawaii might have an extra tourist attraction in addition to its majestic, lava-spewing volcanoes.

Columnist



Shannon Halbrook
Junior English major

On Wednesday, a Hawaii state judge issued a ruling considered landmark by some and apocalyptic by others. Hawaii Circuit Court Judge Kevin Chang found that there was no "compelling state interest" against allowing gay couples to marry and receive federal and state benefits traditionally reserved for traditional male-female unions.

But then, almost as quickly as the decision was announced, Hawaii's Deputy Attorney General Rick Eichor was granted a stay on the ruling. The stay will forbid gay couples from getting married until the ruling comes on the state's appeal. The Hawaii Supreme Court may not get to it until 1998. Until then, the decision will be in legal limbo and gay couples in marital purgatory.

But even after this most recent development, interested parties were either hailing this as a new time of tolerance — or the dawn of depravity. Unfortunately, they're both wrong.

Even if the decision is upheld by the Hawaii Supreme Court, it isn't that monumental. On its own, it will affect only a limited number of people. Thanks to the Defense of Marriage Act, which passed through Congress and was signed by President Clinton at lightning speed, not a single state will be under any obligation to comply with Hawaii's ruling — or recognize gay couples that hold a marriage license issued in Hawaii.

The real question, then, is not whether Hawaii will go ahead and extend the right of marriage to gay couples — it's whether states will choose to go along with Hawaii's ruling when it comes.

And it doesn't look like they will. According to numbers compiled by the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a New York rights group, 15 state legislatures have already passed bills specifically stating that couples who are married in other states will not be recognized.

Far from encouraging gays and mobilizing them in search of their rights, this decision will probably cause "family values" Republicans to react against homosexuals more strongly.

"No reasonable American will support this ex-

treme effort to sanctify and sanction something which is sinful and unnatural," said Rev. Lewis Sheldon, chair of the Traditional Values Coalition.

Similarly, California state Sen. William Knight will sponsor a bill that would deny recognition to gay couples married in Hawaii. The bill was already defeated earlier this year; Knight and his Republican buddies in the California Legislature just feel threatened enough by the possible effects of the possible Hawaii ruling that they've decided to push it again.

On the other side of the aisle, Alan Klein, a spokesman for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, said the decision is historic.

"This is an exciting milestone and an absolutely historic moment," Klein said. "This is completely historic, a momentous decision."

Unfortunately, it's not as historic as he thinks. And it's not as disastrous as Sheldon thinks.

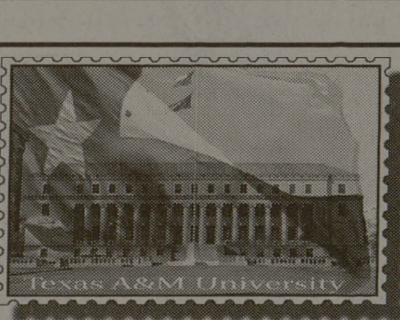
If the Hawaii Supreme Court upholds Chang's decision, it would be great if it were to directly lead to gay couples being allowed to marry in all 50 states. But it won't. If few other states pick up on Hawaii's initiative — and ban gay marriage — Hawaii could become a haven for gay couples. "A lot of lesbian and gay couples are looking to go to Hawaii at this point," Klein said.

What's more, Hawaii could move away from its traditional role of "nice tropical island place for families to visit when their sons are in third grade" to a horribly stereotyped place that elicits cries of "What? Take my kids there? With men hugging men and women kissing women?" at the family dinner table whenever the island's name is mentioned.

Of course, it's also possible that opponents of homosexual marriage would be happy about this; many times in history it has been argued that minorities should just all be sent to an island of their own.

There's nothing really wrong with this, but it would definitely alter Hawaii's image to the rest of the nation's image of Hawaii. And that's not the way it should be.

Equality for homosexuals will come, but it will be a much more difficult struggle than this. Neither side should overreact quite yet — and no one should think that a Hawaii court decision will undermine America's sexual status quo.



MAIL CALL

Unmotivated yell leaders silence Ags

Our yell leaders are the embodiment of the spirit of Aggies. We look to them to coordinate and guide our yells. That much is obvious. What should also be obvious is this lack of leadership in the past years.

I was extremely disappointed in the performance of 4 of our 5 yell leaders at the t.u. game. We Aggies, who are known for our noise and spirit, stood silent for

most of the game. During the numerous timeouts we listened to the t-sips excitement.

We do not elect the yell leaders to watch the game, which is all they seem to be doing on the field. We elect them to lead us and our football team in overwhelming spirit.

Keep this in mind when electing next year's yell leaders. Just because they have the right name or family tradition does not mean they have the ability to lead our great student body.

Instead, vote for those candi-

dates who crave to live the tradition and "yell the hell" to rid the 12th Man of their recent inability to yell.

Wendy Stewart
Class of '97

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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