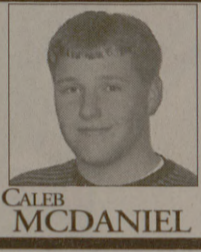


## Free Speech vs. Academic Honesty

### Boston University files suit against Internet sites in order to stop the sale of term papers

Last year, Boston University filed a lawsuit against several companies that sell custom-written term papers to students over the Internet. The accused companies have speciously claimed the mantle of the Constitution to cloak their misdeeds, arguing that the First Amendment protects their enterprise.



CALEB MCDANIEL

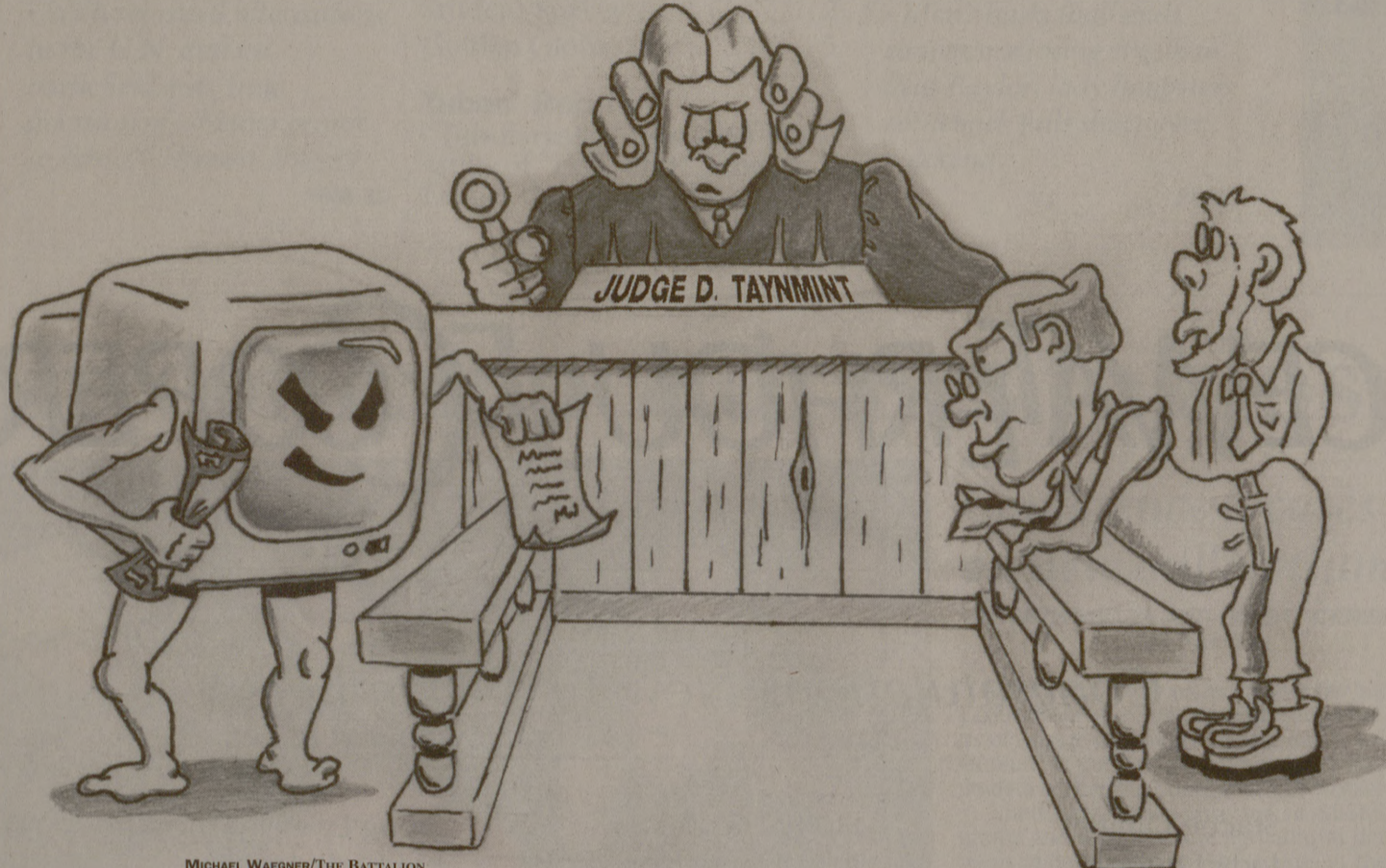
The academic community, however, would unite in denouncing this ploy to protect plagiarism with patriotism. The freedom of speech does not entail a freedom of fraud.

This litigation is Boston University's second attempt to obtain a court injunction against Internet sites like The Paper Store and A-1 Research, which provide both prewritten and custom-crafted term papers to buyers. The suit faced a setback last semester when Judge Patti Saris, a United States District Court judge, dismissed the case because of technical legal minutiae. Nevertheless, the counsel for BU plans to pursue the case despite this development, and the defending companies have welcomed the chance to argue the free-speech dimensions of the case before an appellate court.

Robert B. Smith, associate general counsel for BU, stated the plaintiff's position clearly in a December statement to the *New York Times*. "It's a matter of academic integrity to us," he said.

Barton Lowe, the owner of one of the companies being sued, also made his feelings about BU's effort plain. Lowe said "it's a flagrant violation of the Constitution."

Defendants like Lowe, however, have falsely framed the question as a battle be-



MICHAEL WAGNER/THE BATTALION

tween academic integrity and the Bill of Rights. The issue really revolves around the nature of illegal business practices.

Despite the companies' fervent claims that they are no more than innocent research institutions, it is clear they are up to no good.

The Web page for The Paper Store claims the "intended purpose of our papers is that they be used as study aids

or as models of what term paper should look like."

However, the most lucrative part of their racket is custom-written papers, and BU raises the legitimate question of why students just seeking "models" would need papers tailored to their individual requests.

Are we really to believe that a student requesting a custom paper about the in-

fluence of the 12th chromosome on fingernail development in the third month of fetal growth for fraternal twins in mothers with a calcium deficiency was just unsure about the proper format for footnotes? Perhaps these "research institutions" should do a little research on how to tell more believable lies.

A sting operation conducted by BU lawyers revealed these bold disclaimers

to be entirely spurious. An attorney posing as a student contacted several Internet sites looking for an English paper, making it very obvious that she intended to plagiarize the work.

All of the companies provided the product. Many came complete with a title page printed for the particular course and student who placed the order. So much for only selling "model" papers.

But despite the obvious aid, the companies provide to academic dishonesty, their Constitutional case is presently strong. Because freedom of speech and fraud have not been extensively defined in cyberspace, scam artists and seedy connivers can often wiggle through the eyes of needles on the back of the First Amendment.

Therefore, the courts and lawmakers of the Information Age can no longer allow legal loopholes to excuse patently fraudulent practices. They should take this opportunity to staunchly oppose the threat these companies pose to intellectual property on the Internet.

The Founding Fathers gave wide latitude to the freedom of speech, but our wig-wearing forbearers were not online. They could not have foreseen that highway robbery would eventually become a cyber-crime or that one day Information Superhighway bandits would use the Bill of Rights to sell plagiarized term papers on Constitutional Law.

Now, in their stead, we must take the measures necessary to prevent the freedom of speech from becoming a vehicle for legal deceit. Rather than protecting the free-flow of information, as they disingenuously claim, these companies devalue information by making it cheap capital.

Free speech should be protected, but swindled speech should be prosecuted.

Caleb McDaniel is a sophomore history major

## 60-60-60 Bill deserves full support of Faculty Senate, student body

Over the Fall 1998 semester, Student Senate spent a great deal of time and energy debating and working on the so-called "60-60-60 Bill."

The bill would expand the number of Q-drops allotted to students to four. Instead of all our Q-drops being available over the entire course of a student's career, the proposed measure would allow the first two Q-drops to be used during a student's first 60 hours, and the remaining ones would be put into effect after a student completed 60 hours.

The third 60 in the trio would extend the Q-drop deadline from the 50th class day, is the University's current policy, to the 60th class day.

This week, the Faculty Senate approved the portion of the plan that would expand the number of Q-drops and how they would be distributed to students.

This is a step in the right direction for both the student and Faculty Senates. Early in their careers, students are told that if they need to drop a class they should do it during their underclassman years. So when the instance arises that this poor misinformed soul hits an academic snag, they run to their advisors office and get those fifty blue forms of freedom.

However, they did not ratify the portion of the plan that would allow the Q-drop period to be extended to the 60th day of class.

In a story that appeared in yesterday's *Battalion*, Naomi Fackler, a College of Veterinary Medicine senator, said the current 50-day period offers students plenty of time to decide whether or not to drop classes.

"Fifty days is plenty of time. It is much longer than most schools offer," Fackler said.

This may be true when students are underclassmen and have taken a test or two and maybe taken a few quizzes in calculus or written two papers for their introductory political science class, but for upperclassmen the same does not always ring true.

Many upperclassmen, especially those majoring in liberal arts can testify to the fact that more than half their grade is still outstanding after the Q-drop period has expired.

It is fully possible for a student to only have taken one midterm exam and still have 75 percent of final grade outstanding.

Many students can identify with the 20 page paper, worth a third of their grade that is not due until the last day of class, or the group project that could mean the difference between a C and a

While students should have the courage and moral character to stand up and take a bad grade if they deserve it, whether it be through lack of preparation or just flat out not showing up to class.

The Faculty Senate should realize that sometimes the partner in a group project announces at

the last minute that he or she did not do their work, or that the paper the student slaved over for three months and toiled on with every ounce of being they could muster gets returned with so much red, it looks a sheet of Mao's *Little Red Book*.

Many schools across the nation do not have a restriction on the number of classes that can be dropped unless it is in a student's major.

An extended Q-drop period would also in a limited way benefit faculty members as well.

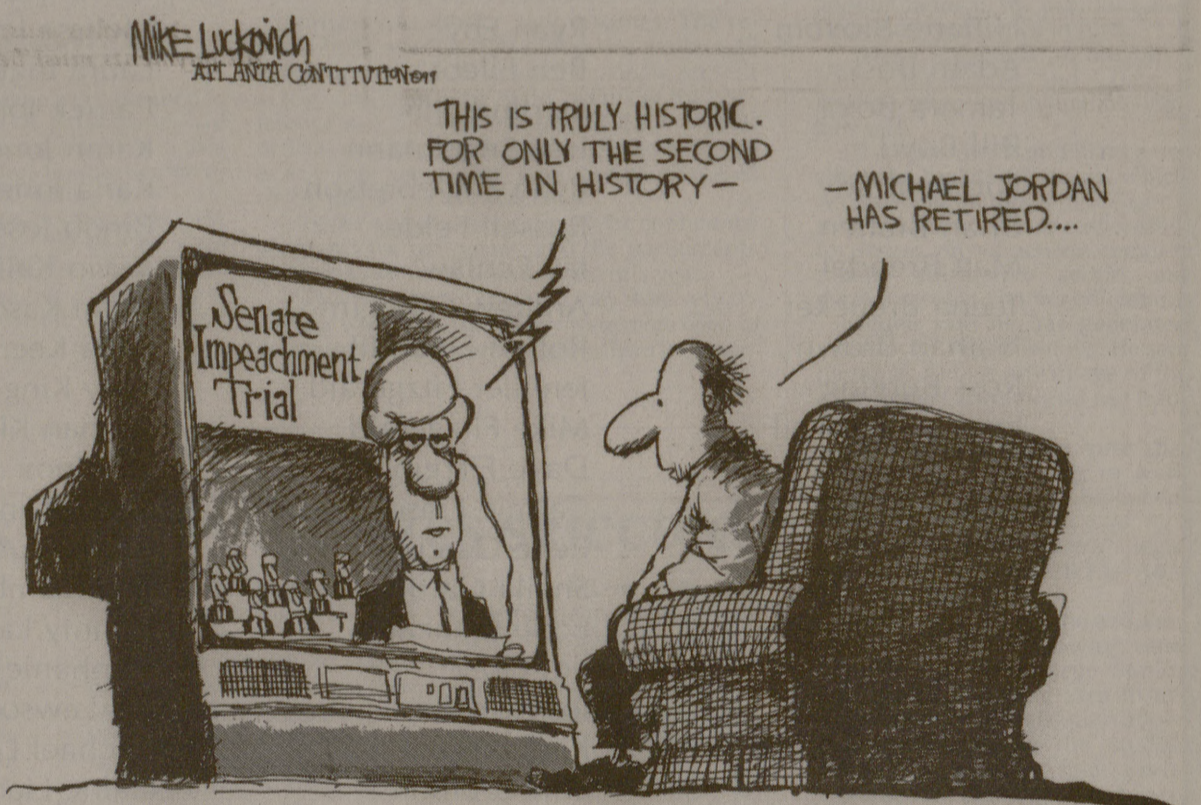
If a student thinking about registering for a class sees six F's out of a class of 40 students they probably will protect their GPA and look elsewhere, but if the number of F's is lower, or the ratio of A's and B's is higher thanks to the number of failing students that dropped the course, then registration for that professor might increase.

Not to say that professors necessarily care about grade ratios, but when looking for tenure, every little bit helps.

Aaron Meier is a senior political science major.



AARON MEIER



MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

### MAIL CALL

#### Aggies should be more considerate

In response to H. Green's Jan. 21 Mail Call

As Aggies, we respect traditions and the legacy of those who came before us. We are also friendly. When you see a visitor walking on the MSC grass, you can either scream at them like a wife-beating white-supremacist in *The Jerry Springer Show* or you can catch up to that person on the pavement, introduce yourself with a big "howdy" and discreetly explain the tradition of the MSC grass and the Aggies it represents.

H. Green was our guest and didn't know the rules. After reading his letter, it is obvious that he is humiliated, defensive and still doesn't know why MSC grass is sacred. Let's do a better job in the future Aggies.

Jeff Miller Class of '98

#### Lottery still not entirely Satanic

In response to C. Gregory Dukes' Jan. 20 Mail Call

I would like to thank Mr. Duke for pointing out to people across Texas just how important Satan's role is in purchasing lottery tickets. However, I

would also like to point out that the Lottery Commission has failed to heed the call of its most loyal supporters: members of the Church of Satan.

Twice I have requested from my representative that he push the Lottery Commission to allow the number "666" to be valid in the Texas lottery.

This would make the whole numbers 1 through 50 and 666 valid lottery selections. We are not trying to introduce pi, e, or Planck's constant as valid selections, just a simple integer to reflect our support of the lottery. The only concession the commission has given is the Pick 3 selection of 666.

Unfortunately, the earning from this said drawing is not adequate to support our unholy cause.

I do disagree with Mr. Duke's viewpoint on poor stewardship. Satan has rewarded me with financial gain only because of my stewardship. I donate most of what I win to the worthwhile foundations of The Church of Scientology, The Ayn Rand Foundation and NORML.

Through these selfless deeds and the occasional chicken and/or goat sacrifice, Satan has given me the ability to pick some winning numbers.

I realize that this is a gift from a higher (or lower) power and I return to Him what he has given because we all know just how important money is to both

God and Satan. They have to pay bills too, don't they?

I am glad someone has finally realized just how important Satan's role is in the lives of lottery players everywhere. It's about time we got the respect we so rightfully deserve.

Granville Wright Class of '97

#### Aggies should be more considerate

In response to H. Green's Jan. 21 Mail Call

"...Oh say does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

As our respected and revered song of liberty rings true, it was written out of respect for those who have died fighting for that freedom we all deserve and, in fact, have. Texas A&M's Memorial Student Center is a dedication to those men who have died and is our way of remembering their sacrifice of life and liberty. It is an outrage that anyone, regardless of their alma mater, would offer that their right to "walk the shortest distance between two points" would somehow be superior to the student body's desire to re-

member our country's heroes.

Green obviously doesn't realize that the rights that he observes everyday are the result of the loss of lives of those soldiers, and yet he wants to reserve the "right" to be offended by the flagwaving attitude!

To refer to the Corps as a faction of Nazi Germany was not only off-color but a display of Green's own ignorance. My bider is off to the "pimp-faced little shave-head" that tried to uphold one of A&M's revered memorials. More students should act in like manner to protect what this country — and this University — holds dear.

David Clinkscales Class of '00 accompanied by 72 signatures

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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