

Wanted: able-bodied professors

Solution to university overcrowding is in hiring new professors, not decreasing enrollment



SUNNYE OWENS

For some time now, Texans have witnessed overcrowding of the state's public colleges and universities. According to Dr. Ed Walraven, coordinator of undergraduate advisory for the journalism department, the students who are currently trying to obtain a higher education are the children of the baby boomers generation, so there are many more young adults trying to get into college than in previous years. This trend is evident at Texas A&M. Sitting in crowded classrooms, many A&M students have noticed a severe shortage of faculty members.

To combat problems associated with overcrowding, some universities are reducing their enrollment. For example, the University of Texas-Austin (UT) recently stated that it will not accept any more students for the Spring 2001 semester.

However, cutting back student enrollment is not the answer to this serious problem. The state government needs to concentrate its efforts on improving higher education by expanding budgets for universities and colleges so that they can hire more faculty members. As Walraven said, "The solution to the over-

crowding problem is funding for faculty. The more funding, the more faculty for classes, the less overcrowding." The overcrowding problem at universities should be a top priority of the government.

Some members of UT's administration believe the answer to overcrowding is decreased enrollment for universities and colleges.

One way to reduce enrollment is to increase admission standards. However, this solution inevitably causes many problems. Where do admissions offices draw the line on who is accepted and who is rejected? If, for example, only the top-10 percent of a graduating class gets accepted, then universities will lose many outstanding students who fall below this incredibly high standard.

Furthermore, high school rankings often vary widely — a top-10-percent student at one school may have a much lower grade-point average than another top-10 student at a more competitive high school. If universities reduce enrollment by raising admissions standards, they risk losing many young adults with great potential.

Another way to decrease enrollment is to increase costs for higher education. A rise in tuition would mean that students who could originally afford college would be forced to drop out.

Likewise, many prospective students would not have the opportunity to obtain a higher education if tuition costs increase.

A&M administrators understand there is a problem with overcrowded classes. Accordingly, the school has created Proposition 17. Dr. William Perry, executive associate provost, said, "A&M is slated to hire 60 additional faculty members in the next five years to help combat the overcrowding problem." The funding for these new faculty members will come from the University's Available University Fund (AUF).

Many department heads agree that they do not want A&M to take UT's route and prematurely freeze enrollment for the coming semesters. According to Perry, the incoming freshman class this fall will total 6,700 new students. This is the same number of freshmen accepted for last year's fall semester and should not cause any major problems for A&M students.

While A&M and UT are each taking different routes to combat an increasing number of prospective students, the state legislature needs to recognize that the overcrowding of universities and colleges is a major problem that has an obvious and readily available solution. Decreasing enrollment and raising tuition costs will not solve the overcrowding problem.

These tactics will only create more problems for the universities; current students; and deserving, prospective students. The state legislature needs to allot more funds for universities and colleges so that more faculty members can be hired to match an increasing number of bodies in classes.

Sunnys Owens is a junior journalism major.

For some time now, Texans have witnessed overcrowding of the state's public colleges and universities. According to Dr. Ed Walraven, coordinator of undergraduate advisory for the journalism department, the students who are currently trying to obtain a higher education are the children of the baby boomers generation, so there are many more young adults trying to get into college than in previous years. This trend is evident at Texas A&M. Sitting in crowded classrooms, many A&M students have noticed a severe shortage of faculty members.



BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

New campaign finance law curtails PACs, helps voters



BRIENNE PORTER

Informed voters have one more tool in their arsenal of knowledge about political candidates and political action committees (PACs). A bill signed into law on July 1 by President Clinton ended the ability for PACs to run television, newspaper and radio advertisements without disclosing the source of the money for the advertisements.

Called "527" groups after the federal tax code that freed them from paying taxes on money contributed to them, PACs have been labeled advocacy groups. Traditionally, PACs have not been considered to contribute to electioneering, and therefore they did not have to report how they were spending their funds and where they obtained those funds.

However, many of these groups produce misleading propaganda-type commercials about candidates. With the new law, PACs that have more than \$25,000 in expense receipts will have to offer their financial records to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) four times a year. The law calls for the disclosure when the individual donations to the group are over \$200 or the group spends more than \$500 on campaign-related issues. By setting the bar so low, the law will affect almost every PAC. The new law also stipulates that a PAC must notify the IRS within 24 hours of its formation. The new law is a promising step in the fight for campaign finance reform and the fight to educate voters on who is responsible for these misleading advertisements.

This law will help new voters, including college students, become more informed about which PACs support which candidates by requiring the groups to disclose to the public which groups sponsor malicious, and often damaging, advertisements. That knowledge will allow voters to be better informed about how money they donate to PACs is spent and whether the PACs also support a candidate the voters do not. Furthermore, voters will know if a candidate they favor is gathering funds from industries or groups the voters do not support. With this new information, voters will be able to voice their political opinions more accurately when they cast their votes in November. The new law puts the power of information into

the hands of voters and takes it from special interest groups.

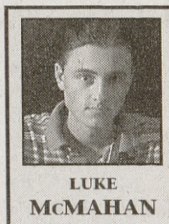
Even as relative novices to politics, college students do, however, make up one of the fastest-growing percentages of American voters. The importance of college students is evident in candidates' regular appearances on programs such as MTV's "Choose or Lose." With an increasing focus on college-age voters comes the added pressure for PACs to court the issues that affect young adults. By knowing how these groups operate, young voters can take a stand about many important issues. For example, they can let the candidates and the political system know that they will not stand for sensationalized advertisements that are produced by many PACs. This new law gives young voters an additional tool in working against the myth that college students like to party and do not care about the issues. By using the knowledge that is made possible by this new law, voters, including college students, can tell these groups and their backers that PACs do not control the outcome of the campaign. This law will force candidates to take a stand on the issues that affect college-age voters such as health care reform and national defense. Candidates will have to address topics without the hidden aid of PACs. By adding this pressure to candidates and PACs, voters will be better informed on candidates' true opinions, not propaganda pushed by the PACs.

Forcing PACs to inform the IRS and the public about their expenditures on candidates' campaigns gives the voters more power in the political system. Although the new law cannot completely clean the election process in America, it is a start. Talk of campaign finance reform has been floating around in both houses of Congress, but the new law is the first of its kind in more than two decades. The most important effect of the new law is the impact it will have at election time. If the voters use the additional knowledge made available by this law, campaign finance reform has an even better chance of becoming a reality. With the new law in hand, voters will fill out their election ballots in November with the confidence that their decisions are more informed than ever before.

The most important effect of the new law is the impact it will have during election time.

Brienne Porter is a sophomore chemical engineering major.

Libraries need to serve diverse patronage



LUKE MCMAHAN

Widespread use of the Internet in educational applications has made the public library all but obsolete. Although the Internet is accessible virtually everywhere, there is a problem with relying solely on cyberspace to educate the masses. The high cost of personal computers puts part of the population at a disadvantage.

Although most public schools and a number of libraries offer Internet access, those children and adults without the same tools in their homes are falling behind. Until everyone can be afforded Internet access, and even after that, public libraries must continue to maintain their status as a useful method of education and research.

Local libraries have been the subjects of some scrutiny lately because their programs cater to the Anglo population. An individual who does not speak English seeking to use the facilities of most Texas libraries would run into countless obstacles. Most libraries have no bilingual staff members, foreign-language material is extremely limited, and the amount of American works translated into foreign languages is minimal. All these drawbacks contribute to a less-informed community.

Spurred by the recent steps taken by the Houston Public Library, some libraries are redirecting their spending in efforts to make libraries more diverse.

The move to make libraries more useful for Latin Americans is underway here in Bryan-College Station. Both the Bryan and

College Station libraries boast a modest collection of Spanish titles including educational materials and fictional works native to Latin American countries. Entering both libraries, one will find pamphlets in both English and Spanish discussing educational programs sponsored by local organizations. Visiting both libraries, people can hear Spanish, Russian and German being spoken by patrons, giving the impression that the attempts to reach out to Bryan-College Station's continually diversifying population were well received.

The Houston Public Library has been the trendsetter in the effort of libraries to cater to the special needs of their ever-changing patronage. The library has hired bilingual staffers, set up programs for first-



KELSEY ROBERTS/THE BATTALION

time foreign users and purchased more American works translated into foreign languages. Houston Public Library spokesperson Sheryl Berger said, "It's not just a matter of buying more foreign-language materials. We have to address a variety of cultural issues. We need to devise outreach programs that will bring these people into the library."

Berger's comments are justified. Up to 40 percent of the Houston area's net growth in recent years has been due to the

arrival of immigrants. It is a logical conclusion that a similar proportion of these libraries' budgets should be spent on providing for these new residents.

For years, part of libraries' problem with catering to foreign-born patrons was the ineffective manner in which library officials obtained foreign-language material. A master list of available titles was sent to branch managers, and the managers would choose texts from the list. Many branch managers, however, were not Spanish speakers, and their knowledge of Spanish literature was limited. This allowed very little room for innovation.

"In some cases they were ordering blind. It was not acceptable at all in terms of good library practices," said Syla Zerchow, materials section coordinator for the Houston Public Library. Last year, Zerchow took a focus group of Spanish-speaking librarians to a book fair in Guadalajara, where they met with Latin American authors, publishers and distributors. Now that the Houston Public Library has made a pledge to increase its spending on foreign-language materials, the Latin Americans are listening.

Today, the Houston Public Library is one of the largest libraries in the nation, with 50 million books and other loanable items, 38 branch locations and an annual budget in excess of \$36 million. The reputation of the Houston Public Library and its "leading the way" attitude concerning the Hispanic population should pave the way for other libraries across Texas and the United States.

Luke McMahan is a senior industrial engineering major.

Mail Call

Bike parking permits will not cure problems

In response to Anna Bishop's June 10 article.

I cannot even fathom the idea that SGA is actually considering a proposal to rob students out of more money by passing PTTS' bicycle permit proposal. This is just yet another evil ploy by PTTS to line its pockets without benefiting students in the process. The reality of this matter is that changing permits will only cause more chaos, not solving the real problem at hand. Students are too lazy to use the bike racks so they stockpile their bikes out of convenience in front of the buildings.

Jennifer Nevill
Class of '00

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 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
Email: battletters@hotmail.com

First Loves
Carmela Ciuraru (editor)
Scribner Poetry

genres
erature
imeless
are of
wn his-
poetry.
new
tion of
is in-
by a
and works to refine and
poetry with its own style.
g, First Loves is a testimonial
s cyclical nature. The book
ction of more than 60
ing of the state's public
al anecdotes by modern
colleges and universities.
which each writer recom-
According to Dr. Ed Wal-
em they first fell in love
aven, coordinator of un-
literature fans, First Loves
graduate advisory for
journalism department, the students who
currently trying to obtain a higher educa-
like
like A.R. Ammons, Robert
e, Seamus Heaney and Robert
y contribute to First Loves.
d after each poet's narrative
ll text of his or her first poem.
Likewise, students who
classes covering British and
ican literature will enjoy
ing classics by Edgar Allan
Emily Dickenson and Robert

the best part of First Loves is
nation of the old and the new.
ynthesis shines in anecdotes
submitted by Robin Becker.
Becker may not be a household
her recounting of first heart-
m Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey
ow it spoke to her as a first heart-
scent is a highlight of the book.
st Loves is a tribute to passion
poetry, but more than that, it
inspiration. While sometimes
ay be turned off by the book's
vering focus to the art of poetry,
students who have ever said
and felt like the author, you
king directly to them will find
st Loves' quaint collection of
ic memories. (Grade: A)

— Eric Diller

News in Brief

minem's wife
attempts suicide

STERLING HEIGHTS
ch. (AP) — The wife of
pper Eminem, Kim
uthers, tried to kill herself
day night, said Detroit
nnehy, director of medical
d artist relations for
minem's label, Interscope
ords.

Sterling Heights police
they went to the home of
27-year-old Eminem's
ose legal name is Marshall
Mathers III, about a medical
emergency at 11:30 p.m.
d resident had attempted
icide.

"Eminem is obviously con-
rned about his wife's
ing," he said. "As far as
anything else, it's a private
atter, which they'll be
dressing privately."

Low
Student
Airfare

Europe • Africa
sia • South America

More Than
00 Departure Cities

Eurailpasses
Bus Passes
Study Abroad

student
univer-
com

YOUR WORLD. EXPLORE

studentUniverse.com
800-272-9676