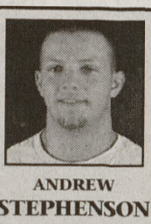


## None of Your Business

Mimicking U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy would be beneficial for Corps

The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets is like any other student organization. It must follow the rules and guidelines set by the A&M administration. One policy deals with various types of discrimination. The University student rules state that, "Texas A&M University, in accor-



ANDREW STEPHENSON

dance with applicable federal and state laws, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation or veteran status." There is one major difference between the Corps and other campus student groups. Many cadets are participating in an ROTC program and are subject to the sometimes-stricter rules and regulations

of the U.S. military. ROTC members are essentially military personnel who are allowed to attend college while in training before they serve out the term of their contracts. One policy that should affect cadets is the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy concerning sexual orientation. Having two different sets of rules acting on members of a single organization can create problems. The administration should re-examine

some of its policies that pertain to the Corps to prevent problems. A&M should exempt the Corps from certain student rules so the group can more closely follow military guidelines. Recently, an individual who was a member of the Corps and a military ROTC program quit both, telling The Battalion that his sexual orientation played a major role in his decision to leave. This individual said that he had been openly gay with the members of his outfit, and there were no problems until he was seen sitting with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Aggies (GLB-TA) in the Memorial Student Center (MSC) breezeway.

and both sides of the issue are often dissatisfied with it. It does allow those in military service to lead whatever personal lifestyles they choose, as long as they are not caught and do not talk about it. This means that an ROTC member cannot freely portray himself or herself as gay, because it violates military policy. Therefore, as soon as the A&M cadet mentioned before began representing himself as a homosexual, he effectively ended his own military career. He could still have remained in the Corps, but as far as the military would have been concerned, he violated a policy and would not have been allowed back in.

This can create quite a predicament. Currently, some of the Corps' members cannot talk about their own sexuality, and other students and leaders must simply abide by the current University policy on discrimination. Obviously, under current student rules, the Corps cannot revert to "don't ask, don't tell."

The University should take steps to ensure that the cadets, current and incoming, are aware of their rights. Those who are simply members of the student program and not a ROTC program should be aware that they have all the protection that any student at A&M has. While the Corps is, for many, a pre-military training, as a state-sanctioned organization it cannot simply revert to a blanket policy such as "don't ask, don't tell," despite the fact that this is a better solution. To properly train students for military service, A&M should acknowledge that the Corps is different from other student organizations and should not be forced to follow the same guidelines.

Andrew Stephenson is a sophomore environmental design major.



JOE FEJEN/THE BATTALION

### Mail Call

#### Graphic anti-abortion posters offensive, show unnecessary violence

I am writing because I am disgusted and appalled by Aggies For Life's anti-abortion propaganda. Is your objective to dissuade young women from abortion by any means necessary? You are quite entitled to your own opinion, but I think that you will find that you will more easily reach rational, intelligent minds through the use of fact and reasoning — not by the use of scare tactics. I am sorry, but I have no desire to be confronted, dare I say forced, to look at a picture of an aborted fetus on my way to class.

What I feel worth discussing is the hypocrisy of the members of Aggies For Life. I speculate it is a safe assumption that many of the members are Christians, and that this is the basis of their protests toward abortion. Let me make it clear that I feel there are many Christians out there who are spectacular people, and I find it quite admirable when people believe in some power greater than themselves. But, then there is this other breed of Christians who, rather than nurturing their private, personal beliefs, feel it is their mission in life to further crusade against anyone who believes differently.

Need you tear down others' beliefs to make yours stronger? Are your principles so weak that you must use fear to convince others of their merit? But let us take a step back from the philosophical and just really get down to the heart of the matter. You so often forget the namesake of your religion and what a soft, gentle man he was. It saddens me that you can put such filth upon our campus while wearing a "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelet around your wrist. Do you fail to see the irony here? Can you honestly see Jesus waking up at 5 a.m. on a Monday and

placing a large picture of an aborted fetus in front of the Blocker Building? I hope you give him more credit than that; I do. To close, you have done nothing today but cause your fellow classmates to cringe. And you have only hardened my resolve, as well as many others, against your viewpoint. In the future, I propose you play to our intellects and not our fear.

Brad Burris  
Class of '01

This letter is in regard to at least three occurrences, that I know of, of pro-life supporters displaying poster-size photos of bloody, aborted fetuses around our campus. I am not trying to voice my opinion. I am just questioning the manner in which some express theirs.

I understand the argument of free speech that is present there, but I also know that there are definitely times when instances involving a graphic nature need to be controlled. I do not understand how we can have ratings for television, movies, video games, books, etc., but someone is completely free to display posters of bloody, dead bodies in the middle of campus.

It was only last week that I had to squeeze my way through four to five school buses of elementary kids loading up after a visit to our campus. I just wish that those responsible could show a little more class and not try to force their opinions down other people's throats.

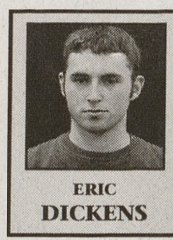
You are doing more to hurt yourself and your cause than you are gaining in sympathy from those who see the pictures. Display your figures and put a Web page on there or something, but I should not be required to walk across campus with tunnel vision to keep from being sickened by your display.

Josh Naylor  
Class of '01

## School Days

State control of starting dates not advisable

In January, the 77th Texas Legislature will meet in Austin to discuss a number of proposals, including one concerning the starting dates for all public schools. The proposal outlines that public school calendars must begin after Sept. 1.



ERIC DICKENS

Current policy allows each school district to determine when its schools begin and end classes, and many of the districts choose to begin classes before Sept. 1. For example, the year College Station Independent School District (CSISD) began classes on Aug. 14 while the Bryan Independent School District (BISD) began them on Aug. 10.

While the idea of pushing back the first day of classes may appeal to many students at the end of summer, allowing individual school districts to set their own calendars is in the best interest of students, teachers and the community.

The only way to understand the rationale behind the proposal is to look at who supports it. An Oct. 17 article in The Bryan-College Station Eagle stated officials with the tourism and travel industry support the proposal, saying shorter summer breaks hurt their business. The same article says some supporters claim family unity suffers when members cannot spend as much time together over the summer. However, cutting into family time together is exactly what postponing all schools' beginning date until after Sept. 1 would do.

Starting classes before September allows students to complete their fall semesters before the beginning of winter break. This ensures that high school students who have midterm exams

would take those exams before the holidays and not have to balance studying for them and spending time with their families. Since all public schools in Texas must have 177 days per school year, an August starting date allows classes to end before Memorial Day.

In 2001, Memorial Day falls on May 28, and both CSISD and BISD classes will end before the national holiday. This ensures public school students can take longer vacations over the Memorial Day weekend with their families.

The biggest problem with a statewide uniform starting date is, as CSISD trustee Larry Johnson says, it "flies in the face of local control." The proposal strips school districts of the power to set their own schedules based on the community's own calendar.

BISD and CSISD tailor their school calendars to mimic Texas A&M's. Many of BISD and CSISD's students have parents who work for A&M, the area's largest single employer. Likewise, many public school students have siblings who attend

A&M. Allowing CSISD and BISD the freedom to change their dates to match A&M's helps ensure students will be able to share more holiday time with siblings and parents on the University's schedule.

The situation in Bryan-College Station is certainly similar to that of other small college towns or cities. Setting a statewide starting date after Sept. 1 would potentially cause a number of scheduling conflicts in these locations. When spring breaks, winter breaks and summer breaks of public school children do not match up with those

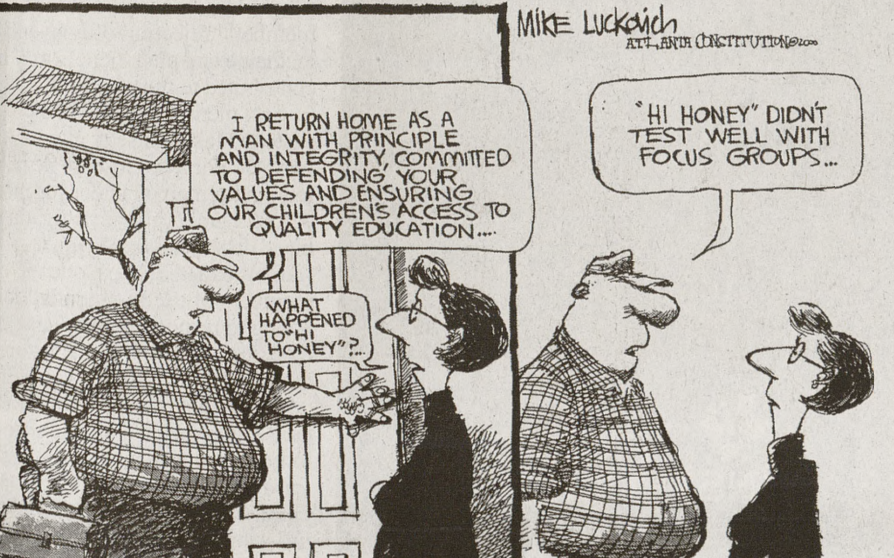
of their families, everybody misses out on an opportunity for family time.

Local school districts know what calendar schedule is best for their students and community. Approving a mandatory starting date after Sept. 1 strips away the district's say and opens a Pandora's box of potential scheduling conflicts. Keeping school districts from setting their own calendars takes the decision out of the hands of those who know best the needs of their students.

Eric Dickens is a senior english major.



BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION



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