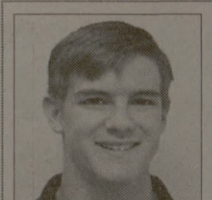


CAMPUS CONNECTION

Where for art thou?

A&M's quest for world-class status demands improving fine arts offerings

Texas A&M University is an institution blessed with being "a world-class university." In pursuing this goal, the University has implemented the Vision 2020 program, a set of long- and short-term goals to bring the University to a top-ten status by the year 2020.



CHRIS HUFFINES
radio producer

Walter Wendler, executive assistant to President Ray M. Bowen and one of the architects of Vision 2020, said two things most universities have in common are a law school and a developed fine arts program. As any Aggie who is still breathing on a regular basis knows, A&M recently shelled out to pick up a law school. Now, the University needs to focus on the fine arts.

Many people here at A&M are wondering why a fine engineering/business/left-brain school like A&M needs a more developed fine arts school. The first reason is by having such a substandard program (a university of its caliber), A&M is driving away fine arts students. This would be a problem, if studies didn't show that students interested in the fine arts

tend to be smarter than students not interested in the fine arts. I don't know if it's because theater, music and art tend to stimulate brain cells or smart people just like fine arts, but the fact remains fine arts equal smarter students.

By driving away these smarter students, the University is lowering the collective intelligence of its students.

Also, the fine arts are some of the most creative areas of study, and this creativity is sorely needed around here. A&M is not a stagnant environment — far from it — but it is a place that seems to thrive on its own stability. This is why the University administration is able to operate independently of student desires and problems like hazing go undetected and unsolved for years.

There is no desire to change anything, even if it needs to be changed. The fortunate byproduct of bringing in the fine arts is their great respect for tradition that makes sense. And, odd as they may seem, traditions here in Aggieland do make their own brand of sense.

Fine arts will bring needed change to the University, without doing away with anything desired.

Finally, A&M needs a little culture, which, currently, Bryan-College Station does not provide. Frankly, throwing darts while drunk at the Chicken doesn't really add to one's appreciation of the world and

life. Neither, really, do OPAS or the current theater arts program. OPAS, no matter the quality of show or their over \$1 million budget, cannot bring in enough shows to satisfy the diverse A&M student body.

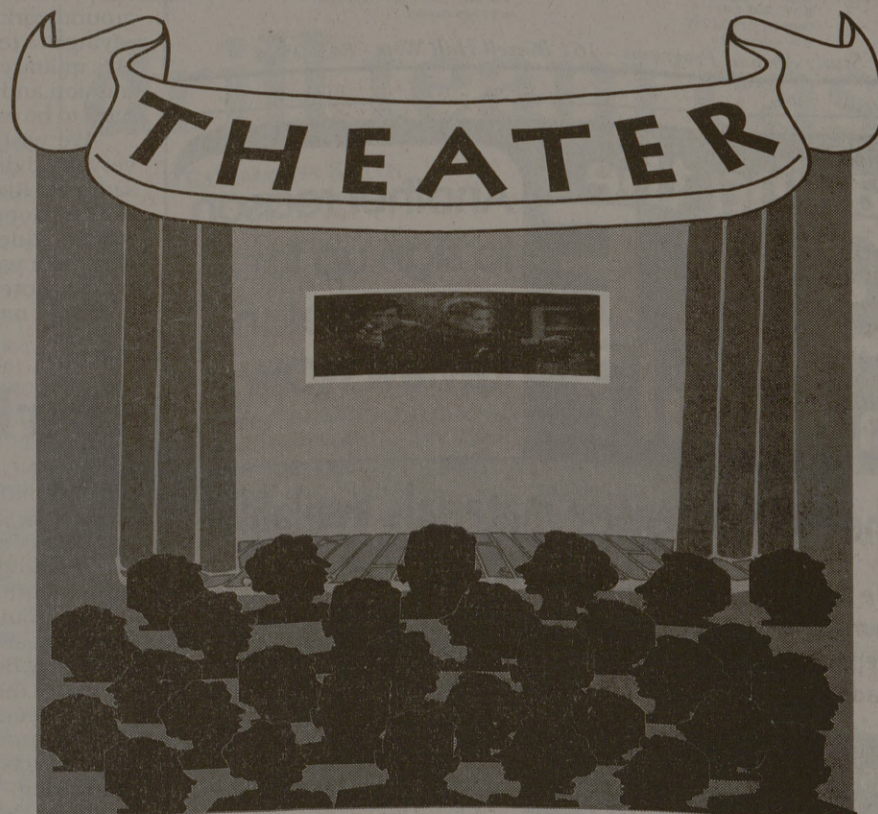
Admittedly, a higher percentage than anyone cares to admit is southern white, but even that majority cannot be served; all 46,000 students are too much for the dozen or less shows OPAS sponsors.

The Department of Theater Arts has the ability to satisfy the student body, but it does not have the facilities. Right now, the department is limited to Rudder Forum and the Fallout Theater. They use the Forum, that is, when everyone from Freudian Slip to St. Michael's Academy to the Honors Office is not using it. And the Fallout Theater is only slightly less primitive than the auto shop my high school used as a theater for a few years.

With the music department still in its infancy, and no other fine arts programs on campus, there is no escaping the fact A&M is under-cultured.

The University has clearly spelled out what is required to become a top-ten university, and thus a world-class university. Administrators have taken steps to achieve this, and now need to simply follow through.

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.



STUDENT LIFE

SAT remains a poor indicator of collegiate performances

The Scholastic Aptitude Test. The mention of those three words can make any high-school junior break into a sweat. The SAT is the three-hour test that is a factor in college admissions. It is designed to test students' math and verbal skills and predict performance.



MANISHA PAREKH
columnist

In reality, however, the SAT is just one big game. It has problems, and if a student has the right resources, it can be easily beaten.

The first problem with the SAT is that it is not a valid predictor of performance. "On average, for 88 percent of the SAT applicants, an SAT score will predict their grade rank no more accurately than a pair of dice," Glenn Ellert of Columbia University said. His findings are based on reports by Educational Testing Services (ETS), the company that administers the test. Recent studies have found that the correlation between SAT scores and college grades are slight at best.

In fact, ETS psychologist Jonathan R. Warre concluded that motivation is the key to performing well in college. The best students were committed to their studies and interested in learning.

The second problem with the SAT is it seems to be biased towards certain groups. Researchers James Crouse and Dale Trusheim found that while the SAT was a poor predictor of future performance, it was a great way of indicating a student's socioeconomic status. Students from middle to upper-class families did consistently better on the test than lower income students.

It is obvious to anyone that money does not equal intelligence and any test which says that is flawed.

Yet the admissions professionals at many universities still use the SAT as a major part of the decision process. This is in spite of the fact an ETS study found other factors such as grade-point average are not directly influenced by economic status, and are better predictors.

Further studies have shown white males do bet-

ter on the SAT than females and minorities. Does this mean white males are the most intelligent? Of course not. The SAT is biased towards white males, Ellert said.

ETS, for its part, says the test does not discriminate against certain groups; it merely reflects the inequities in American society. But the SAT is not supposed to measure societal inequity, it is supposed to measure intelligence and ability. And it obviously does not.

The third problem has to do with reliability. How many people are at their peak performance at 8 a.m. on a Saturday? And how many people can concentrate on a test for almost three hours straight? Most college students have a hard time concentrating during a three-hour class on a Tuesday night.

Therefore, it is insane to believe that a single test can predict future performance, especially under the sterile conditions the SAT is administered. There are many factors that have absolutely nothing to do with intelligence or aptitude that can affect SAT scores. The room was too cold or there was too much traffic outside. Any psychologist will tell you because many factors can affect performance, the most reliable way to measure a skill or ability is to run several trials and then average the scores together.

The SAT, however, is a one-shot deal. Finally, the SAT can be beaten if a student has the time and money to take a class like the Princeton Review. These type of review classes teach strategies that help students to "beat" the test. And studies show that the courses actually work. So, if a student has the \$600 to spend on a review course, he or she can score high on the SAT.

Once again, the SAT proves it can measure the size of a student's pocketbook.

And the statistics show that is really all the test can measure.

Yet the SAT is still used by many universities as a deciding factor in admissions and scholarships. And despite the evidence that the SAT is nothing more than a waste of time and money, many more high school students will take the test and realize that SAT really stands for "Silly And Tiring."

Manisha Parekh is a sophomore psychology and journalism major.

STATE OF THE UNION

Memories of materialism will haunt America's history

One day, in 80 years or so, a few of us will be doddering, senile geriatrics. Shuffling along the sidewalks in our robes, black socks and espadrilles, we'll emit foul odors and be in serious need of ointments.

We'll mumble about this place called America. That place where we grew up, but it crashed into a large glacier and sunk.

Virtually everyone drowned in the North Atlantic after a rather suspenseful moment when the continent broke in half, which had a catchy score that you can pick up for \$12.95 at Blockbuster.

So, the stories will be told and history will be written. America will be part of the past. A bygone nation from before the Flood.

Then, the question becomes, how will history write about America?

The typical American might be inclined to respond: A military super-power, the big-burrito of Western Civilization, the inventors of silly putty and hoola-hoops.

However, if all records were destroyed, and history had to be rewritten by an historical materialist, the world's superpower might look a tad ridiculous.

Since a materialist would study personal artifacts of ordinary people, the history of America would have a different ring than we might imagine.

A materialist would notice that Americans were the most litigious culture in the universe, with more televisions than homes, more foreign cars with goofy names and more Taco Bueños than could possibly be good for the ozone — you know, all that methane.

An American in 2078 might be defined as: A person who ate grande burritos and drove a Yugo to their lawyer's office to collect a personal injury check since they dropped a television on their foot.

No, no, no, not possible. Americans put the first man on the moon. Americans um, um, invented 1015 onions. And . . . um, Americans, well, hmm. Americans invented MTV. Yeah, MTV.

Sure, okay, America is neat. But, let's play pretend.



MICHELLE VOSS
columnist

Hypothetically speaking, let's say Iraq unleashes their weapons of mass-destruction on the United States tomorrow morning as we're munching on our bowls of raisin bran.

Funky chemicals are released into the air, we all die, bla, bla, bla. But our houses remain. So, Saddam sends out special teams to rummage through our houses and make America look really, really stupid.

This would be a rather simple task. Think about it. Our houses are full of retarded things. Things that if someone stumbled into our houses and began piecing together a history of America as you, the beer-guzzling frat-boy, lived it, we would look seriously asinine.

The Iraqi-special team to make Americans look stupid might have notes that look like the following:

One, these Americans must consume enough beer to equal the entire Gross Domestic Product of a small country in South America. And they really seem to like large, round metal barrels with little hoses attached at the top.

Two, they like to collect large cassette-looking tapes with covers that say things like, "My Best Friends Wedding," "Sixteen Candles," "Father of the Bride," etc., etc. They must really like cakes and streamers or something.

Three, they really like peanut butter, sausage and frozen peas as this was all that was sitting in their refrigerators.

Four, they all have amassed stacks of little round discs from those obnoxious Hootie and the Blow Fish idiots.

Last, this country is all about religious zealots with guns.

Don't think so? Go home and look around. Imagine how history would record Americans if they had to collect knickknacks from your apartment.

One day, America will be gone and some of us just might live to see it — the rest of us will be frozen with John Wayne.

So, do not let the true memory of America die when it sinks into the Atlantic.

Tell everyone you meet that Freebirds had the best burritos in the free world.

Michelle Voss is a sophomore English major.



MAIL CALL

Family tragedy spawns spirit of Aggieland

OK — So you have heard about it. Maybe even felt it. But my family recently fully experienced it. On Feb. 4 my daughter Shan-

non was killed in a traffic accident. She was not a student at A&M, but was going to college at Blinn in Bryan with her eye on Aggieland.

Her brother, Patrick McCleskey (G-1) Class of '99 and her fiancé, Lt. Mark Andrews (Talon 12) Class of '97 are and were both in the Corps at A&M.

Not only did A&M notify Blinn and assist with getting her records closed out, but the Corps' support of her brother and fiancé has been beyond belief — cards, letters, calls, plants.

Members of their units were there throughout the processes to help their buddies and continue to be there for them. My brother, Bruce Henderson (B-1) Class of

'83, brought together all the Aggies at the funeral and did a Corps "Hump It" for Shannon.

The Federation of Aggie Moms sent a card, and the Austin A&M Mother's Club sent flowers for the family and a goodie basket to my son. We continue to receive calls from members of the club.

So what is the spirit of Aggieland? It is the feeling of inclusion during a time that is beyond comprehension and the core fear of many parents — losing a child.

My husband and I will be forever grateful and in awe at how the spirit of the Corps of Cadets and Aggieland has embraced us.

*Bob, Kathy and Pat McCleskey
Lt. Mark Andrews*

Textbooks attempt to correct past deletions

In response to Donny Ferguson's Feb. 18 column:

Donny Ferguson has once again failed to think before he put his opinion on paper.

He is attacking public school textbooks and comparing the Board of Education to the Politburo.

What he has failed to realize probably because he believed everything that Coach taught him in high-school history and government classes, is that many school textbooks in the past 50 years have not been telling the entire story.

Public school textbooks for years have been the source of

propaganda that supports the "American Way."

If you don't believe me, then take a look at a high-school textbook from 10 to 12 years ago to see how much subjects like the Vietnam War or McCarthyism are covered. If public schools are finally getting away from the Amerocentric and Eurocentric stance then, it's about time.

I also wonder what teachings of Stalin are incorporated in textbooks given that Mary was the political philosopher and Stalin was a dictator. Maybe Donny was absent the day his Political Science professor taught Political Theory in class.

*Mike Rogers
Class of '97*

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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