

# See London, I see France . . .

Studying abroad makes for an experience consisting of more than academic credit

Studying abroad represents a unique opportunity to observe a foreign culture first hand. Yet for many Aggies, international education means learning never to eat from a roadside fajita stand during spring break in Matamoros. With an increasing number of reasons, as well as opportunities, more Texas A&M students should consider studying abroad.

The intangible benefits of being immersed in a foreign culture are as irreplaceable as the memories. Just as important, after living in a foreign culture, it is much easier to appreciate one's home environment all the more. But even if the thought of doing your part to create a deeper understanding among nations sounds too Disney-esque, remember, nothing starts a story off better than, "So I was at this bar in London . . ."

Obviously, the social aspect is an integral part of studying abroad. Social interaction with people from around the world allows one to discover that long-held international stereotypes

are not necessarily true, or that in some cases, they have some basis in reality. After the blandness of high school, remember how interesting it was to meet people from other states at A&M? Just think about what someone from a different continent can show you.

As the designation suggests, studying abroad also demands academic development. You can learn anywhere. But how and what you learn will be completely different depending on where you go. Learning about architecture by watching a 45-minute slide show in class is educational. Standing five feet away from the Great Pyramid is an experience.

In addition to the experiences providing a new perspective within a major that has become a bit too familiar, studying abroad allows one to take classes unique to the locale. No other university in the world could duplicate a course such as Meats 307.

At the same time, nowhere in the Texas A&M University Course Catalog are there courses titled "Cultural Trends of the Carpathian Basin" or "The City and Art in the 20th Century," but there are at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences.

The reasons to study abroad are as endless as the opportunities. However, instead of taking the opportunity, students seem

to find excuses not to go. Perhaps one of the most common excuses used is the fear that college is not the best time to spend abroad. Yet, what other point in our lives will be as convenient as now? By the age when one has enough spare time to travel overseas, the most exciting thing about visiting St. Paul's Cathedral will be the fact that it has pews where you can sit down and rest.

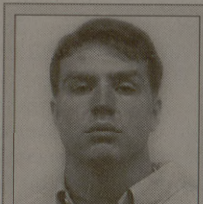
The Study Abroad Office in Bizzell Hall offers a substantial amount of information and assistance on a diverse range of locales, costs and programs.

Options range from staying in a hotel with the use of one's own car to living in former army barracks and getting to school in a donkey cart.

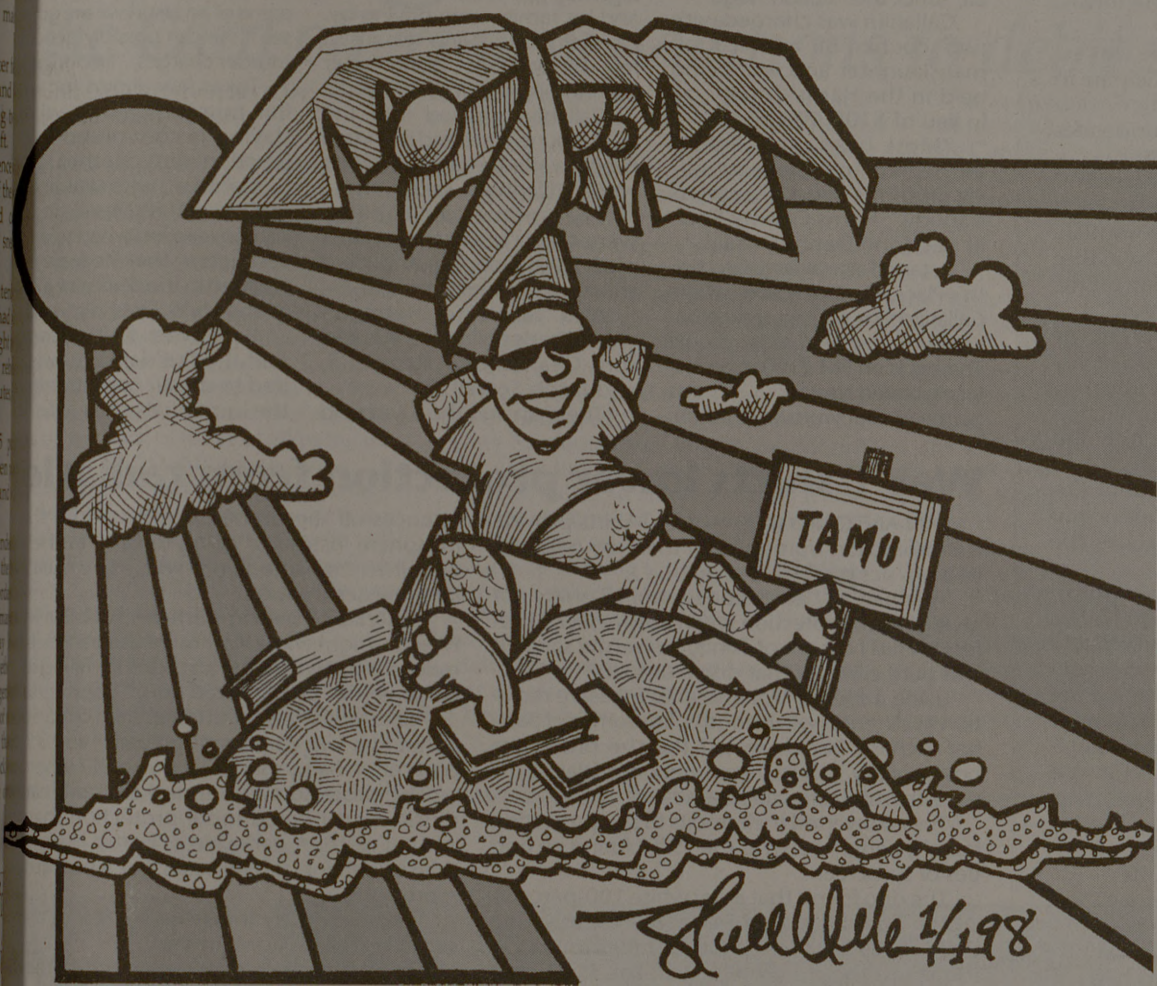
Along with helping on where to go, the Study Abroad Office offers numerous university-supported study abroad scholarships each year and can guide interested parties to national scholarships.

Studying abroad is not merely about dating someone from Switzerland or gaining academic credit. In fact, it is about both and more. After all, it is hard to be part of a world-class university if you never leave the country.

Steven Gyeszly is a junior finance major.

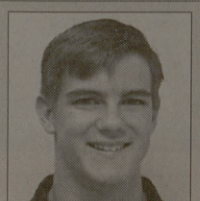


STEVEN GYESZLY  
columnist



## ResLife should advocate the students it is serving

Every year, fearful parents entrust their precious children to the tender, loving care of the Department of Residence Life. After living two semesters in a residence hall, these same precious children emerge scarred and embittered toward the very department entrusted with their care.



CHRIS HUFFINES  
columnist

This problem is caused by the apathy and lack of respect for students' needs recently displayed by the Department of Residence Life. In the past few years, it appears that the Department of Residence Life has become so concerned with not causing conflict, they are neglecting students in favor of not making waves.

For example, entering freshmen cannot request current students as their roommates. This makes no sense. My older brother is two years ahead of me in school. He and I would make good roommates. We know each other very well, respect each other's space and are friendly toward each other, which is a far cry from the innumerable horror stories I have been treated to in the past two years.

Yet, according to ResLife policy, he and I could not be roommates on campus, despite the fact that if we requested each other as roommates, we obviously want to live together. Should ResLife hold onto an outdated policy instead of helping create a better on-campus atmosphere?

Another apathy that affects students is potluck roommates. ResLife does nothing when it comes to matching roommates, and usually its matches are less than ideal.

My first roommate and I were, personality-wise, just about complete opposites. We didn't fight, like some other potluck roommates in my hall. That was good. We did have the same first name, but that was

the only similarity.

The argument has been made that, in the real world, people don't always get their way, so deal with the roommate conflicts. That is an excuse, plain and simple.

In the real world, roommates choose each other, or at least meet before becoming roommates. In the real world, roommates do not have to go through frigid mediation sessions before succumbing to reality and moving.

ResLife is looking at the policy of pre-housing surveys to match roommates but are so concerned about possibly getting sued it has stalled the program.

This kind of timidity is undoubtedly soothing to the Board of Regents and everyone else holding the University's checkbook, but it signals to the student body that the University cares more about keeping out of trouble than about the students. Students who feel the University cares less about them than money are probably more likely to sue, by the way.

ResLife does a good job, but the department needs to become more forceful advocates for the students it was chartered to serve. ResLife bends over backward to avoid offending groups such as the administration, the Association of Former Students, and the Texas A&M Mothers Club.

For example, there are no dorms at A&M. They are all "residence halls." Dorms are where you eat and sleep; residence halls are where you live and grow. The difference between dorms and residence halls is semantic at best.

ResLife, instead of calling the dorms a different name and ignoring the problems, should work and fight tooth and nail to make the dorms a place to live and grow. The Department of Residence Life's motto states that it exists to "enhance the academic and educational mission of Texas A&M University." What is this continuous buckling to other powers teaching students?

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.

## Low-fat foods equal low taste

Shoppers, motoring along carefully with their carts while pleasantly humming to grocery tunes, approach diet-oriented foods. Boxes smile and scream out, "Pick me! I am fat free, low-calorie, first-rate, chemically-puffed garbage."

An array of labels are marked on the boxes: Low moisture, naturally low-fat, 50 percent less fat and 100 percent delicious, fructose-sweetened, and sugar-free.

These diet-enhanced ingredients allow the freedom to feed and the freedom to stuff, but are chemically bloated with artificial additives, preservatives and flavors.

Anything from Danish coffee cakes to cookie dough, the omnipresent diet foods lurch along the shelves.

A random walk through the grocery store is reminiscent of the country's absurd obsession with the pubescent waif look.

Diet foods are thickly dispersed throughout every aisle. The suggestion that the pressure women face to keep slim figures, or in fact, skeletal figures, is well intact.

Through various media images and 6-foot tall, 115-pound malnourished supermodels, women are encouraged to devour cakes and sweets absent of flavor.

Twinkies, the timeless treats, have been victimized by this diet mantra. They have become the alternative twinkie of one's nightmares.



ALISON LACKEY  
columnist

The luscious-turned-vicious yellow cake and white icing is fat free and tastes just like it too.

The idea of the alternative fat-free twinkie sounds like the most important piece of information one could receive in one day. Now, one can eat 26 in one sitting.

This is not true. A little something called taste happens to get in the way of enjoying this pseudo-utopian twinkie.

Not only has this damnation of fat affected snack cakes, it also has altered the dairy aisle.

For those of you who have never had the pleasure of tasting a slice of fat-free cheese, God bless you — keep it that way. That stuff should be ditched to the landfills of the world and nestled among broken hubcaps, mildewed carpet and moldy potato peels. These foods have gone through so much processing, one has to wonder what the content of the food was originally.

The original content of potato chips cooked in Olestra is virtually unknown. The new chemically-puffed diet potato chips are the puffiest of them all. These snacks are fried in Olestra oil.

Olestra is a fat substitute that has required a warning label on the back of every bag of chips. They "may cause abdominal cramping and loose stools," reads the label.

Olestra inhibits the absorption of some vitamins and nutrients. The chips are chemically modified so that the digestive system can't properly break them down. The chips also contain tocopherols to protect flavor.

First of all, if one cannot pronounce the ingredients of the food they are eating, why eat it? Furthermore, any food that requires a warning label and harmfully affects well-being is definitely not worth eating.

Fat-substitute oils deliver all pleasure and

taste with serious side effects. These products should not have been approved by the FDA. However, after the products had a quick test run in three major cities that the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) labeled as "the diarrhea capitol of the USA," fat-substitution oils were granted the go ahead.

Olestra is presently rocking the bowels of America.

Be an exception — don't "eat like a kid again," as the wholesome advertising campaign requests. Eat like a human again. Spare your toilet.

There is nothing wrong with eating the foods you want then getting active to burn the fat and calories off. Eat naturally — get the full-blown sour cream. Thank your body by rewarding it with exercise.

Don't swear by the lazy American way. We can't have our cake and eat the whole tub of icing too.

Fat-substitute oils are controversial. Paying close attention to what consumers eat is vital to healthy living.

In the immortal Web page words of Paul Penna, anti-olestra advocate, he contemplates the laxative existence of consumers . . .

Olestra is my Shepherd  
I shall not digest;  
It maketh me lie down  
on brown bed sheets.  
It leadeth me beside the still cesspool.  
It restoreth my stool.

Alison Lackey is a senior English major.



### MAIL CALL

#### Future pastor defends columnist

In response to April Towery's July 11, column "Keep 'em in the kitchen":

I want to give April Towery a standing ovation for her column "Keep 'em in the kitchen?" I greatly appreciate her courage to speak out with regard to a woman's right to pastor. I know many will bombard Mail Call with letters calling Towery a hypocrite and judgmental, or whatever word they remember from

Sunday School. In her defense, she could not have been more Biblically accurate. To objectors, I ask, "Have you researched the Bible for yourself on this matter or do you simply disagree with the Bible?" If the latter, who are you to claim the ability to choose or yourself what's true in the Bible? Do you claim equality with God? The essence of sin is that people think they have rights before God. As a future pastor, I definitely want to be the leader for my church and fiancé. But remember the same Bible that calls men to lead the church (and not women) also defines leadership as servanthood.

To lead in this manner is a great task. What woman or church would object to having a leader who serves with this kind of love? Thank you, April Towery, for not conforming like everyone else to what is politically correct. . . . because then you would have been wrong.

Brad Vaughn  
Class of '99

#### Mariages deserve equal treatment

In response to John Lemons' July 11th column on same-sex marriage:

If there is one issue that The Battalion columnists always seem to be outspoken on, it's homosexuality. More often than not, the writers choose the intolerant side of the road instead of the side that accepts differences in people and celebrates them.

John Lemons' July 11th column was written in opposition of same-sex marriage. He cited the tired old reasons that are always used: "family values" and Bible verses. And so, I write to restate what's already been said against these arguments.

It is absolutely illogical to say that any kind of marriage is destructive to family values. How is it possible that a loving, monogamous partnership between two

people is anything but right? Gays and lesbians are no less capable of love than are heterosexual people.

Megan Wright  
Class of '01

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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