

Opinion

New Q-drop proposal offers better education

Many Aggies hoard their Q-drop options like squirrels in winter. They save them for the last possible moment, waiting until they absolutely have to use them to avoid failing a class.

The current system for Q-dropping is ineffective, and the good news that Texas A&M is considering changing its policy, offering each student an additional Q-drop.

The current Q-drop system allows students three Q-drops to use at their discretion anytime during their undergraduate careers. Any Q-dropped class is not calculated in the student's grade-point ratio. The new proposal, dubbed "60-60-60," offers students two Q-drops to use during their first 60 semesters, two Q-drops during their second 60 semesters and extends the Q-drop deadline until the 60th day of the semester.

One reason the proposed system will work better than the current one is it will even out the GPR gap between four-year students and transfers. Students who transfer to A&M have a huge advantage over four-year students. In a society where competition is everything, GPR matters. Some students have attended John Q. Junior College for two years in an effort to improve their GPR's by taking the "weed-out" classes at an easier school. It seems this is already a distinct advantage over those who attend Texas A&M for four years. To give these students the additional benefit of three Q-drops over two years is unfair.

The new system would allow the transfer students the same number of Q-drops in their first two years as every other Ag. This is a great news for the four-year Aggies. This is also good for companies searching for qualified employees. If employers are examining an even playing field in the arena of GPR numbers, they can then make more informed decisions about which person is more qualified for the job.



LISA
FOOX



TIM KANG/THE BATTALION

Another advantage for implementing the new Q-drop policy is it will extend the Q-drop deadline, giving students a longer amount of time to decide whether to Q-drop. This change will allow students to take chances on more difficult classes.

Aggies who are trying to attain a workable degree with a useful amount of knowledge will benefit from having more choices in the classes they take. If students know they can take classes and drop them much later in the semester, they will make an effort to stay in the class and improve their grades. The idea behind the Q-drop policy is not to make it difficult for a student to decide whether to stay in the class or drop it, but rather to give students options.

As the system stands right now, students often get halfway through a class and find they have a borderline grade. Then, because they are up against a Q-drop deadline, they drop the class without knowing if they could have achieved the grade they sought.

Changing this system will encourage students to work harder in the class and hopefully get the grade they want.

Now, it is possible to argue students do not need to have any of these added advantages. One could say the Q-drop system is merely an added benefit to attending a good university and it is not necessary to improve the policy. After all, if students have more Q-drops, they will use them more, and soon Ags might be carelessly registering for classes, knowing they are protected by an extra Q-drop.

This argument fails, however, because it is based on a misconception. People assume taking a class and Q-dropping it is a bad thing. This is false, because the main premise behind a university is to gain knowledge. If students are taking these classes, they are gaining at least a bare grasp of the subject matter. If they then Q-drop and take the class again — or never retake the class — they will still have gained something.

Overall, while the current system for Q-drops is adequate, improving it can take it beyond adequacy. The proposed system will be a step for future knowledge.

Lisa Foox is a senior journalism major.

Gore proposal promises protection from abuse

In a monumental victory for advocates of domestic violence awareness, Vice President Al Gore announced a plan Wednesday making it easier for victims of abuse to escape their attackers.



MANDY
CATER GRAEBER

The plan, which involves making it simpler for battered women to change their Social Security numbers, is one of the most positive, important endorsements in the history of victims' rights.

Gore announced his dedication to the effort in an Associated Press report.

"We are raising awareness of this terrible scourge," Gore said. According to the AP report, the plan would allow victims to change their Social Security numbers simply by "providing written evidence of domestic violence from a local shelter, a treating physician or a law enforcement official."

Diminishing the red tape involved with changing a Social Security number certainly will make it easier for domestic violence victims to avoid being tracked by their attackers. It will also send a message to abusive individuals that government is finally saying enough is enough. And the decision is long overdue.

Gore's plan is a victory, not just for women, but for anyone affected by abuse and violence. And, according to the statistics, this is a frighteningly large number of individuals.

The Associated Press reports almost a million American women are victims of domestic violence every year. So, one can only imagine how limiting this statistic really is. It does not include the families of the vic-

tims, who most certainly feel the pain involved in the aftermath of abuse. It does not involve the children who are witnesses and victims of abuse themselves. And, although stereotypes of abuse often ignore the possibility of such cases, it does not include men who are abused by their partners.

As a spokesperson for the Social Security Administration said in the AP report, the plan recognizes the many faces of abuse.

"We wouldn't discriminate [against male victims of abuse]," she said.

Women's groups, and even law enforcement agencies, have rallied behind the usually politically-uninvolved Gore and applauded the plan.

Americans can only hope this plan is put into action and effectively enforced. If it is, society, and especially government officials, have made the first real step toward putting victims first.

This is an issue that deserves bipartisan support.

In an increasingly violent society, Americans must stand up as a united front and say no to violence. Americans must send a message that violence and abuse will not be tolerated. This plan is the first sounding board for such a message. And despite anyone's political ideology or party politics, Gore's plan should be applauded.

It is time for Americans to put victims first, and supporting this plan is an effective way to start. It is a way to honor those who have succumbed to domestic violence and the families who have felt their loss. It is a way to say their deaths are not forgotten. It is also a way to say Americans will do everything they can to prevent another person from becoming a statistic.

Mandy Cater Graeber is an English graduate student.

Houston police shooting reveals gross misconduct

There is no way to validate the death of Pedro Oregon Navarro. No place can be found that might lessen the tragedy of the final minutes of his life.

Oregon, 22, a Mexican national, was in his Houston apartment on the morning of July 12 when members of the Houston Police Department gang task force illegally entered searching for drugs. Officer David Barrera and his colleagues chased Oregon into his bedroom, kicked in the door and shot Oregon 12 times.

Officers claim Oregon drew a gun and they fired in self-defense. After a grand jury declined to indict them, HPD fired the six officers involved in the death of Oregon. The officers say they will appeal the dismissals.

The question in the aftermath of the shooting, the grand jury investigation and the firings is were the officers acting reasonably on the morning of July 12?

The answer is no.

According to the investigation report filed by HPD internal investigators, the sequence of events leading to Oregon's death began the night of July 11 when Officers Jose Herrada and James Willis stopped a vehicle near Oregon's apartment. One of the passengers, Juan Baxter, admitted to drinking alcohol and smoking crack cocaine and was arrested. However, the officers offered to release Baxter if he would serve as a drug informant.

This offer violated departmental rules stating intoxicated people are not to be used as informants.

The task force proceeded without approval from the narcotics division, another policy violation.

Baxter led the officers to Oregon's apartment. Oregon opened the door and the officers burst inside. Oregon was running down the hallway, with the officers in pursuit when Barrera's gun accidentally discharged, knocking another officer to the ground. The officers, believing Oregon had fired at them, began to open fire.



MANISHA
PAREKH

Thirty-three shots were fired, that night in Oregon's apartment, 12 hitting Oregon. He was shot nine times in the back. Forensic investigators deduced those nine shots were fired while Oregon was lying face-down on the floor.

A man is shot 12 times in his apartment, by six officers during an illegal and unsuccessful drug raid, and the officers claim they were totally within their rights.

With officers like this, who needs criminals?

Even if one overlooks the numerous times the officers violated HPD policy, the numerous federal and state statutes that were trampled and considers the officers' fear for their lives, there is one thing that cannot be ignored.

Pedro Oregon Navarro was shot in the back nine times.

How many times does a man need to be shot before he is considered harmless? Supporters of the six officers point out in the heat of the moment, six officers can fire a lot of bullets in an attempt to secure an individual.

That is true. The safety of the officers must be a consideration. But what kind of danger must there have been for Barrera to fire off his first magazine of 14 rounds, then pause, reload and empty another magazine.

Certainly not the kind of danger posed by a man lying on the ground, defenseless.

Oregon left behind two children when he was brutally killed. He also left a reminder that police brutality is not something that disappeared after Rodney King.

Perhaps American society is to blame for Oregon's death. In the overzealous "War on Drugs," society has lost sight of what we are fighting for: a safe America.

Perhaps America should rethink its plan of action and realize the war on drugs is becoming a war on the citizens and their rights.

Whether the officers or society is at fault, it is too late for Oregon.

Rest in peace, Pedro Oregon Navarro. Those who were left on Earth can only dream of it.

Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology and journalism major.

Public evangelist fails to persuade Aggie audience

He has been described as overzealous, fanatical, amusing, lucky and blessed by God.



CHRIS
HUFFINES

To paraphrase an old joke, put five Aggies in a room and ask them about Tom Short, and six opinions will emerge.

One of these opinions is, no matter what benefits Tom Short brings to this campus, his presence needs to be rethought by the entire student body.

There are three general points of view concerning Short's visits. There is the viewpoint of Christian doctrine, the viewpoint of students who go to watch Short and the rest — the vast majority — of the student body.

From the viewpoint of Christian doctrine, there is absolutely nothing wrong with Short's presence on campus. As the Great Commission — Christianity's "Prime Directive" — clearly states, Christians should go out into the world and attempt to win converts, be it nearby or at the uttermost ends of the earth.

Short is simply fulfilling the mandates of his religion. This is as natural as a Zen Buddhist med-

itating, a Muslim praying towards Mecca or Egyptians building amazingly large, stone pyramids.

However, the viewpoint of those students in attendance at Short's open-air sermons is more sharply divided.

Penny Appleton, a junior animal science major and President of the A&M Christian Fellowship, the organization which invites Short to campus, said Short is an excellent speaker who speaks the truth straight out of the Bible, which is what AMCF is aiming for. Appleton also said Short's ministry provides an excellent learning experience for students.

"We [AMCF] think it's a good opportunity for different groups to come together and learn from each other," she said.

On the other hand, many students do not support Short. Mike Pishner, a junior industrial distribution major, said he thinks that although Short says he exemplifies tolerance and respect for other's religions, his actions do not reflect his words.

"Tom has told me that Catholics pray to idols, and because of this and other misnomers, I'm going to Hell," Pishner said.

The rest of the student body does not seem to care. In a not-entirely scientific survey of over a dozen students passing through

the Academic Plaza where Short preaches, none expressed any interest in him. Only students who had made a point of going to listen to Short seemed to care at all about him or his message.

And so, of the students who care enough to go listen to Short, many believe he is the next-best thing to the second coming, and the others would not give him a hot drink on his way to hell.

So, why then is the University allowing this man to come and speak? He obviously has the right to, under the First Amendment, but what good does he do that cannot be done in another location, with less grief to the student body?

The problem with Tom Short is he so polarizes the student body that, many times, rational discussion of religion is nearly impossible. The middle ground, represented by those students who do not care about Short's sermons, is absent. Short is only preaching to either the choir or deaf ears.

While Short does provide a select few students, less than one percent of the student body, the opportunity to discuss religion, the more than 99 percent of students who are unaware or are ignoring Short are not being served. Giving Short such a public venue implies Short is serving a significant portion of campus, not the

bare hundreds he currently does.

These few can argue to their hearts' content in Rudder Auditorium, or in any of the larger lecture halls on campus. Short does not have to be in the Academic Plaza. He is only there to draw in the public, something that apparently does not happen.

Short's presence in the Academic Plaza implies he has the support of the University. The Plaza, with the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross and the Academic Building rising behind it, is the site of one of A&M's most sacred traditions — Silver Taps.

The Plaza is also centrally located on campus. There is not a better location. Of course, the University does not even fund AMCF, or any other political or religious group. However, the appearance remains, especially when other equally important groups' speakers are relegated to lecture halls and meeting rooms.

It is time for AMCF, the student body and the University to rethink Tom Short's presence at Texas A&M. His continued public sermons are not doing any good to the vast majority of students. There is no use in masquerading them as if they were.

Chris Huffines is a junior speech communication major.

MAIL CALL

Feminism fights for equality

In response to Corrie Cauley's Nov. 4 column:

I do suppose the women's movement does appear unladylike — if you buy into gender roles.

As a woman and a feminist, my appearance does not define my femininity. A large part of feminism is breaking stereotypes and knowing it is OK to be feminine while wearing pants and short hair.

Feminism is about equality. This includes the ability to choose whether or not the man or woman will stay home with children, the ability to be president or the ability to wear pants.

Maternity leave may be shorter than in the '60s. That is not be-

cause women's organizations want women to leave their children, it is because corporations will not pay for long leaves. In fact, feminists fight for longer maternity leave.

It is coincidental that juvenile crime is higher with the decline of the nuclear family. It is also coincidental that juvenile crime is rising as men play smaller roles in their children's lives. Many children with stay-at-home mothers are still involved in crime.

If it was not for feminism women would not be at A&M, would not be able to stay at home with their children, would not be able to vote, would not have careers and would not be writing for *The Battalion*.

Jennifer Woodson
Class of '01
Accompanied by 27 signatures

Attire does not define femininity

In response to Corrie Cauley's Nov. 4 column:

The idea that a woman must sacrifice her femininity to be a feminist is untrue. One can be both.

Cauley's narrow definition of femininity as donning skirts and wearing long hair suggests a woman wearing a short hairstyle and slacks is masculine. Femininity is not solely defined by a woman's attire — if it can be defined at all.

The view that women should remain uninvolved in politics is reactionary and popular with the Sul Ross generation. It seems Cauley wants to return to the ante-bellum South where African-Americans were enslaved in shackles and

women were bonded by the shackles of silence rendering them beautiful ornaments placed on a pedestal, only to be seen and not heard.

Victoria Smith
Class of '98

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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