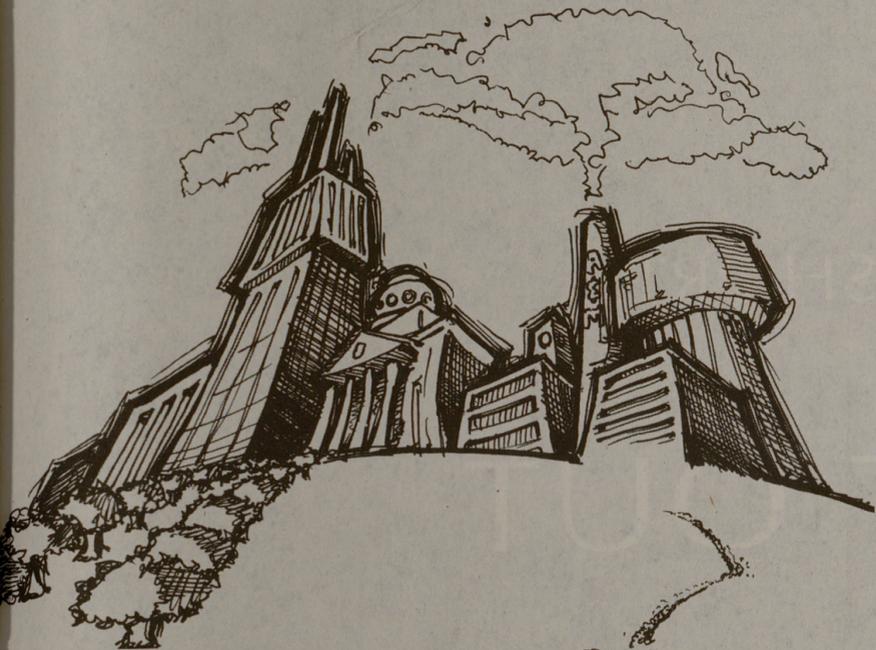
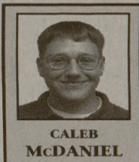


THE STUDENTS ARE COMING!

Growing enrollment rates call for creative educational policies



This week, campus will be shocked from its summer lull into the bump and bustle of the fall semester, bringing to remembrance the one fact never far from an alert Aggie's mind: "Whoa. This school is big."



CALEB MCDANIEL

But Aggies are not the only ones around the country who are drawing this somewhat obvious conclusion.

The ballooning increase in college enrollment around the entire country carries greater implications than the simple but substantial irritation of moving onto a finite campus with a seemingly infinite number of students.

A study released last Thursday by the U.S. Department of Education predicts "enrollment will jump 10 percent in the next 10 years and an increasing majority of college students will be full-time students."

"Enrollment is projected to increase by 1.5 million between 1999 and 2009 and comes at a time when many colleges and universities are already at full capacity and becoming more selective in their admissions processes," the report said.

Now is the time to confront the coming problem of overcrowding in our nation's universities.

To keep up with the growing population in the higher education system, policymakers at both the governmental and institutional levels must act to deal effectively with the waves of students arriving on campuses around the country.

First, increasing numbers of students pose unique challenges for university administrators.

The demands of larger student bodies must be met by able leadership from school officials.

The first concern of administrators must be to accommodate the influx of more students without lessening the quality of their education.

Technological and human resources must be enhanced to serve an expanding base of student consumers.

Texas A&M has already accepted this challenge in writing by outlining the various steps of Vision 2020, a strategic initiative to meet the special needs of the coming growth of Aggieland in the next two decades.

But the more difficult task for school administrators is the one most frequently overlooked.

While enlarging resources to serve a larger clientele, it will become dangerously easy to neglect the individual attention students need and deserve.

As registration rolls lengthen, recognizable student faces fade more and more into the blur of computerized bar codes and identification numbers.

Avoiding this depersonalizing process is the more intangible but most important chore for university officials.

They must endeavor, at A&M and elsewhere, to see the trees in spite of the forest.

But the increasing size of higher education also carries policy challenges for lower education.

The swelling tide of college students is evidence of overcrowding throughout

the nation in primary and secondary schools.

According to the Department of Education, record-setting numbers of students are now attending high school and record-breaking numbers of high school students are applying for college.

The increased demand for a short supply of college spaces will force universities to become more selective than ever in choosing applicants for admission. To be competitive for these positions, high school students will need quality preparation for college.

It would fall then to the government to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of good preparation.

If the public education system is left to languish in its current shambles, the selective spots in universities will begin to go exclusively to students fortunate enough to attend an upscale, resource-rich high school.

To prevent this unfair scenario, policymakers must revitalize poorer school districts and inner-city high schools to give all of America's young people a fair shot at a college degree.

Accomplishing this goal costs money, but the expense is to be expected. University tuition is climbing along with enrollment figures, and to keep up, high schools will have to spend more money on making their students competitive and providing the needy with grants and financial aid opportunities.

However, in this time of great prosperity, there are few causes to which Americans can more conscientiously devote their largesse.

Now is the time to match growing enrollment in high schools and universities with growing educational funding.

Peak numbers of college students may make it harder to find a parking space to move in at campuses around the country, but this annoyance is petty compared to the monumental challenges facing educational officials.

The enrollment boom will require thoughtful, progressive responses from administrators and policymakers alike. But if these reactions are tailored to ensure students still receive individual attention in higher education and equal opportunity in lower education, the boom will prove bigger is better.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

Freshmen should balance academics, traditions

The traditions of Texas A&M are what make, and sometimes break, this school.

They give everyone something in common — traditions are the unifying force between the freshman willing to push and the senior who is willingly making him push, let's say — but they can also be divisive and overshadowing in their militancy.

Each year, increasing amounts of lip service are rendered in the name of tradition, which is good.

However, taken to the extreme they steal the spotlight away from many other great aspects of A&M. There are more than a few opportunities that regularly go unnoticed, but the zealot-like support of tradition never goes without mention.

The varied traditions are treated like things akin to religious experiences, where Fish Camp counselors are the outreach ministry teaching freshmen "the way" and HowdyAgs are the fundamentalists trying to save the souls of all those non-Howdy proclaiming Aggies with hundreds of maroon stickers.

The two groups succeed in their fight, because whether students are worshipping at the burning altar of football victory (Bonfire) or joyfully singing a meaningless but altogether pleasing refrain at sports events (Hullabaloo, caneck, caneck), they all know traditions are good and any other behavior is bad. Bad, bad, bad.

Watching a football game, an innocent spectator would hardly think that



BEVERLY MIRELES

the convulsing, screaming, wildcat-crazed person in front of him actually came to A&M for the serious academic opportunities and not just for the chance to "score" when A&M scores.

But that is the simple truth of it. Many people, most of whom love the admittedly inane traditions, came here not to cheer, but to learn.

Having a great football team, as well as amazing baseball, soccer and volleyball teams, was just a bonus.

Nevertheless, for the number of Aggies who came here in search of a positive learning environment, few are offended that Aggies are viewed as sophomoreic, tradition-loving, innovation-hating fanatics.

In fact, to the annoyance of some, the whole campus seems to celebrate this myth.

Academics at A&M getting overshadowed by traditions is apparently acceptable, as long as outsiders realize the Aggie football team is really going to slaughter t.u. this year.

Every school has an image and student experiences are invariably molded by that image. But the students can also change this and pull the image toward a different direction. That does not mean anyone wants a complete slate-wiping on traditions.

Far from it. It would be a hard task indeed to find any person who would admit to wanting to attend a school where you can walk on just any grass or a school where there is no over-bred American Collie to signal the end of class with a bark.

One phrase that is currently thrown around goes like this: "From the outside looking in, you can't understand it, and from the inside looking out, you can't explain it."

It is true enough, because at the first football game, almost every Aggie will yell and scream and wildcat their hearts out and most on-lookers will not understand why.

But there are a few things Aggies need to be able to explain to themselves, such as why such a thoughtless stereotype is so easily accepted.

As thousands of new freshmen enter into A&M, they have the chance to either mindlessly accept the traditions or to participate in them without losing a sense of why they actually came to A&M.

The traditions have been mainly good to A&M.

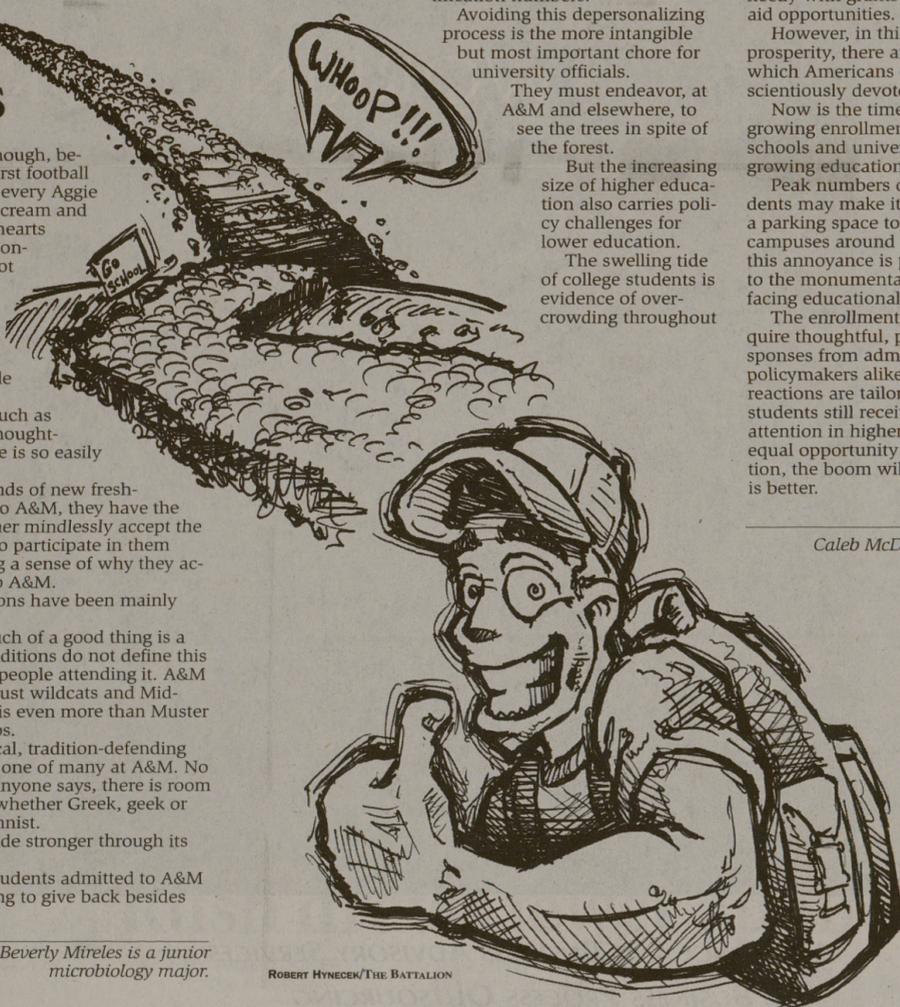
But too much of a good thing is a bad thing. Traditions do not define this school or the people attending it. A&M is more than just wildcats and Midnight Yells. It is even more than Muster and Silver Taps.

The fanatical, tradition-defending crowd is only one of many at A&M. No matter what anyone says, there is room for all kinds, whether Greek, geek or opinion columnist.

A&M is made stronger through its diversity.

The new students admitted to A&M have something to give back besides "howdy."

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.

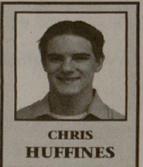


ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Successful students must adapt to unique demands of college life

Going to school is not fun, learning is not fun and dealing with people can be an ordeal. Admittedly, if people were capable of knowing everything without having to go somewhere to learn it from annoying professors, life would be a whole lot simpler and happier. However, that just will not happen. It is time to simply accept it and put forth the best face possible on this situation.

As every senior and a few juniors know, there are ways not



CHRIS HUFFINES

only to survive in the college environment, but also ways to thrive and prosper.

While they may not be as emotionally gratifying as a fight to the death between your roommate and your least favorite professor, these techniques and tips are what separate successful students from the wannabes.

Three things are especially overlooked by a vast majority of students. But those who learn that college is not high school, that they are adults and that learning and knowing are different go on to become successful people. Those who fail to appreciate these facts do not.

The first and most important thing to realize is that college is

not high school. In high school, there is a difference between an 89.9 and a 100. In college, both grades equal a 4.0 in the class.

In high school, the teachers know students' names. In college, the professors do well to remember their own names.

One other difference between high school and college is that in college the stupid people have mostly been weeded out. While universities are not made up of 100 percent intellectuals, by and large the losers have all gone to the showers. College is the big leagues.

The second thing to realize is college students are adults. While this distinction is, in the case of some students, a disservice to the

gene pool, students are nonetheless adults. Adults can drink themselves sick all weekend, if they are willing to go to class Monday hung over. Adults can do all sorts of stupid things, if they are willing to pay the price. Similarly, adults cannot make excuses for their behavior. If an adult takes a test hung over, the grade is his or her fault. The buck stops there.

Too often, students do not act the part of adults. They skip class, do not do the assignments, generally slack off and then place the blame for bad grades anywhere but on their own shoulders.

Finally, students must realize there is a difference between learning and knowing. Any putz

can know the facts and figures long enough to spit them back out for a test or a paper.

But to learn something is to understand. Learning is to so thoroughly enmesh oneself with an idea that forgetting it in the real world becomes as unimaginable as cutting off one's own hand.

Knowing a subject requires some work, work that must be put in again after the information is forgotten. Learning a subject requires more work, but after that, the information is as accessible and useful as a hand or a foot.

While some say that a good student learns everything, a successful student knows he or she cannot put forth that much effort

and still have time for eating, sleeping and leaving the room. Learning one's major is required. Just knowing unimportant subjects is good time management. Where the line is drawn is up to the student, but never be afraid to learn everything possible and never be afraid to just get the grade when time is short.

College is more than a souped-up high school. College is more than a 16-week kegger. College is more than "the other education." It is a happy median between the three, and new students as well as old ones should embrace every aspect of this life.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.