

STUDENT LIFE

Construction, elections will play big roles in 1998

It is the beginning of a new semester and a new year at Texas A&M University. With this new year comes the potential for nearly anything to occur. A&M is, after all, a very unpredictable place.



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

Who could have predicted 1997's big events? Four Presidents of the United States visited campus for the Bush Library opening, the Reveille festivities moved and the Fish pond inexplicably turned purple for over a month.

For 1998 to be as big of a news year as '97, some exciting events will have to occur. Fortunately for all of you faithful *Battalion* readers, I am going to reveal to you '98's biggest events. So get ready to learn what the next year holds. While some of the predictions may be a bit silly, they all are possible if not probable.

- Here's a pretty safe prediction — 1998 will see student fees increase. Rarely a year goes by without a fee increase. Besides, the only two certainties at A&M are death and fee increases. While there is no telling if a fee increase will be in the General Use Fee or the Student Service Fee or the Student Center Complex Fee or the Health Center Fee or one of the other numerous fees students pay each semester, it will occur.

- Reed Arena will open this semester. Despite partially collapsing and being nearly a year late, the Special Events Center will impress students and finally provide A&M with an arena appropriate for a university of this size.

- Muster will be the first event held at the arena, and last, anyone who wants to attend the service will have the opportunity.

- The arena's second event will be a tractor pull, saturating all of the car-crushing action Aggie land can handle.

- Construction on the Zone, the monstrous addition to Kyle Field will begin. However, believing that the Zone is not quite big enough, the Athletic Department will make it even larger. In addition to already displacing the Reveilles and E. King Gill's statue, the MSC, Rudder Tower and G. Rollie White Coliseum will have to be moved.

Students sitting in the upper rows of the Zone will be forced to wear oxygen masks in order to stay conscious throughout an entire game. People will wear T-shirts sporting the phrase "A&M spent a million dollars and all I got was a lousy nosebleed."

Meanwhile, opposing teams will mock A&M for naming a part of their stadium something as ridiculous as the Zone.

- Student Senate will break new ground this semester and do something that benefits campus. Campus will rejoice as representational government actually works.

- The Student Body President elections will regress once again into a matter of choosing which candidate's sign looks most like a commercial advertisement. The advertisements of the winners this year will emulate those of Slim Jim Beef Jerky.

The candidate's sign will feature Randy "the Macho Man" Savage saying "Snap into (insert candidate name here)."

- The Corps of Cadets, the Board of Regents and Bonfire will make it through the year without a controversy. Poultry science majors, however, will not. Tired of being labeled as hicks and red necks, poultry science majors will unite and hold a rally to protest prejudice against them. Aggies, however, will still think the poultry science majors hickish. The protest will result in weeks of ugly mail call filled with phrases like, "Highway 6 runs both ways" and "world-class university."

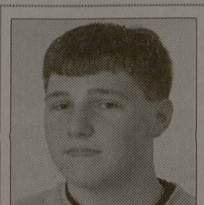
Obviously, '98 is going to be an exciting year. Whether or not these events occur is still up for debate. And although hindsight may be 20/20, foresight sure is fun.

John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.

STATE OF THE UNION

Hung jury exhibits necessary checks of American justice system

More than two years after the worst act of domestic terrorism in American history, there is still controversy over who is responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing. One thing, though, is certain — the Terry Nichols jury is not guilty of the crime. But ever since jurors notified U.S. District Judge Richard Patsch that they could not agree on a punishment for Nichols, the country has treated members of the jury as if they were the villains.



CALEB MCDANIEL
columnist

The 12 innocent members of the Nichols jury. People should have nothing but sympathy for any panel that is forced to decide whether a man lives or dies, and they should reserve their criticism until they have faced the same awful choice. It is not an easy decision to make.

In fact, thanks to the American justice system, it is an incredibly difficult decision to make. The jurors who decide capital punishment cases should have nothing but due respect for human life. They should not execute anyone if the conscience of even one juror is troubled by a "reasonable doubt." The last thing juries should do is hastily condemn a person to death because the crime was emotional or especially tragic. Yet that seems to be what Linda McCurley prefers. "If that jury had lived here and lived through this," she told a reporter in Oklahoma City, "I bet they would've felt differently."

Such criticism is misguided. If people are angered at the outcome of the Terry Nichols trial, they should blame those who deserve to be blamed. For starters, try the prosecution team. According to the jury forewoman, Niki Deutchman, "The government wasn't able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt a whole lot of the evidence." Holly Hanlin, another juror in the case, echoed that the government attorneys "could have done a better job. There were some things that wouldn't fit." It seems that the holes

in the government's case were too much for jurors to overcome. So if Terry Nichols really does deserve death, the prosecution has failed the victims, not the jury.

Or how about the F.B.I.? Americans should be angry that the FBI failed to record over 30,000 interviews conducted during the course of the investigation. Hard copies of these depositions, said Deutchman, would have made her decision much easier.

Ultimately, people should be glad that the jurors did not simply ignore their doubts for the sake of emotional closure in Oklahoma City. "Reasonable doubt" is the most sacred check on the American judicial system, and something is wrong with the country when people believe a jury has "failed" because it listened to its doubts. A hung jury is not a failure. It is a living tribute to the American justice system, a system that makes it hard to execute the guilty so that it will not be easy to punish the innocent.

The heart of every honest American grieves with you, Oklahoma City. Nothing anyone can say or do will ever replace the loss you have suffered. But Americans must not abandon objectivity and justice in their emotional zeal. And they must not vent their frustrations on juries who are hesitant to kill. Such juries should be commended, not condemned.

Caleb McDaniel is a freshman history major.

Remembering Martin Luther King Jr.

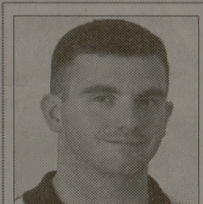


BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Diversity's future depends on non-discriminatory admissions

Current and would-be detractors of race-conscious admissions and services have capitalized on higher education's failure to justify its multicultural objectives. Mounting numerous legal assaults, the groups have targeted practices such as these, including *Hopwood* in Texas and Proposition 209 in California have been targeted. These groups ultimately will prove legally solid in their argument that the government cannot maintain a policy which favors one group over another based solely or in large part on race or gender.



ADAM COLLETT
columnist

Affirmative action and other programs were instituted by government by virtue of a compelling interest to correct the past wrongs of discrimination. In the short term, supporters of such corrective policies will likely stem the tide represented by *Hopwood* and Proposition 209, by arguing that the work is not yet done.

However, society will eventually have to comply with its own prescription that none shall be judged by the color of his or her skin. In *Generations: The History of America's Future 1584-2069*, William Strauss and Neil Howe explain that this is especially true considering that the young adults of Generation X are much more likely than previous generations to support programs which get away from equality of results and move toward equality of opportunity. For now, this group opinion only affects polls and studies, but could carry the force of law starting around 2015, when X-ers are expected to reach a plurality in Congress.

Well in advance of that day, universities and colleges will have to do two things. First, they will have to do a better job of selling the general public on the merits of diversity. Second, institutions of higher education will have to explore and implement alternatives to race-based programs.

Philosophically, universities will increasingly have to rely on the intrinsic value associated with diversity. According to some educators, that value has not been communicated well to those outside the academy. Kevin Carreathers, Director of Multicultural Services for Texas A&M, says, "There needs to be more articulation of what the research says about the impact of diversity on students. There's a positive correlation between diversity initiatives and student success and student satisfaction for all."

Another factor restricting the flow of information to the public is that colleges commonly keep quiet their specific admissions decision criteria to avoid controversy. It has long been the practice of institutions of higher education to admit a wide range of students, such as athletes, musicians and minority groups.

In a quest to address specific needs on a campus, some students with higher grades or test scores are passed over so that a particular community niche can be filled. However, admissions offices are adamant, however, in the practice of not admitting students who are not capable of doing the work. Colleges will have to make clear this reasonable admissions rationale in order to keep public support.

Philosophical defenses thus shored up, colleges can focus their efforts on designing recruitment, admissions and financial aid distribution systems that enhance diversity while avoiding race or ethnicity as factors.

Among the more radical solutions are academically open admissions (in which students are enrolled with practically zero regard to previous achievement) and financially open higher education (in which the government compensates for the demonstrated need of every student wishing to attend college).

While these alternatives remove some of the barriers that bottleneck minority enrollment, they are not likely to receive support from the general public.

The open admissions method devalues the degrees granted by an institution and complete financial assistance is prohibitively expensive and thus not likely to happen for a very long time.

Given the unlikelihood of these options, universities must consider other compensatory enrollment and retention strategies.

Several of these strategies involve measures of class or socioeconomic status (SES), such as tax base and parental income.

Carreathers says that economic consideration is the best alternative to race-conscious programs, because "that drives a lot of other factors [in the student's home community], such as quality of living, quality of schools, and quality of services."

Another indicator of SES is first-generation college enrollment. Universities that currently use this factor give weight to students whose parents did not complete college.

Andrs Prez, an admissions counselor, reports that the A&M takes into account geography, so that students from inner-city or other traditionally low-income areas are given special consideration.

"Most of our students come from the Houston, Dallas and San Antonio areas, but we also try to recruit out of places where students don't apply from, such as the panhandle and the Rio Grande valley."

A final alternative, one not being discussed extensively in the literature on the subject, is the use of multicultural or diversity-rich experiences as an admissions factor, along with the field standards of academic, extracurricular, work, and community service experiences.

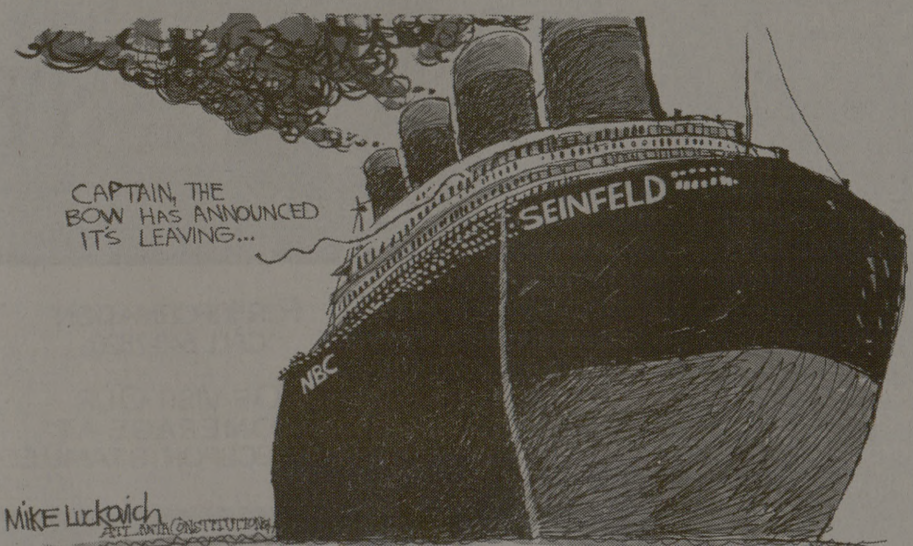
A requirement thus based could avoid the entanglements that current policies encounter because they would not be favoring a particular race, gender or culture group.

Multicultural or minority culture experiences could be gained by virtue of being of a certain race or group; but the saving grace of this alternative is that it is not restricted only to that criterion. Minority or multicultural experiences could also be gained from academic study, community service or job experience.

Affirmative action and race and gender-conscious admissions and services by universities have made significant inroads against discrimination, but the work is not yet done.

However, when the public and the judiciary finally tire and remove what's left of the recently reduced legal support for such activities, colleges and universities need to be ready with a clearly-communicated rationale for multiculturalism and viable alternatives to maintain diversity on campus.

Adam Collett is an educational administration graduate student.



MIKE LUCKOICH