

Without honorable mention

Women's plight for great achievements ignored by Capitol Rotunda, Texas A&M

At Texas A&M, women trying to find a figure to identify with would be hard-pressed to do so. Walking around this campus, visitors quickly discover that none of the University's many landmarks are dedicated to women. Sure there's Sully, Rudder and even some guy who ran on the football field to save the big game, but as far as females go, there aren't any to mention.

Absent are the early female graduates of the University dating back to the early years of this century (yes, there were women earning graduation credit before the school was officially co-educational). Absent are the first females in the Corps of Cadets. In fact, a person touring the campus would have difficulty finding any proof that women have had any influence or even been present on this campus.

The University clearly made its opinion on the value of women recently. The end of the 1997 term of the A&M Board of Regents saw the end of Mary West's reign as chair of the Board. West was the first female chair and has been a key fund-raising figure over the years. Under her leadership, the A&M System expanded to eight schools and her leadership of the San Antonio Livestock Show helped generate funds for 261 scholarships to be issued to A&M students.

Historically, Regents have been bestowed with great honors such as buildings being renamed after them or other grand recognition. West's retirement looked like the perfect opportunity for the University to make a statement. Certainly a female leader with credentials such as hers has been around long enough to deserve some large-scale, formal honor.

Apparently, the answer to that question is no, she does not. A staff member of the Board of Regents' office said that West's honors already had been decided. He said that West had been honored with the title Chairman Emerita via a formal resolution of the Board. The Emeritus/Emerita honor entitles recipients to keep their phone and mail privileges at A&M, and "in some cases, even an office."

While the Emerita recognition is well-deserved and is regarded as an honor, it is merely ceremonial hoopla. West's merits deserve more than an unlimited supply of stamps, a nice desk and phone privileges. The "honor" of these rewards is ques-



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tionable; even prisoners get phone privileges. In regard to this question, the Regents' staffer replied that "a nice dinner" had been held for West. Well, everybody does love a good meal.

The University has spoken, but this issue also takes on a national focus.

Congress has long been an elite boys' club, whose doors barely budged for females. Standing in the Capitol Rotunda is a 13-ton marble statue which symbolizes women's struggle for acceptance, visibility and respect; a battle that still is being

waged on our campus, as well. The time has come for the suppression of women's achievements to end.

In 1921, the National Women's Party presented Congress a marble statue commemorating the fight for women's suffrage. The sculpture, known as The Woman Suffrage Statue, depicts suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton breaking out of a huge block of white marble. The group donated the work under the premise that it would be displayed for the American public in the Capitol Rotunda.

The Rotunda houses 11 statues of America's most significant leaders. Those Americans commemorated include Roger Williams, Martin Luther King Jr. and nine other men. The Rotunda hosts approximately four million visitors annually.

The Women's Party proudly gave Congress what they believed would be a greatly appreciated gift, one that would fairly depict the tribulations of the early women's movement. One day after the Rotunda dedication, however, Congress officially moved the statue to an area of the Capitol often referred to as the "Crypt." The statue sat in this area for over 75 years, invisible to the public until 1961 when the "Crypt" was made public.

For the past 30 years, women's groups have been campaigning to return the statue to its original esteemed position. Finally, in 1995 their fight earned bipartisan support, passing easily in the Senate. In the House, however, Republican opposition almost stonewalled the statue's move. Newt Gingrich even rejected a petition to approve funding for the transport, demanding that the proposed \$75,000 be raised by groups wanting the statue's place restored.

The Woman Suffrage Statue Campaign (WSSC) was formed, and it soon raised the necessary dollars for the move. The statue was returned to the

Rotunda and rededicated a couple of weeks ago.

The victory, although important, is only a partial step forward for American women. Congress is currently attempting to find another location to permanently house the statue, suggesting that it is not worthy of a permanent seat in the boys' club.

Sadly, this phenomenon is not limited to the Capitol Rotunda. A recent survey of the National Parks Service said only five percent of the nation's 2,200 National Historic Landmarks are dedicated to women. The most visible "female" landmarks are the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol and the Statue of Liberty. Karen Staser, co-chair of the WSSC, said these figures are "icons, not real women that girls and women can

look up to."

No matter how far women have come, the glass ceiling is firmly in place. Visibility is a sign of respect, power and equality, and the lack of representation of women both at A&M and the Capitol Rotunda sends the clear message that these institutions continue to be boys' clubs.

The three suffragists' torsos emerging from the white stone in the Woman Suffrage Statue are symbolic of the fight American women still wage for equality and respect. They are still breaking through, and they are far from being completely free from the bonds of discrimination.

In other words, don't expect to be seeing a Twelfth Woman statue any time soon.



Prepaid tuition law discriminates against lower class

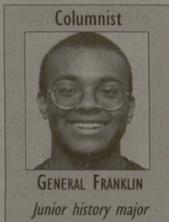
The American Association of State Colleges and Universities recently conducted a study which unearthed a disturbing trend in higher public education. The study indicates that class bias in state programs designed to boost college enrollment in 13 states which have a prepaid tuition plan.

The plan allows for parents or relatives to pay for future college tuition at current costs.

The problem with the prepaid tuition plan is that it effectively limits access to higher education for poor families. Only those capable of paying tuition years in advance are eligible.

Furthermore, the study concludes that these programs make college more viable for those who can afford college without the program. It does nothing to address the escalating cost of higher education which keeps poor students out of college.

Specifically, the Texas Legislature implemented its own prepaid tuition program, the Texas Tomorrow Fund, with the intent to boost access to higher education.



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Unfortunately, the program is flawed. Eligibility is based upon the financial ability to pay ahead of time rather than a student's potential or ability.

The Office of State Comptroller, which administers the program, defends its focus on the upper classes by suggesting the necessary resources currently exist for poor students, thereby not requiring any state action to heighten their access to college.

Any informal poll reveals the emptiness of this argument. The inflated costs of higher education provide an obstacle to many poor attaining an education.

The tuition program perpetuates the exclusion of many deserving poor students from college. It focuses on those with the means to pay for college, rather than assisting those who would benefit most from higher education.

Also, the view of the comptroller's office represents a terrible overstatement. Most public grants allocated for college are scarce and insufficient because they do not grow with the expenses of education. The decline of

public resources is evident of the state's unwillingness to increase funding for higher education.

Education always has been heralded as a tremendous equalizing and stabilizing force in America. It increases career opportunities by providing the vital skills necessary in a highly technical and specialized society.

Given the heavy emphasis, if not necessity for college education, it seems imperative for the state to formulate programs designed to benefit all students, not just those with the financial clout to pre-purchase tuition.

Also, from a financial standpoint, the program seems questionable since the prepaid tuition cost reflects today's rate rather than the actual cost which must be dealt with in the future. Quite simply, the state and taxpayers will have to subsidize the difference between the cost of future tuition and the amount paid in advance.

Because this will draw income from all taxpayers, it seems unfair for the poor to subsidize the education of those with greater wealth while simultaneously being excluded from any benefits of the program.

As we approach the upcoming millennium, higher education has the potential to bridge or widen the chasm between the rich and poor. The class bias evident in these tuition programs only serve to reserve access to higher education for the wealthy. This concept establishes education as a privilege of the elite, other than a sheer necessity, important for survival in a specialized economy.

Moreover, the trend in inequity is symptomatic of the growing disparity between the resources of the "haves" versus the dwindling resources of the "have-nots." The state should establish equilibrium through innovative programs designed to give all people the opportunity to mold their promise into something meaningful and beneficial to society and themselves.

By favoring the well-off over the poor, the program establishes a dangerous connection between class and intelligence, implying certain individuals by virtue of class are more valuable and worthy of education than others.

The key to opening up college to the masses lies neither in class preference nor prepaid tuition. It lies in accessing

the cost of higher education to determine whether the benefits are worth the costs. It also requires us to evaluate public spending at universities to ensure that taxpayer money is being spent wisely and efficiently.

Although these measures can materialize a certain degree of savings, the cost of education will remain relatively high. Keeping up with the rapid progress of knowledge is expensive. Subsequently, taxpayers and politicians alike must realize not only the importance of education, but the extensive commitment of resources required to provide it to all.

This greater access, particularly for members of lower classes bear the enormous potential to improve communities as well as lessen problems of low educational standards such as violence, crime, and poverty.

Initially expensive, the long-term benefits of education far outweigh its costs in monetary terms.

Society must decide whether an educated society is more viable than an incarcerated one. A deprivation of opportunity only serves to aggravate and perpetuate the worst elements of our culture.



MAIL CALL

PTTS ticket revenue bewilders student

In response to the news article and column written about PTTS:

I propose that we utilize the ticket payment scheme (formerly?) in use at the University of Houston. Under their system, if you received a parking ticket, the fine was cut in half, provided that you paid it within 10 days.

The University's officials apparently realized that students were waiting and not paying at all, so they offered them an incentive to pay promptly. Amazingly enough, parking conditions at the University were even worse than they are here,

since it is more of a "commuter school." Now let's figure this "ticket bond" thing out.

If 100 people appeal a week (as stated in The Battalion news article) at approximately \$25 per violation, then Texas A&M must hold \$2,500 a week pending the resolution of the appeal. In order to make accurate calculations, we would need to know what percentage of appeals are successful, and the average length of the appeals process.

Of course, A&M would only end up making out like a bandit (i.e., getting free interest) for those cases in which the ticket is dismissed. Consider the fact that A&M makes out like a bandit on 100 percent of all Aggie Bucks purchased — that is, none of the interest generated goes to the purchaser (the students). Unlike the "parking bond" float, this is a significant figure. Consider the total PTTS ticket revenue.

If 10 percent of all tickets are appealed (as stated), and there are approximately 100 appeals a week (also stated), then, assuming the minimum \$25 fine applies in all cases (a conserva-

tive estimate), approximately \$1.3 million is generated per year from ticket revenue alone. And where does all this money go? Good question. Have you seen much, if any, new surface parking recently? Then again, PTTS did buy all those new ticketing computers.

The students' best option for eliminating parking woes is to hound administration officials and get them to pave the polo fields (after an appropriate cost and benefit study).

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

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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