

Should A&M have yell leader run-offs?

Yell leader Gary Kipe and Student Senator Javier Martinez debate the issue

Those who lead, serve. All leaders are servants of those who depend on them for direction, especially all leaders.

Guest Columnist



Gary Kipe
Junior
agricultural development major

A yell leader should reflect the attitudes, values and things we love most about our school. Yell leaders are servants and reflections of the 12th Man. We are directly responsible to the students.

The power of the students' votes establishes the credibility of the office of yell leader. Without the students' support, the office of yell leader is not legitimate. Today, we, the student body, have the chance to directly impact the future of Texas A&M University. Today, we, the student body, can vote to have yell leader run-offs.

The students of A&M have come together in the true spirit of the 12th Man to stand, not at football games, but for the principles and ideals that form the basis of the University we love. This is why 63 percent of last year's voters cast votes in favor of yell leader run-offs. This is why 5,470 people signed a petition to put this issue back on the ballot. This is why we care — because we believe in the fundamental values of this University. We believe in integrity, fairness and service. We now have a chance to cast a positive vote to make a positive difference.

Yell leader run-offs are democratic in principle and consistent in practice. Having the yell leaders in the run-off would encourage greater voter participation in the run-offs that are already being held for other positions. These run-offs will make everyone's vote count more, making the yell leaders a more accurate reflection of the student body.

Every year, the student body votes in runoff for the student body president, Class Council officers, RHA officers and OCA officers, but are denied the opportunity to vote for yell leaders. With your vote, we can create consistency in this process.

So, vote. Vote and persevere because perseverance and the testing of our faith builds character and creates unity for our campus. Stand up and be heard. Make a positive difference. The 12th Man cannot be heard if it does not speak. And, as a yell leader, I know there is nothing more powerful than the deafening roar of the 12th Man.



Today the student body will decide the issue of run-off elections for the position of yell leader. But before the votes are cast, it is important to set a few things straight for the record.

Guest Columnist



Javier Martinez
Junior
English and philosophy major

Contrary to popular belief, the Student Senate did in fact consider a bill regarding the issue, but it failed because it was a flawed idea.

Year after year, the issue comes up, and year after year, it fails. It comes up perennially because it sounds good, but when all is said and done, it doesn't make sense to have run-offs for positions to which people are elected in a group. Run-offs work well, or at least they are consistently used here at A&M, for single positions such as student body president or class council positions to secure a plurality (50 percent of the vote). But the numbers would not work in the same way for yell leaders.

The plan is to send the top five senior candidates and the top four junior candidates to the next round, ensuring that those elected would be receiving a plurality. This is easy enough when two candidates are in a run-off, but when there are four or five, it is highly unlikely that any one of them would be able to win a large enough chunk of the electorate. Even if they did, it still may not be an impartial system of election.

Suppose this year's election has about the same number of voters as last year. Ten thousand people voted in the regular election, and only 3,000 in the run-off election. Under these conditions, a candidate could receive close to 5,000 votes in the first election, only to lose to someone who squeaks into the run-off, campaigns vigorously, and then only wins 1,500 votes.

Another factor discussed is the Corps Block. Any organization has the right to organize politically and motivate its members to get out and vote. If run-offs are held, these organizations will inevitably have an advantage in a situation where the turnout is already relatively low.

The Rules and Regulations Committee also realized that, regardless of how low the vote is today, the yell leaders are not part of the student government association and therefore are not bound by the election commission to abide by the results of a run-off. The yell leaders could easily choose to go back to the old army way of doing things and hand-select their successors.

I hope it never comes to that, but the possibility looms dark and heavy on the day of such an important vote.

Unfortunately, many Aggies just don't care about this vote. If students don't care, that's their prerogative, but there is a body that does care. It's called Student Senate and it has spent several months deliberating on the topic. They decided it was not in the best interest of the student body.

They are not, as has been portrayed, people serving personal agendas from ivory towers. Rather they are hard-working, committed students who dedicate long hours to issues that effect everybody on campus.

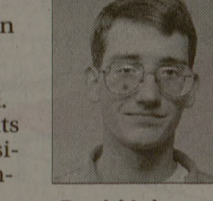
Please listen to the voice of reason and those who have taken the time to study the problem. Vote no.

Editors' Note: As stated in a front page article in today's Battalion, yell leader Chris Torn said, "Whatever the students decide, we'll do everything in our power to abide by their vote."

Gimmick advertising wastes students time and money

Some commercials are creative and some are outright weird. Everyone has seen those advertisements which leave us wondering what was advertised.

Columnist



David Johnston
Junior
mathematics major

Many advertisements on campus for University departments or committees seem to fit in the latter.

University funds and resources should not be spent on useless trinkets. Committees giving away items should remember the items should benefit the student body they were created to serve.

Most students have collected a wide variety of these freebies over the years. The "University Gift Collection" includes plastic tumblers, sunglasses and plenty of cold drink holders — all supplied by University departments or MSC committees.

Some of these items are clever and useful, but some have no relation to the group or cause who distributed them. Some are so pointless students wonder if these departments have money to burn.

The most unusual items distributed lately were pairs of sunglasses with the phrase "Safe & Sober Road Trip '96" printed on the temples. This phrase probably has little impact on the drinking habits of most students, but at least they can use the glasses to hide bloodshot eyes.

The Department of Student Life used these glasses during their "Safe Spring Break" campaign. While they seem bizarre now, the glasses were an effective tool in distributing information. By attaching the sunglasses to educational flyers, students were coaxed into picking up (and possibly reading) the message.

The MSC mounted a marketing campaign last semester which also left students with unanswered questions. During one week, a different trinket was given out each day to students passing through the MSC hallway. The items included key rings, plastic tumblers and bumper stickers. Each piece was printed with a psychedelic version of the MSC logo and the slogan "Memorial Student

Center, Your Student Union."

Again, the intent seemed unclear. The MSC is already a household name. Students still nap on the Flagroom couches. Actually, the MSC Executive Council was trying to remind students the committee is governed by the student body. They felt the various goodies might encourage students to get involved with MSC committees and organizations in the future.

In the months since the publicity drive, few cars have been seen sporting an MSC bumper sticker. Perhaps they weren't the wisest investment.

The Opera and Performing Arts Society tried a similar approach many years ago. OPAS gave away insulated drink holders bearing the group's logo and a drawing of Opus the penguin. Perhaps this particular image gives some people the urge to run out and watch a theatrical production. But drinks aren't allowed in the Rudder Theatre or Rudder Auditorium. It's like giving seat cushions to students at Kyle Field.

The "safe & sober" sunglasses were donated to the Department of Student Life, but the MSC and OPAS goodies were paid for with University money.

The MSC profits about \$5,000 from Open House, and some of this money is used for advertising. It would be wiser to put the money used to buy key rings and bumper stickers into the general operating budget and return some of the Student Service Fee back to students.

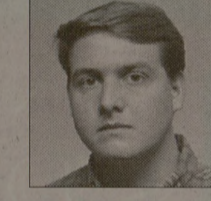
Not all advertising campaigns on campus are ineffective. Last semester, OPAS gave away brightly colored helium balloons. Students all over campus saw floating reminders of the performance of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Unfortunately, these clever advertisements seem to be the exception and not the rule.

Sure, everyone likes to get free stuff, but the T-shirts that credit card companies give out don't cost the University money.

Nation, campus should focus on prayer

While our nation's currency claims, "In God we trust," our increasingly secular society undermines this statement's truthfulness.

Columnist



John Lemons
Engineering graduate student

At the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., President Clinton met with 4,000 politicians, businessmen, soldiers and dignitaries to lend some credibility to our currency's boast.

The conclusions drawn from the prayer breakfast sound like a Sunday school lesson: Prayer is the answer to reconcile our campus and national problems.

Clinton described prayer as a useful tool for healing rifts between groups. Specifically, he addressed the need for prayer in the existing conflict between politicians and the press.

"You know how cynical the press is about the politicians. What you should know is that the politicians have now become just as cynical about the press, because cynicism breeds cynicism," Clinton said. "We are in a world of hurt. We need help. We are in the breach."

Clinton is correct about the necessity of prayer in healing broken relationships. Prayer brings distinct groups together, causing those groups to consider each other's welfare. By praying for the people we dislike most, we gain compassion for them.

As a campus segmented into groups such as fraternities, non-regs and the Corps of Cadets, Texas A&M could use a little more compassion. Racial tensions persist despite

numerous organizations and programs aimed at helping diverse groups understand each other. Healing these divisions will require a change of heart that mere human intervention has been unable to produce.

Many student organizations on campus use prayer as a means of starting their meetings. The Residence Hall Association begins all of its general assemblies with an invocation.

Association President Jesse Czelusta said prayer is appropriate for the organization's meetings.

"In my mind, the purpose of it (the invocation) is to get everybody's mind focused on service," Czelusta said.

Likewise, Student Senate meetings begin in prayer. Chris Reed, speaker of the Senate, said the invocation is valuable to the Senate's proceedings. However, he has heard some dissension on the matter.

"I've received one complaint this semester," Reed said. "They thought invocations should be non-denominational."

"The person wanted me to set up guidelines, but I felt uncomfortable doing that because I don't think it's the role of any one person to censor or modify someone's public speech, whether it be religious or political in nature."

Although using prayer in a secular setting may be controversial, prayer is relatively unobtrusive. It gives people who believe in its power a chance to exercise their belief in a

way significant to them.

"I think people are open-minded enough to realize that just because someone is praying to their own God, that doesn't exclude others from praying for the things they believe in," Czelusta said.

Campus and national leaders need the prayers of the people who follow them. As individuals who suffer constant scrutiny, our leaders could use guidance. During his term as president of A&M, Dr. E. Dean Gage met weekly with a group of men to pray for their jobs and families. Gage said the group was a great encouragement to him during his presidency.

"I was asking for prayer and guidance in the responsibilities and decisions before me as president of the University," said Gage.

Prayer is more than just a way to begin meetings, sporting events and graduation ceremonies. It deserves to be more than just trite lip service placed at the beginning of an agenda.

Prayer is a means by which we can recognize our dependency on something greater than ourselves. It provides a chance to realize some problems are too big to be handled alone.

This campus needs prayer more than it needs yell leader run-off elections—although it needs run-off elections.

This nation needs prayer before it needs welfare reform—although it needs welfare reform.

Through prayer, we can truly become one nation under God. As for people who don't believe in prayer, they can always have a moment of silence.

things of God and for supporting the great students at Texas A&M.

Bob Mayfield
Director,
Baptist Student Ministry



Church protests more alcohol on Northgate

Regarding the Feb. 6 article "Restaurant get license despite church protests"

The article quoted restaurant owner Willie Madden as saying, "Once I get up and running and they see the type of establishment I will

have, they will be embarrassed and ashamed they made a big deal about it."

As one of the ministers who objected to yet another establishment in the Northgate area selling alcohol, let me admit that I am already embarrassed and ashamed, ashamed that national statistics indicate one in three students now drinks primarily to get drunk. I am ashamed that

ninety-five percent of violent crimes on U.S. campuses are alcohol-related. I am ashamed that alcohol is implicated in forty-one percent of academic problems and twenty-eight percent of dropouts.

I am also embarrassed, embarrassed that I have done so little to help students struggling with alcohol abuse. I have too often been quiet about the drinking problem on our college campuses. I have failed to warn students about the devastating effects of alcohol abuse on their lives.

I am proud, however, of the stand that several Northgate ministers have taken concerning the alcohol problem among our college students. Thank you, Pastor Anderson of A&M Methodist Church and Pastor Estes of A&M Presbyterian Church, for standing up for the

things of God and for supporting the great students at Texas A&M.

Bob Mayfield
Director,
Baptist Student Ministry

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Email: Batt@tamv1.tamu.edu