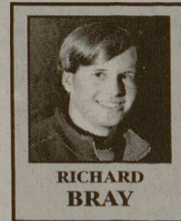


Underage does not mean stupid Anti-tobacco groups should stay focused on facts when educating teenagers



RICHARD BRAY

anti-tobacco activists driving a truck through an upscale neighborhood where tobacco executives supposedly lived and pointing out how much money tobacco company executives make from selling cigarettes.

These commercials underestimate the intelligence of the average teen. It is terribly obvious that the people producing the commercials are fanatics, and it is difficult for anyone to accept the argument of someone who is so obsessed with their cause that they seem willing to do anything to convince the public that their view is correct. Rather than appearing as a voice of wisdom, they appear to be promoting blatant propaganda, making them difficult to take seriously.

They also do their best to make the tobacco industry's advertising appear to be a devious attempt to subconsciously trick the American population, especially teens, into smoking. This "Magic Bullet" mentality, which assumes that advertisements affects people in uniform, powerful ways, is outdated, and this theory has since been discarded.

However, TheTruth.com's Website would have visitors believe that the tobacco industry is using its advertisements to force teens to smoke. The site also declares that tobacco companies are "good at what they do, but they are afraid of us discovering the truth about what they have done." This kind of over-the-top language makes it difficult to take them seriously.

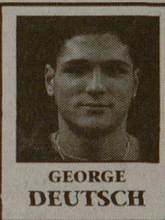
Since anti-tobacco advertising is having little effect, anti-tobacco advocates must find new ways to spread their message. Simply annoying people with self-righteous commercials will not have the effect these advocates want — in fact, it may have the opposite effect. If they want to stop teen smoking, they need to better focus their resources by either replacing their current commercials with ones that will have an impact on teenage smoking or with an entirely different program altogether. Otherwise they might as well just light up the money they are wasting.

Richard Bray is a sophomore journalism major.



CHAD MALLAM/THE BATTALION

SMU should not give benefits to gays



GEORGE DEUTSCH

Last week, Southern Methodist University (SMU) announced plans to extend medical benefits and reduced tuition to same-sex partners of employees. This controversial decision comes at a time when the United Methodist Church's internal disagreement over same-sex unions is threatening to segment the 8.5 million-member Christian denomination.

The benefits, which will include medical and dental insurance and reduced tuition, are to be available in 2002, according to the Associated Press.

The Dallas-based SMU will become one of about 150 of the country's 3,300 higher learning institutions offering such benefits. The Human Rights Campaign identified Rice University as the only other Texas university with a similar policy.

Though SMU faculty and administration may regard the new policy as more inclusive and therefore attractive to potential employees and students, it actually undermines the legitimacy of what should be a Christ-centered institution.

Those familiar with the Christian faith know that it adheres to several ideological tenets, not the least of which forbids the practice of homosexuality.

Willfully abandoning these tenets is equivalent to abandoning Christianity because they are inseparable. SMU should not offer benefits to same-sex couples. By granting benefits reserved for married couples to homosexual couples, SMU is acknowledging homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle, thereby compromising the values of the Christian university.

SMU, as a Methodist university, should reflect Christian values

and the ideals delineated in the Bible. According to the book of Leviticus, a man should "not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."

Morgan Olsen, SMU vice president for business and finance, told *The Dallas Morning News* that the plan was a good business decision.

"It was becoming clear that many employers nationally are offering this benefit," he said. "This is necessary to ensure that SMU recruits and retains the best people."

However, some of the university's Christian students could be offended by the new provision. Students seeking an education at a Christian university might dislike the idea of benefits for partners of gay instructors, especially if these students consider homosexuality a moral wrong. SMU students were not even given any say in the issue. Instead, the SMU Faculty Senate made the ruling.

Homosexuality should not gain mass acceptance from the nation's religious universities. When a university like SMU condemns homosexuality as immoral, yet grants two men living together the same rights as a married couple, it is being hypocritical.

Universities should be inclusive and politically correct, but not so much so that they compromise their most fundamental values.

George Deutsch is a sophomore journalism major.

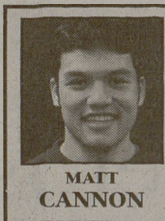
The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

HISD needs Hispanic leader



MATT CANNON

Ever since Rod Paige was whisked off to Washington, D.C., by President Bush to fulfill his appointment as Education Secretary, there has been much grumbling in the Hispanic community about who will succeed him as Houston Independent School District (HISD) superintendent. The HISD board of trustees, in typical fashion, has no idea what they will do. Hispanic leaders are calling for the next superintendent to be Hispanic, and the community truly deserves a Hispanic superintendent. But if the past is a good litmus test, we can expect the board to hang Hispanics out to dry.

Hispanic students now make up 54 percent of HISD's students, and if present population growth trends continue, this number will increase even more in coming years. One would think that with Hispanic students in the majority, their parents would have no problem being heard. However, as soon as it became clear the superintendent job was open, local Hispanic leaders began preparing for an all-out war with the board.

Hispanics apparently have not forgotten the last time the board bungled its way through the superintendent selection process. In 1994, the board met behind closed doors for two hours before making the surprise announcement that there

would be no national search for a new superintendent. Instead, the job was given to Paige, an African-American, thanks to a bloc vote of Caucasian and African-American board members.

Many Hispanics felt completely left out of the process. Who could blame them? They were the most affected group and yet they had the least influence in the process. "They weren't inclusive in allowing the community to be a part of the process," said parent Rosemary Covalt.

So this time around, Hispanics are naturally suspicious. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is not only requesting that the next superintendent be Hispanic, but is also forming its own superintendent search committee.

"Our mission and goal is still the same; we can't let our guard down," said LULAC spokesman Johnny Mata.

LULAC may be treating this like a war, but it could be the only way to get some respect. Despite the obvious statistics showing the predominance of Hispanic students in the school system, the trustees show no signs of favoring a Hispanic superintendent.

The board agrees that Hispanics deserve a superintendent who is sensitive to Hispanic needs, but they seem to think that this person could be someone of any ethnicity. Even Paige has weighed in, saying his successor should be a person "who cares about all people and can do the best job for all children," regardless of ethnicity. Of course, this statement comes from a guy who

was hand-picked for Bush's diversity-friendly cabinet.

Despite the rhetoric, the next HISD superintendent should be Hispanic. It sounds nice to want a superintendent who is colorblind and loves all children equally, but the fact remains that the Hispanic community has special concerns that are not shared by Caucasians and African-Americans, like bilingual education and immigration issues.

These problems will only grow as the percentage of Hispanic students rises. A Hispanic superintendent would be familiar with these issues and would be well equipped to handle them in a sensitive and understanding manner.

In addition, a Hispanic superintendent would provide Hispanic students with a much-needed role model. At a time when there is a relative shortage of Hispanic leaders to African-American and Caucasian leaders, a Hispanic superintendent could go a long way toward inspiring Hispanic students to believe in themselves.

HISD trustees should take advantage of this opportunity to reach out to the Hispanic community and show they are really interested in making the selection process a community decision. Making a decision behind closed doors is tantamount to the smoke-filled rooms of early national political conventions and should not be tolerated.

Matt Cannon is a senior biomedical science major.

Mail Call

Evolution, creation are both unproven

In response to Matt Cannon's March 1 article.

Matt Cannon is right when he says, "Evolution is based on the same evidence that all other scientific theories are based upon." He even seems to understand that "science relies on solid, empirical evidence," yet he fails to provide any such evidence for the theory of evolution. With remarkable consistency, he mixes theory with fact, science with supposition and emotion with reason.

Evolution is, in fact, a theory. It is unproven. It is based on the same evidence as the theory of creation, which is also unproven. Neither theory is provable using the scientific method, which, as Cannon admits, demands experimentation and observation. Nobody was around to observe the "big bang," if it happened, or sample the "primordial soup."

Most sciences, in fact, suggest that the theory of evolution is se-

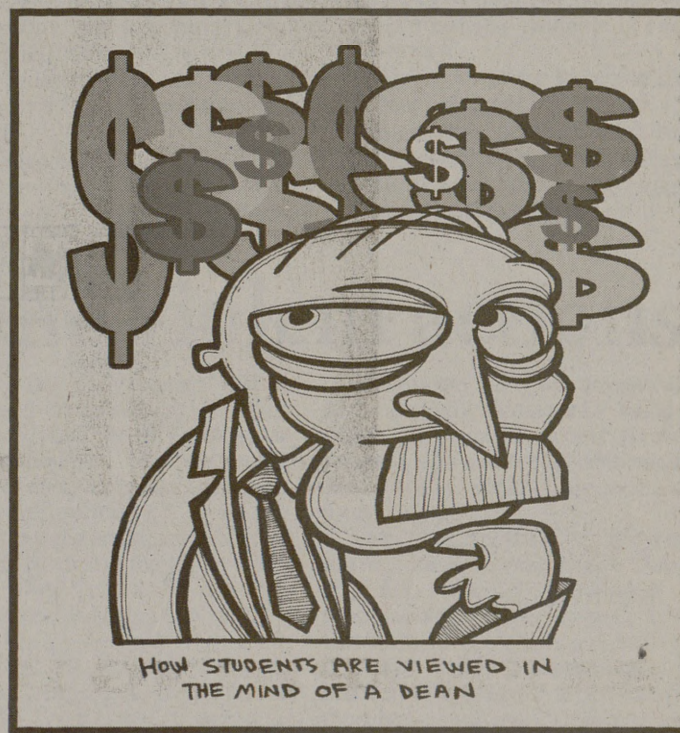
verely flawed for example, the basic tenet of evolution depends upon a biogenesis, which has never been observed in nature or in a laboratory. Likewise, evolution as a whole depends on random beneficial net increase in genetic information over time, which is exactly the opposite of what is shown by the solid, empirical evidence.

Radiometric dating has been proven to be inaccurate when measuring igneous rocks of known ages, and carbon dating is theoretically accurate only to a few thousand years. We have no way to scientifically verify any dates older than a few thousand years because nobody was around to take the measurements.

Simply put, the scientific evidence against evolution is significant if not overwhelming. Yet, this fact is rarely, if ever, mentioned in textbooks. True science is ignored for the sake of propagating belief in a nice, clean, godless theory. This, in reality, is a religion in and of itself. It is called secular humanism.

Jon Gardner
Class of '89

CARTOON OF THE DAY



How students are viewed in the mind of a dean

THE UN-CARTOONIST