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School zone

College students ignore rules of respect and value of education in classes

We are the Aggies, Aggies are we. As we look at each other, we see Aggies can be. It is hoped that the time a student reaches college, he or she will have learned a thing or two about attending classes. Things like what to listen for in class, what notes to take, what kinds of questions to ask and how often to go are things most students figure out fairly quickly. Supposedly by the time students reach college, they are models of classroom efficiency. Pictures of college classrooms full of students doing things such as these are often presented to high school students to inspire them to attend college. Images of students writing furiously in notebooks while simultaneously looking intrigued and intelligent lead unknown teenagers to believe in the apparent sophistication and maturity of those



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college students. The reality is quite different. College students barely pay attention in class, much less look intrigued or intelligent. Especially in large lecture classes, there is a tendency among college students to project an attitude of utter indifference to their surroundings, including the learning environment. Students sleep, eat entire meals, read the paper and even have conversations while their professors are talking. Along with making participating in class difficult for other students, the greatest injustice is to the professor. These behaviors are not only distracting for a lecturer, they are just plain rude. Students often forget to consider that their professors are people, and do not think twice about exhibiting behavior while their professor is talking that they would never do while listening to someone else. It is acknowledged that for some students, class is the only time during the day that they are sitting down long enough to eat anything, and many professors do not mind students eating in class. Discreetly eating a pop-art is unlikely to disturb the professor

or surrounding students. Getting up during the middle of a lecture, crawling over all the people in the row, and leaving the room only to return three minutes later, soft drink and bag of chips in hand, is a different matter entirely. Not only is the disturbance of the audience rearranging itself distracting, the opening and closing of doors disrupts the concentration of every person in the room. The subsequent noises of opening bottles and tearing into bags, as well as the noise from putting the trash away are only added distractions to an already disrupted class. There are other ways students are rude to their professors. Although reading the Battalion is highly recommended, reading it during the middle of class in full view of the prof is a little extreme. Only a few professors will actually ask students to put away their newspapers; most tolerate the insults in silence. Students should at least pretend to pay attention to the lecture, otherwise, attending class is a waste of students' time and money.

Anna Foster is a junior journalism major.



Population increases demand education, proactive programs

Every time you hear heartbeats, three more babies are added to the world's population. This means that by tomorrow, about 242,000 more people will share the earth's resources with us. The population of the United States has grown from about four million in 1800 to over 263 million today. In 1995, our population increase was more than double the rate of other industrialized nations (no, Pat Buchanan, this does not include immigration). According to Bureau of Census projections, the United States population will increase from 263 million in 1995 to 345 million in 2030, with no stabilization in the near future. Other institutions (the government is not always right, as you know) predict a population of 507 million by 2050 — almost double the current population. Imagine the challenge of finding a parking space at A&M in 50 years. On a global scope, the United Nations projects worldwide population will double from the current five billion to 10 billion in 2050. This exponential growth will result in 694 billion peo-



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columnist

ple on our planet by the year 2150, which makes me wonder why the family values police do not address this issue which will affect our grandchildren. Currently, students at A&M are educating themselves for this future dilemma. Most departments, from agronomy to zoology, realize the need for proactive population programs. Courses in bioenvironmental science, geography, renewable resources and agricultural economics empower students to face the problems that loom ahead. Of course, even students in other majors realize that people need food to survive. Daniel Huckaby, a senior meteorology major, said, "In nature, growth is a temporary thing. Sustainable growth sounds neat, but we don't have the resources to grow forever." Dr. Jane Magill, professor of genetics and biochemistry, said educating the world's citizens is important. "Improving literacy almost always leads to decreased birthrates." She said that new techniques in satellite television allow low-cost education to people in developing nations. Some people — bless their hearts — say that a population problem is "alarmist." They claim that more people result in more specialists for solving the problems we face. This trickle-down theory just won't work. Currently, one out of five people on the planet do not have basic survival necessi-

ties, and a doubling of the population will not help. For those who cry "we can have as many kids as we want to," I offer you this: limiting individuals from doing whatever they want — in order to protect the freedom of others — is the basis of most laws in modern societies. The most obvious solution to over-population is family planning programs. Contraceptive techniques that are safer, less expensive and easier to use in poor health conditions should be developed. Ideologies that discourage better family planning indirectly result in suffering and death of many women and children. An interesting irony is that ideologists who claim family planning programs are immoral often see no moral conflict in building more fighter bombers. The population explosion is no longer a distant threat. In our lifetime, we shall see dramatic changes in population policies and personal lifestyles. As future leaders, we must acknowledge the long-term effect of everything we do. Concern for creation as a whole, rather than the arrogant human-centered outlook should be of great importance in secular — as well as religious — ideals. Those who refuse to accept this challenge in the name of ideology should check into the Home for the Terminally Literal-Minded.

John Burton is a sophomore bioenvironmental science major.



MAIL CALL

Public schools deserve support

In response to Donny Ferguson's "Public education ..." Sept. 22 column: I guess anything goes on the opinion page of The Battalion these days. Having read Ferguson's recent attack on public school education, it is evident that there is no need to worry about getting the facts straight. There were so many unwarranted conclusions in the column that I won't try to list them all. I don't know what his credentials are, but I graduated from Texas public schools, and all four of my children have attended them. (One has just graduated as a National Merit Scholar). I have served on the school board for over eight years. Ours is a diverse district in terms of ethnic and socioeconomic make-up. My experience has been that the vast majority of Texas public school teachers and administrators work extremely hard for relatively low pay with admirable dedication to the students. His cost figures of comparing public and private schools ignore bilingual education, special education programs, free bus transportation, free and reduced lunch programs and many other programs which add greatly to the per-pupil average cost in the public sector. Our district and many others focus extra dollars on prekindergarten programs, mentoring programs (in which many Aggie students volunteer their time), and additional technology for schools with a high number of at risk students. Many children who would not even be admitted to a private school are finding success. The more I learn about public schools (and I am still learning), the more I am convinced that they deserve our support. They are not perfect; some have serious problems; but they remain our best hope for the future. I don't know where Mr. Ferguson went to school before college. I can only hope that he soon learns somewhere that his freedom to express himself, especially in newspaper columns, carries with it a responsibility to be accurate and fair.

C. David Stasny
Class of '74
President, Bryan School Board

Column unfairly blasts Democrats

In response to Donny Ferguson's "Democratic bumbblings..." Sept. 24 column: As if this country, or this campus for that matter, needed more coverups or secrets, Ferguson's

column is typical of the majority of Aggies on this campus. Ferguson's column depicted several examples of inept, immoral and illegal politicians, all of which just happened to be Democrats. Convenient, isn't it?

The truth is, these kinds of politicians can be found in either party. For example, let's look at the king of illegality, former president Richard M. Nixon, or even Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

Both of these people lied and covered up their indiscretions. Gingrich also tops the list of immorality as he delivered divorce papers on his soon-to-be ex-wife's death bed.

Or, need I remind you of the Texas politician out of Carthage who was found with a prostitute? Perhaps Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole can tell us all a little about campaign finance reform. After all, he has received the two largest fines for violations in political history. But, we always have a way of forgetting about stuff like that, don't we?

As citizens, we are critical of all our leaders. We have the right to be; but what if they were to be critical of us? I mean, we are the ones who elect these people. And, we are the ones who are too busy to vote or too lazy to get involved in the grass roots and do something about the real problems facing this country.

We are our own worst enemies, and as long as we tolerate ineptness, immorality and illegality from ourselves and our leaders (of either political party), we deserve what we get.

On another issue, to read Ferguson's column, one would think that the Democratic party is in total disarray, which is far from the truth. The Democrats, while suffering losses in the 1994 midterm elections, came together in 1996 to re-elect President Clinton and gain some seats back in Congress.

The Republicans are the party of ethically inadequate candidates who suffered splintering following the 1992 convention in Houston and the 1996 freefall toward the presidency by Dole. Ferguson's column simply typifies the rhetoric and media attacks of a party lacking conviction, courage and common sense.

Misty A. Hataway
Class of '98

Speech misses student experience

The remarks made by Mrs. Scardino, the British CEO, quoted in The Battalion apply just as much to any U.S. citizen as they do to the U.S. government.

As the only self-proclaimed super power left in the world, you have a responsibility towards the other members of the world community and have to exercise it with knowledge and wisdom. May I suggest a way that can help TAMU's leaders not be "inward looking" as Mrs. Scardino outlines.

TAMU must have many graduates working overseas — I met one in the computer lab the other day who will shortly be leaving for an overseas posting.

Why not invite one of those already established to write short articles about their experiences? How they cope with foreign customs, manners and lifestyles — the difficulties they encounter, they laughs they share.

I am sure the Alumni Association would have contacts with overseas graduates. Thus, you would widen the horizons of current students.

David Speary
Post graduate student

Football program generates revenue

In response to Michelle Voss' "Passing the pigskin" Sept. 26 column: The headline to Voss' column suggests that "football scores big with ridiculous amounts of funding and fanatical support."

We thought that Voss and the rest of the student body might get a kick out of understanding why Texas Aggie football is so big. Almost all of the money used to support all of A&M's athletic teams comes from football.

Each sport raises meager amounts of its own money from ticket sales, concessions, etc. But the fact remains that the bulk of each athletic team's budget comes from revenue donated to these teams from revenue induced by the football program.

The revenue induced during the 96-97 season, solely from the sale of football tickets, amounted to approximately \$9.3 million.

The football program was also able to raise an additional \$11.5 million from other miscellaneous sources, such as radio and television rights, the 12th Man, suites, promotions, concessions and media guides, just to name a few. That's right, the athletic department (mostly football) was able to raise approximately \$20.2 million during the 96-97 season.

Voss should realize that although she does not possess the cognitive ability or the desire for thoroughness to properly research her opinions, it is nonetheless true that the football program is almost solely responsible for the survival of athletics at Texas A&M.

Voss should be aware that college football is big business in every aspect of its being, and that art and music programs simply are not. Until music and art programs can induce a comparable amount of support, revenue and exposure for A&M, they will always take a backseat, as they should.

Jason R. Fort
Class of '98

Loren Leblanc
Class of '00



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