

Science job market evaporates suddenly

An old joke goes like this: Engineers say, "How does it work?" Scientists say, "Why does work?" And liberal arts majors say, "Would you like fries with that?" Ah, irony, we meet again. In 1989, the National Science Foundation warned that in about a decade there would be a huge vacancy in science and engineering fields. Almost 675,000 jobs would supposedly remain vacant, wanting for an eager new flock of scientists to fill them. Future science majors rubbed their meaty little hands together, almost salivating at the job opportunities — and the money — waiting them.

Now, it is almost a full decade later, and where are the jobs? Most definitely filled. Unfortunately, the NSF could not foresee the end of the arms race, which caused a drastic drop in the need for physicists and most aerospace engineers. They also could not foresee the explosion of science majors that would soon follow their announcement. Even with the rise of genetics, biotechnology and quantum physics, science fields cannot deal with the onslaught of graduates and Ph.D.s being pumped out by universities everywhere.

And now, scientists go begging for jobs. In a current issue of Newsweek, a molecular biologist with a doctorate said, "Science as a career is a nightmarish dead end."

At the moment, that sentiment would be hard to refute.

In a recent survey from the National Academy of Sciences, 38 percent of biology graduates reported they could not find anything but temporary jobs, even six years after they had received their doctorates. Maybe a career in fashion designing would have been the smart move after all.

Teasing aside, this finding is disconcerting for all current science majors, particularly biology majors.

Finding a paid lab position was almost always difficult, but with the glut of science majors now, it is worse than ever.

Maybe at this point it is naive to say, but students with science degrees were not supposed to have to worry about job security, or even finding a job.

Times have changed, though, and science majors must adjust to them.

At Texas A&M, hard-science majors make up about 5 percent of the population, or 2,503 members. That does not seem like such a large number, but consider all the other colleges and universities with their own stock of science majors.

Plus, that 5 percent is just referring to actual members of the College of Science. It is not even counting those enrolled in the College of Medicine.



BEVERLY MIRELES



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

The question is, why are there so many science majors out there, ineffectively trying to infiltrate the science job force? Or perhaps the question should be, why are there not an abundance of science jobs out there?

John Horgan thinks he knows. He is an author whose new book is precariously titled *The End of Science*. In the book, Horgan concludes the reason science jobs are so scarce is not because of the large number of science majors trying to contribute to the work force, but because science, as we know it, is over.

Horgan argues exploration in scientific fields can advance no further, since no scientific discovery will ever be able to do better than Darwin's theory on evolution or the discovery of DNA.

It is an interesting view, but it is wrong. Though new branches of science are not being discovered daily, that hardly means science is finished. If anything, it only recently has expanded to the point of having real consequences for the average citizen.

One example of this is the Human Genome Project. This effort's main goal is to map the location of genes within human DNA. The project will aid in identifying and treating some genetic diseases, something that could become greatly beneficial. The awe-inspiring findings of the project could spark a whole

new understanding of life itself.

Saying that science is dead is ridiculously presumptuous, much like Harold Bloom's statement no writer could ever surpass Shakespeare's works. If anything, the amount of scientific knowledge that is now commanded by scientists will only serve to expand the progress of science.

For example, Darwin's theory of evolution was indeed one of the greatest discoveries of all time, but who is to say his theory is etched in stone? If anything, it has only served as an outline, and it will soon be overshadowed by Gould's and Eldredge's theory of punctuated equilibrium.

And in this way, science will continue to expand, and hopefully the number of science jobs will expand as well. Science is not over, and although its students are begging for work right now, that will likely dissipate in the coming years.

Until then, science majors must persevere. If they do not, then it will not just be the scientists that are suffering, but humankind itself, for having to watch the new — and possibly great — wave of scientific minds being pushed out of the realm of science.

Beverly Mireles is a sophomore microbiology major.

Yugoslavian fighting requires careful action

The latest threats of military action against Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic reveal just how awkward American foreign policy has become.



CALEB MCDANIEL

In a New World Order populated by more irreconcilable conflicts and less identifiable enemies, Washington is still strangely attached to the use of conventional military action as a diplomatic cure-all. Some Clinton officials utter the word "airstrikes" with the same reverent awe with which Aggies pronounce "Toombs."

Knee-jerk, reactive airstrikes hardly warrant the kind of respect they are afforded by American politicians. Especially as the United States decides how to respond to conflict in Kosovo, it should be clear the use of force in Yugoslavia is neither effective nor ethical.

First of all, the American affinity for airstrikes in Yugoslavia underestimates the intense ethnic hatred that divides the region.

If people kill and terrorize each other in ignorance and prejudice, no amount of military action will stop their violence. The most well-placed American missile will never reach the place where ethnocentrism eats at the human heart.

Therefore, the Clinton administration is profoundly mistaken if it believes a few hours of bombing can correct a few decades of hatred. It is more likely continued violence will only deepen the resentment and bitterness between Serbians and ethnic Albanians.

Given the special ethnic character of Kosovo's embattlement, some analysts believe airstrikes will only tighten Milosevic's grip on power. Responding to the common threat of American aggression, many Yugoslavians who were staunch opponents of their president are now his allies. American involvement in the war could trigger rally-around-the-flag nationalism in Serbia.

This should not surprise the Clinton administration. How often have Americans burst into countries like Iraq and Somalia,

determined to "rescue" the oppressed, only to find their own flag being burned?

Therefore, the effectiveness of airstrikes in Yugoslavia is likely to be thwarted by ethnic rivalry and deep-rooted nationalism.

But perhaps the most frightening specter of American involvement in the Balkans is its lack of definition. As the New York Times reported Wednesday, "Even within the [Clinton] administration there is disagreement about how best to pursue and enforce a resolution to the standoff with Mr. Milosevic."

Some members of the government, including Secretary of State Madeline Albright, have not ruled out the possible deployment of ground forces to Yugoslavia. Other officials, including Secretary of Defense William Cohen, flatly oppose placing American ground troops in Kosovo. If NATO goes ahead with airstrikes, it will be another unfortunate case of American action without agreement.

So the pitches against airstrikes are all strikes. Bombs cannot get the best of bigotry — strike one. Militarism breeds nationalism — strike two. A lack of clear vision virtually guarantees a lack of victory. Three strikes, and the strikes are out.

The questionable effectiveness of airstrikes makes them dubiously ethical. The very refugees NATO wants to rescue probably will be more hurt than helped by military action. Many aid agencies are already fleeing Kosovo as airstrikes become more imminent. Militarizing the region with aerial assaults will only delay aid to Albanians, and those without food and shelter will continue to struggle even if Milosevic's army folds.

NATO and the administration face a very difficult question. Is it right to endanger more lives without a guarantee of success?

It hardly seems right. Violence begets violence, and airstrikes on Yugoslavia will almost surely open more wounds than they will close. Concerned Aggies ought to let our country's leaders know that we need more Toombs on Kyle Field and less tombs in Kosovo.

Caleb McDaniel is a sophomore history major.

Student attitudes toward homosexuality demonstrate ignorance, intolerance

A growing sentiment of homophobia is manifest on the Texas A&M campus, and this should not be regarded as a good sign. What people say about homosexuals are often reflections of their home life, upbringing and religion. Most of the time it is not based on actual relations with any homosexual people, but rather a sign of biases passed down through family perspectives.

Unfortunately, when students come to college, they do not realize all of their prejudices should be re-evaluated in the bright light of a more liberal and open



LISA FOOK

college campus. If the Texas A&M campus is more closed-minded than it could be, then college students should at least attempt to explore new perspectives on their own.

In the case of homophobia, or fear of homosexuals, the inherent dislike many students feel is not based on any factual reasons. Talking to Aggies on campus, it can be discovered that a dislike for homosexuals stems from "the Bible says it's wrong" to "I don't feel that way and they shouldn't either."

Many people professing these beliefs have not bothered to seek any facts at all. They are merely spouting ingrained beliefs they have heard others voice.

Now, it can be argued that using the Bible is all the proof necessary for condemning these homosexuals for their

actions. However, Bible verses that contain an indefinite amount of interpretations cannot be used as the sole means for an argument.

Further, there are numerous verses that promote loving others without judging their sins.

It is possible to assume that God loves those who sin more than those who foster hatred of fellow humans.

After attending a Gay, Lesbian Bi-Sexual and Transsexual Aggies meeting, it is obvious that homosexuals are not interested in proving their orientation is genetic.

They simply could not care less, because, as one gay student said, "This is the way I am. It doesn't really matter how I got this way, because I can't change it."

Homophobes feel differently however.

They think if they can prove homosexuality is not a genetic problem, then they have a valid excuse for hating homosexuals.

The argument runs as follows. First they are not genetically inclined to members of the same sex. Therefore they are making a choice that is different than the homophobe would make. Therefore these homosexuals are wrong and do not deserve any tolerance.

The homophobia expressed on campus is merely ignorance of anyone who is different. It is the same ignorance that causes racism and promotes religious intolerance.

Other student attitudes simply show an ignorance of life in general. Some college students maintain the belief AIDS is a punishment for those who sin in homosexuality.

This notion reflects poor knowledge of AIDS. Assuming that the only people to contract this disease are gays and lesbians overlooks all the people who have contracted the illness through blood transfusions and heterosexual acts within a marriage.

Or perhaps, these too are the sinners to which the students were referring.

However, none of these attitudes in themselves are significant. It is the underlying concept that those who are different — through choice, biology or environment — are bad, that should be a real concern.

It is time to broaden perspectives and open up minds, Aggies.

Lisa Fook is a senior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

New computer offers advantages

In response to Corrie Cauley's Oct. column: Corrie Cauley seems to think Apple Computers uses innovative design to compensate for a lack of technology. In fact, the new Mac computer comes with a high-speed modem, large hard drive, high-quality speakers, an infrared data-transfer port for wireless data transfer, a 15-inch monitor, built-in ethernet connection and much more.

Cauley is a good example of someone who does not think differently. She claims we live in a time when "the classic computer is beige." Is this a good thing? What was most appalling about her column was her assertion that "those even slightly familiar with computers are quick to admit that there is absolutely nothing friendly about the Macintosh operating system." Apple deserves a little bit more credit than

that. The Windows operating system has never been anything more than a copy of the Macintosh software.

Finally, if there is absolutely nothing friendly about Macintosh operating system, why does Cauley claim the iMac "belongs in the elementary school classroom?"

Daniel Hayman
Class of '01

Decals illustrate student diversity

In response to John Lemons' Oct. 6 column:

It seems people have taken offense to the decals showing Calvin cartoon character urinating. Although I do not own one of these stickers, I feel I should point out some things.

Although the sticker may offend some people, it is not something that should be embarrassing. By the time people get to college, they know what happens when na-

ture calls. Everyone has seen someone else taking care of business before.

The Calvin stickers should remain on people's cars and trucks. The character traits it portrays of the owners just show the diversity of our university.

Jeremy Dressler
Class of '02

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