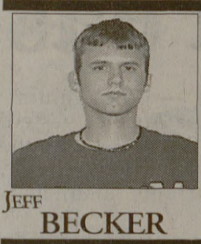


Opposites distract

University should implement profiling system to match roommates with similar interests



JEFF BECKER

roommates. The current pot-luck roommate assignments leave compatibility to blind chance.

If personality profiles were taken into consideration, students less likely would be assigned a nightmarish roommate.

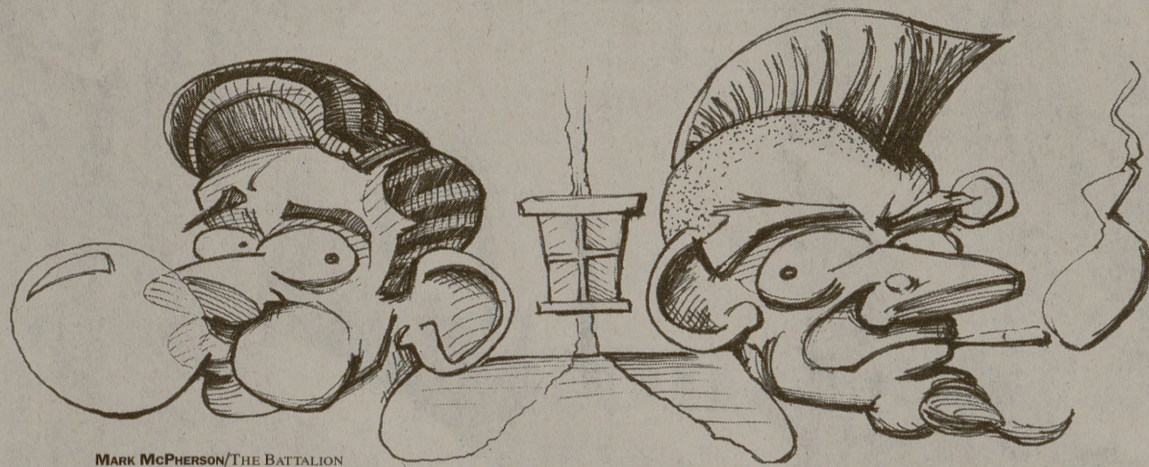
This is not to say that the plan would guarantee a compatible person or eliminate the chances of a lemon, but for students who just cannot cope with certain personality types, matching would be a welcome exercise.

If the University were to help students find roommates they are not going to throttle after a month, students would have a more pleasant, fulfilling stay on campus.

The early bird who just cannot stand the night owl would no longer have to put up with all the late-night antics performed by the insomniac in the next bed.

A health-nut leaf eater would not have to put up with the somewhat unpleasant aroma of the smoker's nicotine perfume.

Opponents of the system



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

might argue college life is about learning to put up with people, and this system would be an antagonist for unity and diversity.

Part of the college experience, they might say, is to meet new and different people who think and act differently than you.

The pot-luck system in place now forces people to come together and try to get along.

However, the proposed profil-

ing system would do no different. People who participated in the profiling would still be forced to get along with people from various backgrounds and interests. All the system would do is allow students to define certain characteristics that they would like to see in a roommate.

Besides, the personality matching would not detail everything about a person and try to

put long-lost twins together.

It would just give certain behaviors and habits about people that would help to create less tension in a close-quarters environment.

This system is not interested in profiling people's ethnic or religious history. It only intends to help people avoid having to live with others who have certain behavioral quirks they find annoy-

ing.

One of the problems with the UT plan is the public display of student's personal information on the Internet.

However, changes could be made to make this system more private. The student would only need to fill out a profile, and a computer should do the matching.

The system would not be difficult or costly to implement. In the housing application, there could be an option in addition to housing preference and roommate preference to use a profile to help choose a roommate.

The housing preference should take priority in the computer system, and the profile would be an added factor to the assignment process.

This kind of computer-aided roommate personality matching would be a great advantage to the housing assignment process and would help people to be less apprehensive about their college experience.

Jeff Becker is a sophomore computer engineering major.

COLLEGIATE ROUNDUP

from U-Wire editorial reports

Anti-drug fungus not worth risks

From the Michigan Daily at the University of Michigan.

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Officials in Florida are planning to risk the future of the state's agricultural economy in the name of eradicating marijuana.

Jim McDonough, the recently appointed head of Florida's Office of Drug Control, is planning to spread a fungus genetically engineered to kill marijuana over areas where the plant is suspected of being grown.

Is marijuana such a threat to the nation that it justifies recklessly interfering with nature? The only rational answer to this question, regardless of one's personal opinions about marijuana, must be a resounding "no."

Of course, Florida anti-drug officials deny that their plans are reckless at all and insist that the fungus will be rigorously tested before it is unleashed.

But history and common sense say otherwise.

According to the *New York Times*, the fungus, known as *Fusarium oxysporum*, belongs to a species of fungus that is already predisposed toward mutation, leaving many environmentalists to fear that the genetically engineered fungus may mutate itself and turn on a variety of plants besides the intended marijuana plant.

Some endangered plants, tomatoes, corn, peppers and flowers could all be vulnerable, and Florida's hot climate makes it an unusually ideal place for organisms to mutate.

Historically, Florida has had a long list of problems with the introduction of foreign species.

For instance, a fast-growing

Chinese vine called Kudzu was planted earlier in the century to stop erosion.

It has since claimed everything from houses to roadside throughout the South because it grows a foot a day.

The *Miami Herald* recently reported that farmers in Peru strongly suspect the United States' use of an anti-coca fungus species has led to the death of tangerine, yucca and banana crops.

U.S. officials disavow involvement in the death of the food crops but admit that they have aggressively researched biological herbicides to use against marijuana, coca and poppy plants.

It seems safe to say that only the most callous individual would even consider the plan McDonough is promoting.

It appears McDonough is willing to open what could be Pandora's box for Florida's farmers in exchange for political clout for himself and his supporters.

Such a plan would still sound ridiculous even if it were aimed at a destructive drug like crack cocaine.

No matter how one looks at it, the potential benefits of a society free of illicit drugs simply do not validate a course of action that could destroy a large part of a whole region's economy. ...

Hate crimes bill should be passed

From the Daily Collegian at Pennsylvania State University.

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The U.S. Senate recently passed a bill that would expand the power to prosecute criminals who commit hate crimes.

The bill adds sexual orientation, gender and disability to

the groups of people already protected under federal hate crime legislation.

Currently, the law only protects race, color, religion and national origin.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., was one of the prime sponsors of the bill many Democrats and Republicans both supported.

Due to recent hate crimes, including the dragging death of a black Texas man and the beating of a gay college student in Wyoming, the bill was approved without much debate.

The House of Representatives should follow the Senate's lead and pass the measure as well.

These hate crime laws are already in place, but this bill would extend the measure to protect even more groups maliciously targeted by criminals. It is time for the government to extend protection to include gender, sexual orientation and disability in order to be fair and just.

However, while the law is well-intentioned, lawmakers still appear to be overlooking the real problem — the hate that spurs these crimes.

Although hate crime laws make sentences longer and punish criminals for their heinous crimes, these acts of violence will continue to happen until hate-crime education and prevention become priorities.

Even though color and race are protected under federal hate crime legislation, the dragging death in Texas shows even laws cannot stop hate.

The government needs to find a way to stop hate before hate crimes can happen.

It needs to focus on taking action that does more than just add punishment after a tragic hate crime has already occurred.



MIKE LUCKOW/ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

MAIL CALL

Report on virginity tests untrue

In response to Chris Huffines' August 3 column.

I am an African, a South African, and I am a Zulu. I take offense at the spreading of lies about my continent, my country and my tribe.

For the same reason that Chris Huffines will not come out and say that Hispanic people are railway killers, I appeal to him to desist from spouting off such claptrap as he wrote about Zulus and virginity.

It is offensive, ignorant and sweeping. More importantly, though, it is a lie.

Velaphi Msimang
Graduate Student

French students respond to column

In response to Mark Passwaters' July 28 column.

Passwaters jumps from a disagreement with a newspaper about an insignificant topic to some sort of self-centered chauvinistic outrage, boasting about the dominant role and position of the United States this century.

While living in France, we helped American families to settle and make new friends. In Texas, we found very friendly people, and the same warmth can be found in France.

Passwaters paints a blatantly false image of France by giving the impression that the French hate Americans.

At a time when cultural diversity is one of the main goals of our University, his column was totally inappropriate and shows a lack of responsibility.

Victor Cheng
Henrik Roycourt
Marc Valls
Graduate Students

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:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

Marketing for horror film offers refreshing change from norm

Contrary to those annoying Sprite commercials, "You are everything."

Just ask the directors and marketing gurus behind *The Blair Witch Project*.

In these days of Burger King sunglasses and Jar Jar Binks hand puppets, it's refreshing to see Hollywood taken to school by two rookie filmmakers.

The mock-documentary follows three young filmmakers who vanish in the woods near Burkittsville, Md., as they track a 200-year-old legendary witch.

After earning nearly \$30 million this past weekend, the film has now grossed more per screen in its first official weekend than *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* did in its first weekend.

Already making 100 times what it cost, the low-budget movie's secret of success is a creative marketing strategy intertwined

with a premeditated image of believability — something Hollywood has lacked for too long.

Instead of bombarding the public with the usual barrage of high-priced commercials and fast-food gimmicks, filmmakers Eduardo Sanchez and Daniel Myrick chose an alternate angle of promotion: the blurring of fiction and reality.

This formula has proven to be enticing enough to a public that has grown tired of the high-priced blockbuster film with the even higher-priced hype that comes with it. *The Blair Witch Project* was purposefully kept out of the traditional motion picture spotlight, adding to the mystery of the film. Apparently, it worked.

"We never lied to anyone, but we tried to make it scarier by creating an element of truth in the story," marketing director at Artisan Entertainment Amorette Jones said in an Associated Press (AP) article.

Sanchez and Myrick have used the Internet to create the legend of the Blair Witch with a Website.

The homepage acts as a serial about the witch, allowing Web surfers to follow the story through biweekly installments of information.

Never before has the Internet played such an integral part in a film's promotion.

In effect, this ingenious approach created the demand for a movie long before any semblance of a script existed.

Eight million hits later, the public stands primed for the actual movie.

The Blair Witch Project and its image of believability were further promoted

by a Sci-Fi Channel Unsolved Mysteries-styled documentary featuring supposed interviews with family and friends of the film's missing characters.

Neither the Website nor the Sci-Fi Channel special ever explicitly state the story is fic-

tion, leaving many of its fans wondering if it is real.

AP reported that some believers have organized search parties to look for the fictional missing characters, and others venture into the Maryland woods with hopes of seeing the fictional witch.

"The advertising is like a companion piece to this film," Jones said in an AP article. Whatever the advertising may be, it is effective.

Tom Borys, president of ACNielsen EDI Inc., which tracks the motion picture industry, told the Associated Press *The Blair Witch Project* has the potential to become the most profitable movie ever made.

Critics speculate that it will easily surpass \$100 million in ticket sales. Not bad for a movie shot in only eight days.

The Blair Witch Project sends a much-needed message to Hollywood that movies do not need a Jar Jar Binks to succeed.

Ryan Garcia is a senior journalism major.

