

Scraping the bottom

Minority enrollment a problem, but admitting top 25 percent is no solution

This year, even the administration has been in the Halloween spirit. At the last Texas A&M System Board of Regents meeting, University officials dressed up an affirmative action proposal and tried to present it as a "Freshman Opportunity Admissions Initiative." This shoddy costume is not fooling A&M students, and hopefully, the regents and the state will unmask this unjust proposal before any more time or money is wasted on it.

The proposal would extend automatic admission to the top 25 percent of students from economically disadvantaged high schools. By considering automatic admission for the top 25 percent of these schools, A&M is fighting a battle for affirmative action that was decided by the Hopwood ruling in 1996.

What makes the top 25 proposal particularly flawed is that the University is confusing race with economic situation. Targeting students who may otherwise fall through the cracks because of the economic shortfalls facing their families and schools is an admirable goal. In fact, having a more economically diverse student body may be a positive thing. It must be clear, though, that diversity in economic situation and race are not the same thing. This proposal implies that the most minorities are at the poorest schools. In any case, accepting more students automatically is not the solution to diversity of any type.

The top-10-percent rule has been the subject of much criticism, most of it deserved. The education system in Texas is so varied that one cannot compare the top 10 percent of graduates from one school with the top 10 percent of graduates from another. Advocates of the top ten-percent rule point out that Texas public universities are returning to pre-Hopwood minority enrollment. The benefits of diversity are obvious, but as admission becomes more competitive, more people are rightly questioning the current system.

More emphasis must be placed on A&M's true diversity problem: Why do qualified minorities who are admitted choose to attend college elsewhere?

Admission trends in Texas show that minorities are applying and being accepted. A&M officials are not blind to these facts. Each year, the University sends a letter to all minorities who

chose not to enroll here asking them to give some reasons why. A&M policy toward racial diversification should concentrate on getting these students to enroll, rather than opening admission up to 25 percent at target schools.

In a post-Hopwood world, the challenge A&M should be concerned with is how to get qualified minorities to enroll, not how to sidestep the court's ruling. Granted, it is easier to change admission standards than to actively seek out the nation's best minority scholars, but A&M deserves better than that.

Finally, the administration needs to rethink its paradigm when it comes to diversity. The most successfully diverse universities and companies have found answers in this truth: diversity means white students also. While the top 10-percent rule has increased diversity, it is producing an unwarranted side effect: some students feel that unqualified minorities are being admitted over qualified white applicants. In reality, the possibility of this is very low, but it will likely become a true problem if top 25-percent becomes a reality.

The question at the center of this debate is the potential of students from economically disadvantaged schools versus the experience of students from wealthy schools. In many cases, the right decision is to choose potential over experience, regardless of race.

What comes of this argument is that there cannot be a blanket policy regarding diversity policy.

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EDITORIAL

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A CALL TO ARMS

Action must be taken or Bonfire will never be seen again

With each passing day, it is becoming more evident that Aggie Bonfire will not burn in 2002. If Bonfire does not burn next year, the burden will ultimately fall on Texas A&M President Ray M. Bowen.

Bowen and other administrators, intentionally or not, are allowing the Bonfire flame to flicker and die amid the morass of bureaucratic wrangling and red tape.

Bowen recently said that the \$1.5-million price tag of Bonfire 2002 is too costly and may force the University to reconsider plans for future Bonfires. Now, the lack of a safety firm threatens to permanently extinguish Bonfire. Planners are already behind schedule, and each week that passes without a final design selected is a nail in the coffin of a 90-year-old tradition, providing administrators with a new reason to reconsider not having Bonfire next year.

If Bonfire does not burn next year, it is unlikely to burn

again. Most students have never seen a Bonfire burn, and as each semester passes, those with an intimate understanding of what Bonfire is are leaving Aggieland. Without a Bonfire in 2002, there will be no passion and enthusiasm for having a Bonfire in 2003 or after — the tradition will die.

Students supported Bowen's

It has become clear that, left to its own devices, the administration will cancel Bonfire.

decision to postpone Bonfire for two years to ensure that when it did burn in 2002, it would be "forever safe." But life is uncertain, and ensured safety is futile. Bowen eliminated cut, reduced the stack to a single tier and drastically reduced student participation. Students accepted these parameters as

conditions for continuing Bonfire, and Bowen must keep his end of the bargain. Rather than fabricating excuses, now is time the administration step up to the plate and do whatever it takes to save Bonfire.

Students, former students and all in the Aggie community who want to see Bonfire burn again also have an obligation. For almost two years, Aggies have passively left the future of Bonfire in the hands of administrators. Apathy must end today. Students and alumni must speak and let their views be known, and student leaders must take up the cause of the students they represent. Student Body President Schuyler Houser has been neither seen nor heard during this ordeal. Her silence, too, must end.

It has become clear that left to its own devices, the administration will cancel Bonfire. The time for watching and waiting is over. The time to save Bonfire is now.

Cipro sensation

Each day, the news is filled with who has been affected by anthrax, and now, a disease that was rarely heard of is something that businessmen and grade schoolers are all talking about. Trailing in its footsteps is Cipro, the newest drug grabbing the attention of Americans. Truthfully, people may be better off knowing less about the drug itself and its availability to anyone.



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Unfortunately, not only are more people learning of Cipro's existence, but healthy people are taking the drug without any regard for the harm that it could be doing. According to Sharon Kirkley of *The Ottawa Citizen*, "Doctors are warning that if too many people start self-medicating with Cipro, it could lead to bigger problems than any germ attack."

The Bayer Health Village reports that Cipro, technically called ciprofloxacin, is "one of the newer compounds" and is the drug used for the treatment of anthrax. It is taken orally and is "rapidly absorbed" into the body with good results on infections. Unfortunately, the facts about the drug itself are of very little interest to most people. People are paying such a lack of attention that this drug is causing unnecessary problems.

The first major problem with people taking it is that most of the people swallowing Cipro are doing it only out of over-precaution and fears of coming into contact with anthrax chemicals. While there are many times when precautions are extremely smart and positive moves — taking Cipro because of fear of anthrax is not one of them.

Cipro has a history of causing an immunity to itself. In other words, people who take it (even for a short time) can become immune to its effects. So, by taking the pills when they are not needed, a person takes away the potential of being able to use it as a treatment if they later come in contact with anthrax. Mutations and trades are two things that can cause resistance to antibiotics in treating infections. A mutation can occur when a bac-

teria's genes are changed, or when the descendants of a bacteria are stronger than the previous strands. Trades are when bacteria transfer genetic information for new resistance to the original treatments.

While some of this may seem extremely scientific, it is not rare at all. Officials in the New Jersey area believe that certain immunities may have already begun to occur in that population because of a high demand for the drug. Carol Baker, head of the Infectious Disease Society of America, said that not only could people lessen their own resistance, but taking antibiotics without need for them can also mean "you're likely to spread resistance to the people you live with."

Another problem is that the people taking Cipro unnecessarily are causing a shortage of the drug for many people who truly need it.

While Bayer may describe Cipro as a "newer compound," it is not at all a new drug in the medical world. It has been in use in the United States for more than 13 years and has treated many other things before its recent use in anthrax cases. Cipro can be used to treat *E. coli* infections and infections of other areas, including the urinary tract.

Just because anthrax is the talk of the town does not mean that other people do not still need it for these other infections, but it is now extremely difficult for them to get a hold of. A huge contributor to this problem is doctors who are prescribing it to their patients out of precaution. Family physician Lloyd Rossman admits to writing five prescriptions for patients in southeast Florida because of their need for "psychological comfort." This is unacceptable.

In times of trouble and need, the physical pain and illness of people must come before the comforting of other's minds. This is not a time to run scared of anthrax, and doctors are only making the problems much worse by aiding people in taking the drugs. Baker, said it best by explaining that "On the biological battleground between man and microbe, people taking unneeded antibiotics means aiding the enemy."

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