

THE BATTALION

OPINION

Page 7

Monday • April 14, 1997

University separates students

Recent rankings and reviews in U.S. News and World Report, Texas Monthly and other publications have given Texas A&M quite the gold star. Jealous students and faculty in Austin, however, are quick to point out the student in A&M's shiny new reputation.

Texas A&M has yet to shed its notoriety for being backward, racist community trapped in a modunk town. A recent visit to two competitors, the University of Washington and Georgia Institute of Technology, brings some credibility to A&M's accusations. Before A&M can be a "world-class" university, Aggies have to free themselves from the stifling conservative culture. Complaints of racism and stereotyping are not unique to this campus. Countless opinion columns and letters to the editor in The Battalion fuss about racial relations. The same complaints surface in The Technique, Georgia Tech's campus newspaper.

Topics include affirmative action, discrimination for certain cultures and insensitivity toward minorities' needs. Past issues of The Technique have featured headlines which read "The racial crisis" and "When the melting pot melts." Racial conflicts are as widespread as sex and rock'n'roll on college campuses across the nation. The key difference between these conflicts is the unusually strong pressures of conformity at A&M. Although the student body is no longer segregated along lines of race, A&M's emphasis on unity, traditions and conservative values divides the campus along lines of upbringing. Unfortunately, differences between ethnicity and upbringing often coincide. Through the eyes of critics, this form of segregation is just a disguised form of institutional racism.

Look around campus. A&M's diversity stagnates in the corners of engineering buildings and scholarship dorms, where international students and minorities are segregated from A&M's conservative leviathan. These pockets of diversity are analogous to ghettos of the nineteenth century, when social forces bound unassimilated individuals within the confines of a subversive culture. The only difference is the "educated" title Aggies proudly wear.

The University of Washington and Georgia Tech, on the other hand, foster more open and truly diverse campus culture. Their claim to diversity goes beyond statistics. Both of these universities are research-oriented and have been climbing the U.S. News and World Report rankings, much like Texas A&M. One important difference, however, is the absence of an all-encompassing culture.

On Friday afternoons, their campuses are alive with a myriad of different people who parade around with different interests and beliefs. Local clubs and hangouts go beyond College Station's only theme: country tavern. Some of the people inside these places actually speak with a foreign accent.

On the weekends, spectators at school-sponsored events (such as baseball games) reflect the statistical diversity. People in the stands, ranging from clean-cut Caucasians to body-piercing Asians and Dennis Rodman look-alikes, all cheer wildly for their team.

On the weekdays, various hairstyles and fashions adorn the campus, while different types of music blare from parking lots. Conformity has not forced these students to abandon their preferences.

But the A&M campus tells a different tale. Dissenting individuals are told to either conform or get out of the way.

The transformation begins as early as Fish Camp and peaks during the first spring semester, when freshmen come back with a "burning desire" to fit in. For those who choose to remain as they are, be it homosexual, atheist, foreign or un-W.A.S.P., the ghettos offer the only shelter.

This segregation is A&M's sore spot, its obstacle to "world-class" status. Though it may not be true racism, A&M will never shed its backward image unless the campus changes its white, racist town perception.

Earl Rudder made a bold move in the '60s when he admitted females and African-Americans. It's time to take the next step and shed A&M's segregation and racist image.

Columnist



Travis Chow
Computer science
graduate student

False advertising

Gay, lesbian, bisexual newsletter shades truth in print

Thomas Jefferson once said, "To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of something he finds reprehensible is perhaps the ultimate form of tyranny."

The Department of Student Life obviously slept through History 105.

Student Life and Special Student Services, a division of Student Life serving homosexual students, publishes The Spirit, a newsletter for "gay, lesbian and bisexual students." According to Student Life, this obscure University publication is funded through their student service fee account at a cost of \$20 per month's worth of newsletters. While The Spirit is both misinformative and derisive of Christian morality, perhaps its crowning achievement is the fact it has managed to be printed at students' expense with relatively few knowing about it.

For one, The Spirit is about as factual as a supermarket tabloid. A feature in the Feb. 1997 issue mentioning the homosexual population on campus said, "a conservative estimate would be at least 2,000 students."

According to The Spirit, homosexuals make up 5 percent of the student body. Scientific studies give far different numbers.

According to the Kinsey Report on Human Sexuality, the most thorough and reliable study on the subject, homosexuals make up fewer than 2 percent of the population. Based on statistical fact, gays on campus number a little over 800, 1,200 fewer than Student Life estimated. Factor in the fact Texas A&M isn't exactly a magnet for gays and lesbians and the number plummets even further. Clearly, the purpose of The Spirit is not to report fact, but to spread pro-homosexual propaganda.

While The Spirit calls for students to "view gays/lesbians with genuine affection and delight," (Feb. 1997) it hardly extends the same courtesy to those with differing opinions on virtue.

A Feb. 1997 feature on "coming out" criticizes people who "view social issues in clear terms of good/bad or holy/sinful," and show "a degree of flexibility when dealing with...societal matters." A "Homophobia Scale" in the Dec. 1996 issue places students who see homosexuality as unnatural and therefore oppose it for religious reasons under the category "Repulsion." It goes on to say those opposed to homosex-

uality feel "anything is justified to change them (homosexuals): prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy, violence, etc."

Student Life has yet to learn the difference between genuine prejudice and Judeo-Christian morality. Hating someone for what they are (such as skin color or religion) is cruel and wrong. Disapproving of someone because you believe what they do is immoral

(such as homosexual behavior or pornography) is proper behavior.

The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right to voice whatever opinion one feels. However, both the founding fathers and legal precedent did not intend for Texas A&M students to cough up cash so others could do so.

A Wisconsin Federal District court recently ruled college students could not be forced to provide funds for publications and organizations they do not support. This philosophy is the reason why The Battalion relies upon advertisers and why College Republicans, Aggie Democrats, Eagle Forum Collegians and other political and religious groups do not receive University funds.

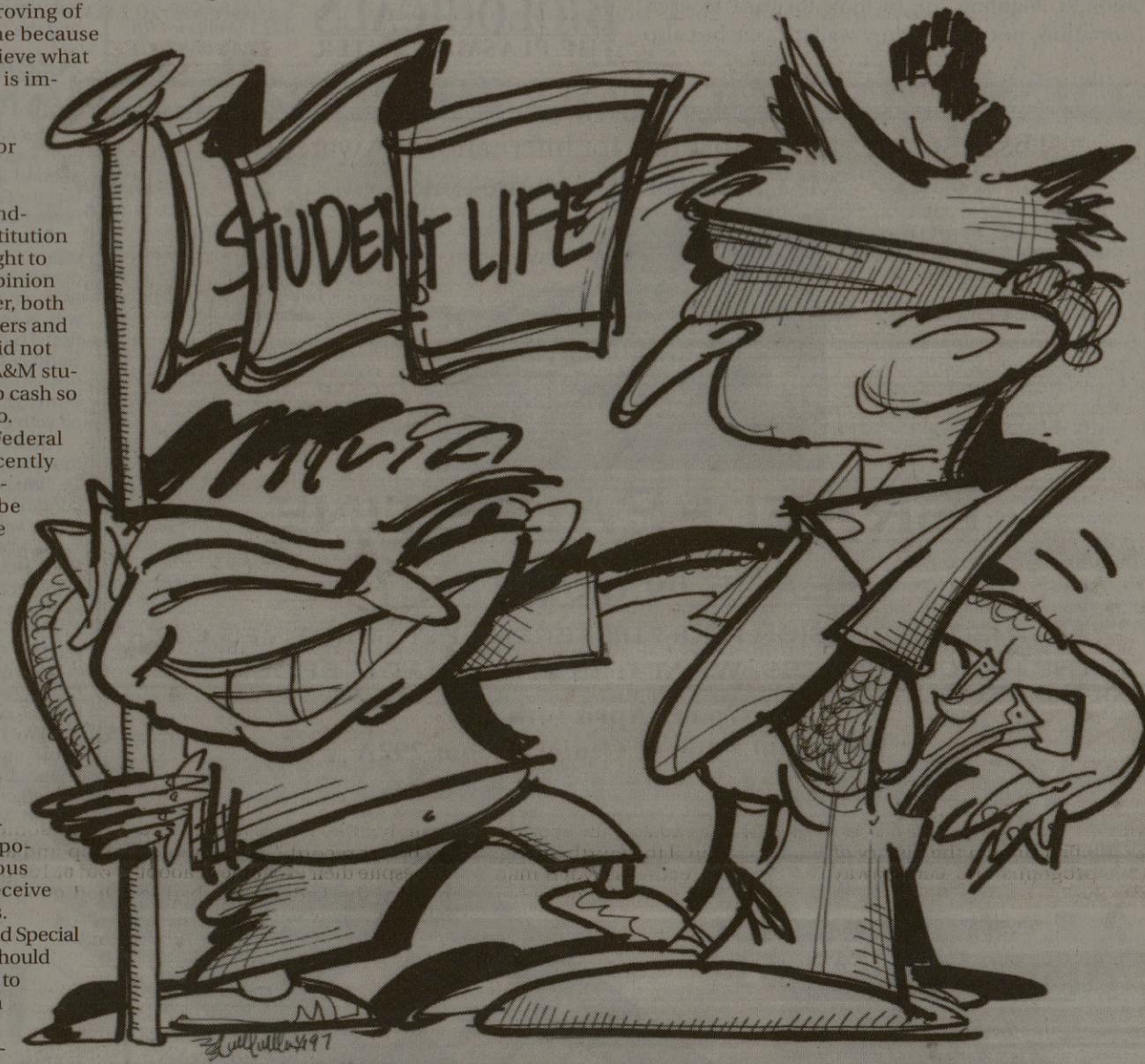
Student Life and Special Student Services should not force students to fund a publication which serves few, spreads false infor-

mation and attacks mainstream religious views.

True, the monetary figure may seem insignificant. However, the fact a University department is using student fees to promote an opinion based on misinformation, bordering on hatred and serving a trivial minority by marketing it as truth should create no small amount of moral outrage. At a cost of only \$20 a month, using student fees is unnecessary. If The Spirit is going to publish biased information, it should

at least state so (the word "Opinion" is intentionally emblazoned on this page in two-inch letters). The Spirit is misleading and has no business being published at students' expense.

For the University to take money out of the pockets of students and taxpayers and use it to promote homosexuality eats away the very ideals of freedom and fairness for which forefathers shed their blood over 200 years ago.



Students' pockets debate fees, half-full or half-empty?

With more registration around the corner, students all over campus are scrambling to make sure they get the classes required for graduation.

More importantly, students are checking their income sources to make sure they can cover the itemized fee slip from the Fiscal Department.

Worries like these are quite familiar to students at any university, particularly one that feels justified in squeezing money out of financially strapped students to pay for a fancy exercise center. Not to mention the other mandatory fees, such as

Columnist

Stephen Llano
Senior
history major

computer usage fees, that rip dollars from students' pockets without benefit of individual choice.

As a collective, students benefit from these fees. The Student Recreation Center is the envy of Big 12 schools, and the campus has some of the finest computing labs in the nation.

As a result, Aggie graduates perform exceptionally well in the business world.

But the University is gouging every student regardless of individual decisions.

Forcing people to pay for unnecessary fees is morally unjustifiable, and somewhat contra-

dictory to the foundation of free enterprise.

When A&M began forcing students to shell out \$100 a year for the Student Recreation Center, local gyms could not compete. A business based on freedom of choice cannot compete against a business that forces customers to pay.

There is only one element of choice in this matter — don't go to A&M, and don't pay. Hardly a fitting attitude for "the best public university in Texas."

As for mandatory degree audits or mandatory classes, these serve only one purpose: to convey the basics. In any number of required classes, essays and discussion topics are pushed to the back burner in exchange for Scantrons and deep discussions

on what type of curve the professor will use.

Required classes take from students the option to pursue courses in fields interesting to them. Students come out of elementary classes with skeletal knowledge at best — not to mention the added cost of tuition.

Just because the majority of students benefit from mandatory computer fees or the Student Recreation Center, the minority has the right to spend hard-earned money on services which will be actually used.

But at A&M Machiavelli holds his ground with an iron fist — "The end justifies the means." At an all-inclusive university, the rights of the consumer are nonexistent.

More often than not, the only

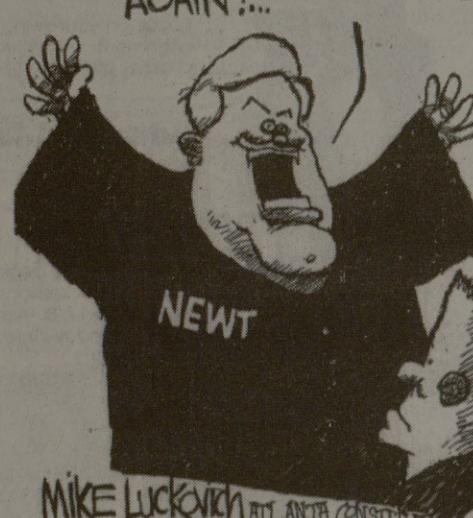
action students can take is to get on Highway 6 and drive the other way.

A&M could corner the market of university systems if more choice was given to individual students instead of a university committee. The University should open up to the community and allow students to pick from different providers for the services those students want.

An occasional student may get burned by a bad deal, but that's the way things work in the real world.

If the University is truly committed to the benefit of the collective, it should stop imposing mandatory courses and fees and let the consumers choose what is best for them.

WELL LEAVE OUR CONTAINERS! THEN WELL REACH THE LEVEL ABOVE HUMAN, MAKING US RELEVANT AGAIN!...



MAYBE WE NEED A NEW LEADER...

HALE BOPP



MAIL CALL

Ancient Biblical law clouds gay debate

In Response to Bryan Hager's April 11 Mail Call

Hager quoted Leviticus (18:22) as proof that the Bible "explicitly" condemns homosexuality. This passage also prohibits such things as planting two different kinds of seeds in the same field, wearing garments with two different kinds of yarn, tattoos, eating raw meat and having sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual period.

We must remember that St. Paul in Romans 1:27 and Corinthians 6:9-10 was written in response to a Greco-Roman culture that represented a secular sensuality that did not coincide with his Jewish-Christian idealism.

To declare that these passages say

homosexuality is evil because homosexuals are tempted to do bad things is to maintain that heterosexuals are evil because they are equally tempted.

Hager is correct when he points out that the Bible says nothing about Jesus sexuality, but is it so wrong to believe that he could've been homosexual? Would that make him less of a man? I believe Jesus came to free us from an archaic social code that was passed off as religion. Christians must follow Jesus' example of love.

Alex Walters said Christ said homosexuality is a sin; I can't find anywhere that Christ condemns homosexuality. Jesus came to free us of our hatreds and prejudices. He would be very upset to see that so many of his followers are loathing bigots.

Ryan Rozich
Class of '00