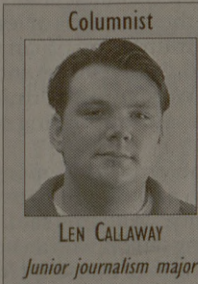


Unappealing to the masses

University parking officials waste students' time with citation appeals process

The Department of Parking, Transit and Traffic Services. Upon the mere mention of this infamous bureaucratic necessity, students from all over Aggieland immediately begin to contort their faces into a half-whimpering image of sheer anxiety.



Columnist
LEN CALLAWAY
Junior journalism major

It's obvious that certain members of the student body neither appreciate nor enjoy the overwhelming presence of PTTS officers on campus.

However, some students have gone on the record as saying that it is not the ticket they mind so much; they are more opposed to the attitude or set of circumstances under which the citation was written.

These students would agree that having to be on the receiving end of one of these heavily publicized incidents and then accepting the punishment assigned by a pre-determined fine schedule is insulting, indeed.

What is more disconcerting than the officers who issue these citations, however, is the administrative appeals process that ensures a fair and positive manner to adjudicate any disputes between the student or predetermined guilty party and the PTTS administration. Not to mention the fact that once an action against a student has been initiated by a PTTS official, a long and arduous process must begin if the student wishes to contest the citation.

The fine issued must be paid before any dispute will be considered, and the student has no more an opportunity to plead his or her case than a simple form that must be submitted when paying the fine in order to appeal.

The student is then notified by mail of the decision of the parking officers and is only granted the opportunity to speak personally on his or her behalf after receiving word of the judgment. If by some

whim a student was to prevail over the fine, the refund would simply be credited to his or her fee statement.

A more appropriate course of action might be to postpone any financial penalty until the matter is resolved. If the system was to stay the same and a student was to prevail on appeal, the fine should be refunded in the same form in which it was paid.

An even larger, and less often explained, expense involved in the PTTS appeals process is the expense of students' time. The appeals process is certainly not a five-minute process, and the officers in the field should consider that all students have constraints on their time that must be fulfilled. Once citations are put on students' windshields, they can expect to spend between three and ten hours fighting the charge if they feel that it is inappropriate. At minimum wage, this equals between \$15.45 and \$51.50 that PTTS should be responsible for if the citation is found to be without merit. If it is viable for the students of Texas A&M to be financially punished for oversights and mistakes, the same standard should apply to PTTS.

The PTTS administration should consider asking officers to financially reimburse its department for time spent adjudicating citations that result in a dismissal. This would encourage the use of warning citations and allow for PTTS to show that it is not the money-hungry revenue-inducing department students believe it to be.

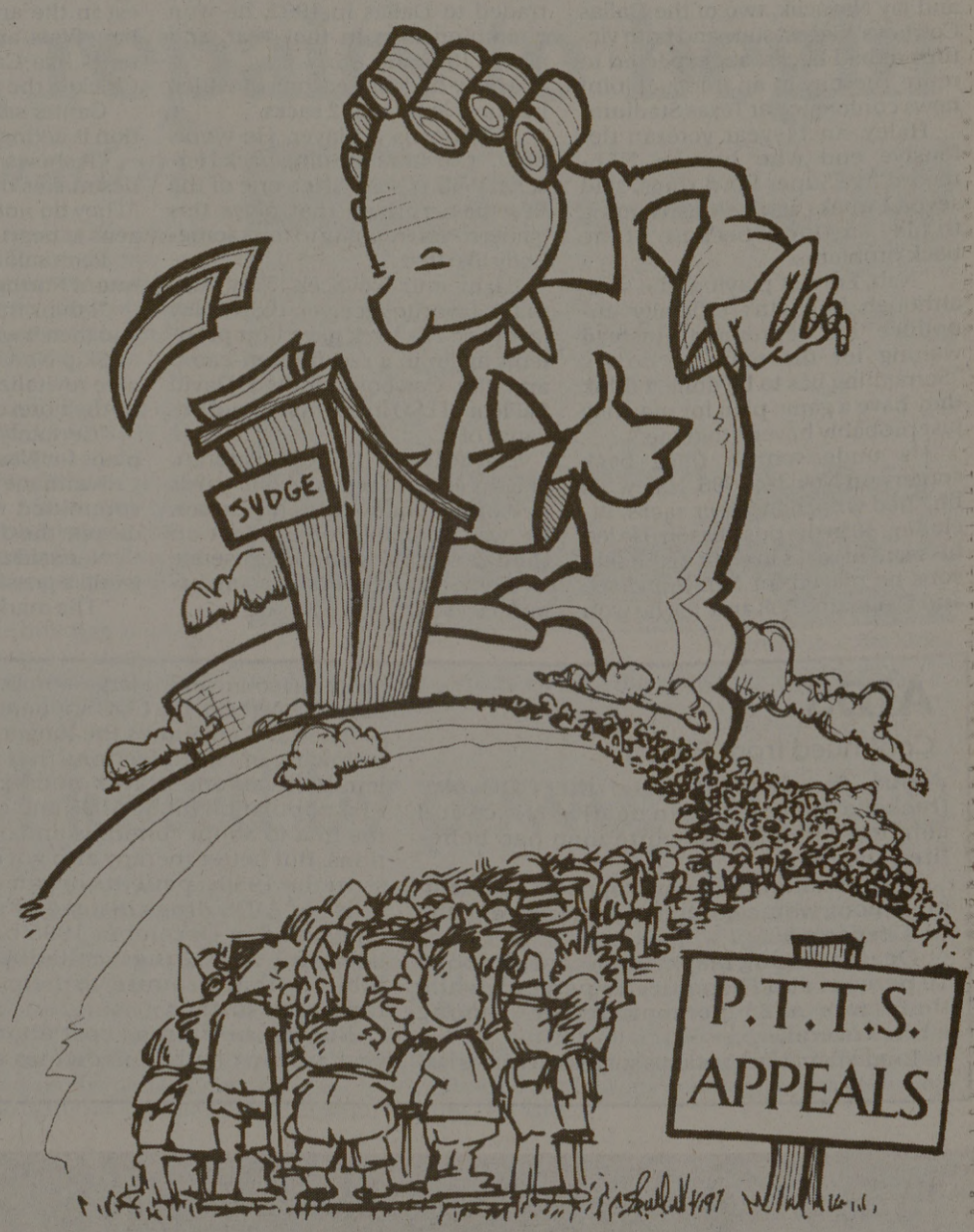
The positions held by the officers and support staff at PTTS are not enviable positions to have, but as a group, they make it worse on themselves by allowing a few hateful and overly ambitious zealots to prove a point to the student body by levying fines against us — sometimes deserved, sometimes not. These people are responsible for parking at the nation's third most populated university, a job for

which they should be lauded. Texas A&M, however, has the single largest campus, touting some 5,200 acres of land. It would seem some common ground could be reached between the students, faculty and PTTS.

From the students' point of view, the most formidable opportunity to change the operation of PTTS is to install some system of checks and balances in the field. Once a PTTS officer is in the field, it would seem that this person has absolute authority to do anything he or she deems appropriate. This ranges from the issuance of a warning to having a vehicle towed. This is a tremendous amount of power once an individual considers the time ramifications of attempting to rectify any punishment handed down by a PTTS officer.

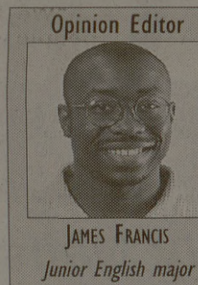
PTTS officers carry small computers that keep up with license plate numbers and chalk times to aid in the determination of violations. These computers also could be used to keep track of warnings given to each tag or plate number. There is no harm in issuing a warning from time to time. A student would appreciate the helpful advice, but the University will miss the revenue that would have been generated had a citation been issued.

PTTS Director Tom Williams said he hopes "to automate the appeals system so that some of the demands on students' time could be lessened." Williams said he would like to see either several terminals on campus in parking garages or common areas, or he would like for the system to be online so students could deal with citations and appeals from home, work, etc. PTTS already has stationary staff at garages on campus whose responsibilities could be added to in order to make paying and/or appealing citations more convenient. This idea has the potential to be an excellent new program and could make the lives of students and visitors easier when dealing with PTTS.



Students represent natural foundation of Texas A&M

There is nothing more natural than the grass we walk upon and the soil that holds it together. These elements beautify the campus, adding greenery to what some may deem an overpowering presence of concrete and brick. In a metaphorical manner, it is clearly understood that stone buildings (University officials) are stronger than any amount of grass blades (students), but people must realize that the abundance of foliage (students) keeps the University from falling apart.



Opinion Editor
JAMES FRANCIS
Junior English major

With the recent disclosure of minority enrollment figures for this year's fall semester, many people have begun to realize that Texas A&M might be slowly losing its status as a university for all cultures and nationalities. Although there is no one person or ruling to blame for the drop in minority enrollment, we must stop looking for a scapegoat to take the fall, and start looking forward to make the best out of the crop of students that have chosen to begin their college careers here.

If an individual was to take a stroll on campus, covering all sidewalks, observing all buildings and noting every face that passes by, he or she would see that there is more to the University than parties, getting good grades and graduating into the real world. The grass on this campus is not uniform in its growth. There are green blades, brown blades that have been scorched by the sun, straight blades, curved blades and even blades that have been cut in

half by lawn maintenance. This dichotomy of grass makes up the student body, a group of individuals that ranges from freshmen to seniors to graduate students. But no matter how different the blades may seem at first glance, we must all understand that everyone at A&M has the same goal: to be happy with the life they have chosen. And the only way to reach this accomplishment is for all students to come together as a functional unit.

Enrollment figures for the fall semester report that the University might see a 30 percent drop in African-American enrollment and a 15 percent decline in Hispanic enrollment. Although these figures give us an approximate idea of the types of faces we will and will not see in the fall, figures are just numbers, not people. It might seem sad to some students that their particular culture is facing a decrease in enrollment, but these same students must come to the forefront of this situation and declare that they can cope with what's going on, and hopefully lend a hand to help bring all students together.

Grass functions as a whole, not individual blades that are out to dominate one another and elect a supreme overseer. This should be the same with the students who walk this campus. This is not to say that students should stop being individuals, but there is a part that lies in every one of us which allows room for others to be brought into the group circle.

A&M is only as good as we make it. If stu-

dents constantly concentrate on the bad or unfortunate things, such as the decline in minority enrollment, soon everyone will begin to harbor the belief that the University is not an accommodating institution of education. This school's diversity in majors, programs and classes is every bit as varied as the students who attend. But while the University runs its programs on a tight and organized schedule, it seems that the students are falling behind in their own attempt to unify.

Although the road students face in dealing with racial unity and inner-struggle is a difficult one to travel and maneuver upon, the solution might be a simple one. If everyone stops looking at numbers, statistics and percentages, and starts viewing each other as equals in the "student scope" of college life, things can begin to change.

Students must come to understand, however, that it takes more than one individual to complete this turnaround, although one person's actions can generate a following of thousands.

A great French painter by the name of George Seurat created a masterpiece in his painting entitled, "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." Although it was created in the nineteenth century, I think the message behind his method of painting carries over into centuries to come, and it especially defines the critical situation students find themselves in at A&M.

The painting was crafted using the technique of Pointillism, a method which uses tiny dots of color to create the painting. Up close,

an individual can discern all the specks of paint used to form the painted images. From afar, however, every pinpoint of color works together to blend into each other, producing a crisp, grand-scale painting of brilliant light and intense hues. Recognized as Seurat's greatest achievement in the art society, this painting illustrates the harmonious endeavor all students of A&M should seek.

We should stop looking so closely at the color of skin and history of nationality that documents an individual's background. What we should do is take a step back, look at the University's students from a distance and learn to become the blueprints for building a better life — a widespread patch of grass, diverse in its shape, color and growth, but held together by common roots.

To those students who worry that the drop in minority enrollment might mean a "weeding out of undesirables," don't let it get you down or lead you to believe that the University is out to get you. We, students of all races and nationalities, are all here in the same boat, simply trying to keep our heads above water and oars rowing in the same direction. Although some will leave the boat and others will remain on the shore, the group consensus should be for those who stay at sea to work together in order to complete this fantastic journey of future unknowns.

In the end, the student population, which covers the spectrum of any rainbow, must come together to form a universal society of Aggies walking hand in hand.

BITING OFF HOLYFIELD'S EAR WAS UNCIVILIZED. I'M SORRY FOR NOT USING A KNIFE AND FORK...



MAIL CALL

A&M should offer what students need

In response to John Lemons' July 14 column:

We look back upon 'ol army days with fondness, yet Texas A&M College was but a shadow of the University that it has evolved into today.

Currently, we have equality in numbers among male and female students, many different educational avenues that can be pursued and a highly distinguished faculty. Although our status as a "world-class university" is debatable, it is generally agreed upon that we are moving toward a common goal. Slamming the door on a music major curricu-

lum, however, would represent a major step backward in our aforementioned progresses.

Lemons' basic argument is that we should not branch into the unknown, and stick with what we are good at — the Colleges of Engineering, Agriculture, and Business for example. This is the exact same attitude that has plagued A&M for decades, hindering its progress and growth.

It is ironic that Lemons includes the College of Business in his argument. A business degree was not offered when A&M was founded in 1876.

Undoubtedly, when plans for a school of business were proposed, many detractors said we should stick to what we were good at offering. The Department of Business, however, has survived to become one of the preeminent programs in the nation. Couldn't the Department of Music follow this same path of success?

Lemons bolsters his argument by stating that "obviously, few Aggies are clamoring to become music majors." Obviously any student interested in music will avoid A&M like the plague. I actually knew people in high

school who wished to attend A&M but couldn't because of the lack of a music program. Music majors want to come to A&M. Unfortunately, A&M has no interest in music majors.

A music major program at A&M will not be an instant success. Much time, effort and money will be needed before its credibility would be ascertained. However, it can be done. Think big, Lemons — students can have it all.

Grant Williams
Class of '98

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The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.



MIKE LUKOVICH
ATLANTA CONSTITUTION 6/97