

Bellyaching Bevo

UT student leadership eating sour grapes

Not since junior high have I seen a group of people so concerned with what others think of them.

Last week, University of Texas officials expressed support for a movement on campus to stop sending statistical information to U.S. News and World Report.

The magazine's annual college rankings. The University's constitution gives the senate no power over the administration. The group can only propose or endorse policies.

When the rankings came out last spring, UT officials touted their accomplishments. UT's graduate schools did especially well, with 23 schools, departments and programs included in the magazine's top-25 lists.

Paul Newman, Department of Accounting chair, told the Daily Texan that he was happy with the rankings.

"We're thrilled," he said. "This kind of ranking brings employers, but it also brings great students. We need them both."

So why the movement to boycott? Again, the Daily Texan provides a glimpse into the minds of UT officials: "U.S. News dropped the University into the unranked tier in last year's survey, provoking many students and administrators to react critically to the report."

And one more thing — Texas A&M passed UT by leaping from the unranked masses into the top 50. Surely this doesn't bother our friends in Austin, but it doesn't look good either. UT is embarrassing itself by supporting this movement with such bad timing.

Executive Editor



Michael Landauer
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U.S. News rankings came under scrutiny last fall when students at Stanford, Yale and Harvard started the movement. But those discussions didn't start as a result of falling out of the top tier of the rankings.

Maybe as a top-50 school, A&M should try to help UT from looking like cry babies by joining the effort. But this probably isn't going to happen, not just because A&M is happy with its rankings, but also because A&M officials seem to have the right attitude about them.

Texas A&M President Dr. Ray Bowen remains modest when discussing

unhappy with the rankings — he just prefers to focus on the future, working on ways to maintain A&M's good reputation.

With such a rational outlook on the rankings, perhaps Bowen should counsel UT officials on the issue. I visualize the scene looking like something out of *Leave It To Beaver*. Ward Cleaver, played by Bowen, might tell the beave, played by UT officials to buck up: "What others think of you is not nearly as important as what you think of yourself. You just keep working hard and recognition will come."

"But, Gee whiz, Dad," UT officials might answer, "I just hate being beaten by the Aggies." In reality, however, neither A&M nor Texas has a right to use such rankings as reason to be con-

descending to each other. Both schools are excellent, leading the nation in many different areas.

Texas schools should cooperate to ensure that higher education in the state gets the respect it deserves. By working together and sharing ideas, the schools can get a lot accomplished. This year, several universities in Texas, including A&M and Texas, are lobbying together for increased funding from the legislature. With unity like this, higher education will continue to improve, with or without the recognition from U.S. News.

And isn't this the most important thing? Or are we so worried about our image we pout when our rankings slightly drop one year? UT officials will be answering this question soon, and hopefully they will decide to stay in the game.

The last thing this year's rankings should do for UT is make them withdraw and regress. By refusing to jump on the wounded-ego bandwagon, UT officials could act like the leaders in higher education they should, rather than acting like the insecure junior-high kids the student government wants them to be.

Figurehead Senate

The Student Senate lacking effectiveness and decisiveness

Most students have heard about the Student Senate, a student group with obscure powers and a vague agenda which meets twice a month to discuss the fate of Texas A&M students. Despite their suits and \$96,000 annual budget, the Senate is merely a figurehead.

The Student Senate presents itself as a representative body. The claim sounds nice, but it's actually misleading.

Student Senators are elected by thousands of students, but by the end of the senate session last spring, fifty percent of the senators had been replaced by appointed students.

Occasionally a student senator will discuss the mandate they received when elected, but most senators do not campaign on their views or policies. Senate campaign fliers only list the student's name, ballot position and maybe a nice graphic.

In the last election, Dave Brown drew the top ballot spot in the campaign for Northside Senate. Brown posted one flier and was swept into office. Elections where policy has such little influence do not make Student Senate a representative body.

The group can only be considered representative if each senator rigorously sought the views of their constituents and acted upon the information. Unfortunately, senators rarely seek student opinion, and when they do know student viewpoints, they often ignore them.

Most of us are familiar with the Yell Leader Run-Off debate which plagued the Senate last semester. Even though an overwhelming number of students supported holding Yell Leader Run-Off elections, many Student Senators boldly proclaimed their constituents' opinions invalid.

Senators do hold a "Constitution Day" once a semester when they ask students at the MSC breezeway to fill out opinion sur-

veys, but this event is more symbolism than substance.

Even if they were truly concerned with student views, the Student Senate can effect no real change. They rarely do anything of importance (except endorse fee increases). The University's constitution gives the senate no power over the administration. The group can only propose or endorse policies.

Last fall, the Student Senate entertained a non-controversial, well-researched bill, and still fell well short of their goal.

The Winter Spirit of Aggieland bill was presented at the Nov. 6, senate meeting and called for the Corps, Physical Plant, Student Government and several other organizations to develop a policy which would bring "festive lights" to the A&M campus.

Once the bill was passed and the full force of the Student Senate was behind the project, corporate funding and donations were secured and the University purchased lights and decorations to place around campus.

Senators assure the ornamentation was present, but even they admit it was less than spectacular.

A large Christmas tree was donated for placement at the main entrance of A&M. Student Government was expected to transport the tree from Orange, Texas to campus and oversee its decoration. This project completely fell apart, and somewhere there must be a tree filling a dump in Orange right now.

Even when the Student Senate tries to do something useful, they are terribly inadequate. Despite several attempts to increase efficiency, it evidently takes over a year to accomplish anything through Student Government. The group has failed to serve the students who put them in office. Student Government's budget comes from our Student Service Fee, maybe some accountability is in order.

Columnist



David Johnston
Junior Math major



MAIL CALL

Hooked on Ebonics

In regard to General Franklin's column in the January 17th Battalion:

time? The answer is, we should not.

Nathan Boucher
Class of '98

When one observes the manner in which well-respected leaders in the African-American community communicate, such as Jesse Jackson, Colin Powell and others, the use of Ebonics is unnecessary. As Franklin said, "Ebonics became associated with slavery and servitude, thereby encouraging free or runaway slaves to master standard English." If this is true, which I believe it to be, this serves as all the more reason to stray from this erroneous methodology. The use of this dialect is still associated with individuals of lower-class, and it will further alienate and oppress those who are taught it is an acceptable form of communication. For example, how will one appear in an interview for a high level job if he or she cannot use the correct, conjugated form of the word "be"? Would anyone hire this individual?

Wayull, I jest got through reading this here Battalion column talkin' 'bout Ebonics bein' the best way 't start teachin' the black folks so's the suspension rates won't be s'high. Wayull, I have a really hard time understandin' what all them Yankees r'saying, talkin' all that proper English stuff. I been thankin', 'n I thank that Ebonics is a real good idea, cuz I know what it's like t'not be able to understand when people's ain't talkin' in my "dialect." They should start teachin' "Texonics" to us here Texas folk who cain't unnerstan proper English. I hope they give it some thought cuz it'd really help up rednecks so's when we say stuff like "jeet yet?" 'n "naw, joo?" people'd know what we're sayin' 'without havin' t' watch th' Jeff Foxworthy show. Texonics'd be a real big step in making us dumb Texans more equal, 'n I'd be mighty pleased if they's start havin' it in schools here in Texas.

Shannon Johnson
Class of '99

Absence policies lacking good sense

Professors put personal convenience ahead of students' concerns

It's the same thing every semester. The first day of class, the professor hands out and goes over the usual syllabi containing the usual items. "My office hours are... there will be three tests and a final..." Blah, blah, blah. Whatever.

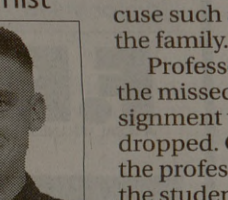
We stare at the wall, the Ph.D. moves on to chapter one and the syllabi are put away never to be seen again.

Students at Texas A&M, however, should pay closer attention to these policies, specifically the excused absence policies; policies that, more often than not, could hurt their chances for a good grade.

A well-known, wide-spread practice among professors is to have extra assignments, quizzes, etc. of which the lowest grades are dropped. On the surface this appears to be helpful to students who may have had a rough week, and it usually is appreciated.

The problem arises, however, when an absence must be taken. Not "my alarm didn't go off," but

Columnist



David Boldt
Senior marketing major

a bona fide University excuse such as a death in the family.

Professors usually say the missed quiz or assignment will be the one dropped. Convenient for the professor. Unfair to the student.

Professors are in effect saying, although you receive a zero on that quiz, how lucky you are because we drop the lowest grade.

The real atrocity begins when a test is missed. Make up tests are often considerably more difficult than the original, often entirely essay questions and covering information found only in the deepest pit of Evans Library.

Some professors have will count the next exam twice when a test is missed for a valid reason. Convenient for the professor, unfair for the student.

Every semester students entrust administrators to look out for our interests in matters such as these. Manager of Faculty Programs and Services Ann Pittman, an assistant to the Dean of Facul-

ties, displaces the issue. "It's up to the individual instructor, as long as it is stated up front," Pittman said.

Well, at least we're told ahead of time before being treated unfairly.

Part 1, Section 7.5 of the 1996/1997 issue of Student Rules states "if the absence was excused, the instructor must either provide the student with an opportunity to make up the exam or other work missed or provide a satisfactory alternative." The problem lies in who considers what a "satisfactory alternative." Having one test counting 100% of your semester grade might be a satisfactory alternative to some professors, but not to students.

When asked if she thought these policies put legitimate students at a disadvantage, Pittman said "I don't feel comfortable commenting on that from this end."

I can't imagine why. The issue remains. Students who must miss school for reasons such as a funeral or severe illness are being put at an academic disadvantage to those who were more fortunate.

Dr. Southerland, Vice President for Student Affairs, said, "The intent is to have an equal opportunity to make up the work at the same level as was missed."

Although most professors mean well and don't intend to maliciously hurt student's grades, it seems that some have lost sight of their duty as a professor.

"It's up to the individual instructor, as long as it is stated up front."

Ann Pittman,
Assistant to the Dean of Faculty

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