Entrepreneurship classes needed

ELIZABETH KOHL

Despite the good standing of the Lowry Mays College of Business and its well-qualified and capable teaching staff, Texas A&M's business programs fail to provide an undergraduate degree plan that would promote the entrepreneurial skills that have so visibly benefited many college graduates, especially over the past 10 years.

Currently offering undergraduate degrees in accounting, finance, information systems, marketing and management, the College of Business has created a solid base for its undergraduate students to enter the corporate business world. It is time, however, for the University to advocate not only basic business skills, but also a degree plan that will educate Lowry Mays alumni on becoming pioneers in the business world, not just entering it.

Stanford University, an institution that has been promoting entrepreneurship for over a decade, encourages students to take risks and explore their creative ideas. The fruits of such efforts can be seen in Stanford graduates who have become founders of successful businesses such as Hewlett-Packard, Cisco Systems, Charles Schwab Corporation, Yahoo! and Gap Incorporated.

Looking a bit closer to home, A&M should take note of Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business. In addition to standard business degrees, the Hankamer School offers an undergraduate degree in entrepreneurship that focuses on the creative development and financing of a new venture. The core curriculum in the entrepreneurial degree plan promotes such concepts as the development of creative thinking skills, the formulation of business ideas and the creation of new business opportunities. In addition, these courses are supported by a well-rounded array of courses in finance, management and even accounting.

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The closest A&M undergraduate degrees come to fostering entrepreneurship is an elective option to the management degree titled "Entrepreneurship and Small Business." Though this may seem sufficient, this option only touches the tip of the iceberg of entrepreneurial knowledge.

In actuality, Management 461, Entrepreneur and New Ventures, is the only course in the undergraduate curriculum that really substantiates the title of the track. Comparing Baylor's and A&M's course catalogs, MGMT 461 is simply all nine of Baylor's entrepreneurial courses crammed into one.

Because the Lowry Mays College of Business already employs a well-qualified staff, it is perplexing that an entrepreneurship degree has not yet come to full fruition. The teaching staff of the business school is full of talented professors and lecturers who are capable of teaching courses such as Baylor's Entrepreneurship 3320, Venture Initiation. This course focuses on the start-up phase, opportunity recognition and the procurement of additional financing, and it could easily be incorporated into the curriculum currently offered by A&M's finance department.

In a decade in which Silicon Valley teams with young, Internet start-up millionaires and NASDAQ fuels a booming economy, A&M must offer courses that will teach students to take full advantage of their various opportunities. Expecting students to take additional several years to receive a master's in business before obtaining true entrepreneurial knowledge is like telling a talented 100-meter hurdler to just wait for the next Olympics.

Though conservatism may seem to pay off slowly and consistently in the business world, there are students who desire to test their own limits and the bounds of this thriving economy. The Lowry Mays College of Business needs to loosen its tie and offer these students the entrepreneurial education that will allow them to capitalize on their abilities immediately following graduation.

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Quoth the Raven: "Not guilty"

Ray Lewis innocent of murder, prosecutor at fault for trial travesty

LUKE McMAHAN

On the evening of Jan. 31, 2000, Ray Lewis was indirectly involved in a scuffle outside a Baltimore night club and sports bar that ultimately resulted in the slaying of Jacinth Baker and Richard Lollar. Lewis was then subsequently charged with capital murder.

Before that fateful evening, Ray Lewis was known for his stellar ability on the football field as a Baltimore Raven, for his good-hearted nature and for his generosity in sharing in his financial success amongst his family.

Today Lewis can boast another accomplishment. He has survived a vicious attack on his credibility, his reputation, his career and, most importantly, his life. Lewis was the victim of a terrible abuse of power brought on by Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard. Howard, whose legal methods resembled a boxer flailing his arms about in efforts to strike anything, set the stage for the fiasco that was the Ray Lewis murder trial by choosing to indict Lewis before sufficiently investigating the case.

Instead of having a legitimate desire to sort through evidence and arrive at the truth, prosecutors in this trial showed more interest in getting a conviction. When it was made apparent that Lewis was guilty of little more than distorting the truth in statements made to police during the aftermath of the murders, Lewis went from being the prosecutors' worst enemy to an ally in their quest for distorted justice. This time, the district attorney aimed for Reginald Oakley and Joseph Sweeting, two men with Lewis the evening of the crime.

The inconsistency in the prosecution's tactics was a direct result of their lack of credible evidence. John Bergendahl, an attorney for Sweeting, told jurors that in order to win a murder conviction, prosecutors presented a case that has changed shape several times. The logic used by Howard and his cohorts was that somebody, anybody, needed to be held accountable for the deaths of Baker and Lollar, who were fatally stabbed that night. To say that this is unprofessional conduct is an understatement.

In the early stages of the investigation, the prosecutors pressed hard for an indictment. They wanted to play the media card and use it to their advantage. Due to the notoriety of the National Felony League that NFL players have been receiving, Howard believed the coverage Lewis would receive would all be negative, facilitating a conviction. However, Howard's presentation of the case was flawed from the beginning, and his plan backfired almost immediately. As more and more evidence presented by Howard was debunked by the defense, suspicious glances refocused on the prosecution and its low-blow tactics. Realizing that its case comprised purely circumstantial evidence, the prosecution switched gears abruptly and presented Lewis with a settlement.

Lewis was to be exonerated of the killings and receive one year of probation in exchange for his testimony against Oakley and Sweeting. Part of the deal was Lewis' admission of guilt stating he had lied to police on previous occasions and resulting in a misdemeanor conviction of "obstruction of justice."

Howard presented Baker and Lollar as innocent victims who were chased, beaten and fatally stabbed by Oakley and Sweeting. Lewis, apparently in bad shape for a professional athlete, could not keep up and simply observed. Lewis painted a much clearer picture of what actually happened that night, including testimony that Oakley and Sweeting had knives and might have used them. The jury concluded after hours of testimony and cross examination that Baker and Lollar had initiated a verbal confrontation with Lewis and his companions. Baker and Lollar were also the first ones to use force that evening. During the argument, Baker hit Oakley over the head with a full bottle of champagne. What ensued was described by Lewis as "all hell breaking loose." The jury concluded that if Oakley did stab Baker and Lollar, he acted in self defense. They concluded the same for Sweeting, who, according to Lewis, was fighting two guys who were larger than he.

The reasoning was the same used in a playground fight — he who hit first got the time out.

By not allowing for sufficient investigation prior to the indictments, the over-zealous Howard damaged three lives instead of working to find the truth about the two that were lost.

In the aftermath of the three acquittals there is more injustice at work. Journalists are already stating that, despite Lewis's exoneration, he deserves the infamy that will no doubt plague him for some time because of his dishonesty with law enforcement officials. In the ignorant words of John Eisenburg, columnist for the *SunSpot*, a Maryland newspaper, "You can't plea-bargain infamy, a sanction that's going to stick with Ray Lewis a lot longer than a year's probation on a misdemeanor obstruction of justice charge." Eisenburg compares Lewis to John Rocker, Roberto Alomar and Latrell Sprewell, all of whom Eisenburg considers to be guilty of bringing a bad name to their respective sports.

Paul Howard should be blamed for these irrational thoughts, which will undoubtedly surface again. Not only has he ignored the phrase "innocent until proven guilty," he is promoting a new one: "Those charged will suffer the consequences of guilt even after being proven innocent."

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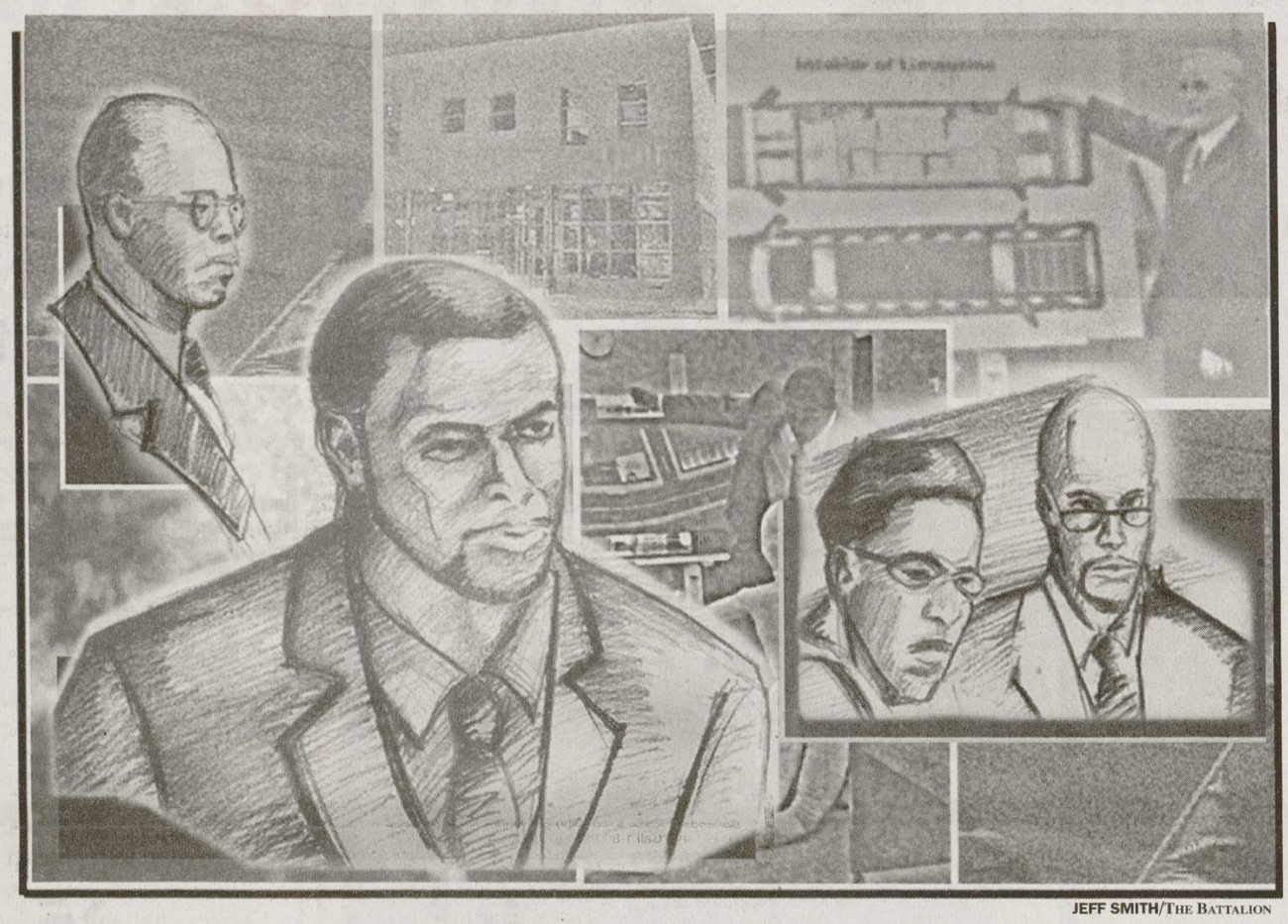

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Court rightfully puts cap on visitation rights suits

BRIEANNE PORTER

Thanks to a Supreme Court ruling, there is one less worry for future parents. Recently, the court ruled that a Washington state law allowing any adult to sue a parent for child visitation rights was unconstitutional and "breathtakingly broad." The case that prompted the review involved Gary and Jenifer Troxel, grandparents who wanted to visit their two granddaughters despite objection from the girls' mother, Tommie Granville Wynn.

The Supreme Court ruling was justified because this law allowed anyone, not only relatives, to sue for visitation rights, and this law was the "long arm" of the American government reaching into the American family unit.

The law allowing a third party to petition for visitation rights allowed the U.S. government to intrude into the personal lives of many citizens. The law did not say the parents had to be ruled unfit. It just said the court could decide who visits the child. The law was written with the belief that a court, rather than a parent, should decide what is in the best interest of the child.

In writing the majority opinion, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said that parents have the right to raise a child without government interference. The Supreme Court basically decided that if parents and grandparents cannot agree about visitation, the government is not going to step in. This ruling came as a blow for many grandparents in Washington, but it does not affect many states' grandparent visitation laws.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) completely agreed with the ruling. The ACLU sees it as a victory for the homosexual community. O'Connor also says that the American family is no longer a traditional family and that third-party involvement needs to be limited. According to the ACLU, this ruling will help nontraditional families when others, including grandparents, try to sue for visitation rights.

With many divorced and single-parent homes, grandparents are not usually in the picture. If the court allowed disgruntled grandparents, along with any other person, to sue for visitation rights, the government would become that evil big brother nobody wants. By letting the courts and government decide what is in the best interest of the child, they enter into the sacred domain of the personal life of the average citizen. In the opinion of the court, the 14th Amendment due process clause protects parents in the rearing of children and in deciding who may visit.

It is not the job of the government to raise children who have fit and willing parents. When the government is allowed to tell a parent who can and cannot visit that parent's child, American parents' rights will be nullified and the family unit will cease to exist. If the government takes away parents' rights to raise children as they see fit, it oversteps the bounds of its control.

When the founding fathers wrote the Constitution, they did not organize the government to be everyone's parent. They wrote it to protect the rights of the citizens so that overbearing government would not occur. For now, parents can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that meddling busy bodies, including grandparents, cannot sue to visit with their children.

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