

The veil of secrecy

MSC should not operate behind closed doors

The Memorial Student Center shrouded itself in a cloak of secrecy again this week when it appointed its new council president, Jennifer Brashares.

Voting in closed session, the MSC council appointed

Brashares to the spot left vacant

by Josh Rowan, who

resigned during the appeal

process of a post-summer

debacle resulting

from allegations of

alcohol abuse, drug

abuse and inappropriate

sexual advances during a University-

sponsored trip to Italy.

Regardless of what Rowan did on that

trip, he and Brashares are not wrong in

this case — they are victims of circum-

stance and a bureaucracy rife with politics

and misplaced priorities. Rowan's

alleged indiscretions may have tarnished

the legacy of A&M student leaders, but

they are eclipsed by the mismanage-

ment and spiteful nature of MSC and

University officials, all of whom have

given the MSC a black eye. Students and

alumni should be outraged.

All proceedings involving Rowan's

removal and Brashares's appointment were

done in secret, outside the eye of the student

body and media. State law mandates that state

agencies must conduct business in open session.

But all business surrounding the MSC president

has been behind closed doors, and MSC and

University officials should be penalized for that.

The MSC Council and MSC administrators are

spending Students Services Fee money and \$50-

per-semester University Center Fee, and students

have a right to know how and why.

But evidently, the MSC has something to hide.

The University claims documents

related to the investigation into Rowan's

actions are protected by the Buckley



BRADY CREEL

Amendment — a federal statute protecting student records — because they are educational documents. To make such a claim is a disgrace. The University has withheld minutes of meetings, voting records and a report prepared by the Division of Student Affairs — none of which are related to Rowan's academic performance.

Hopefully, the attorney general's office will realize the ludicrous facade being orchestrated by the University and order the release of those documents.

Within the microcosm of the A&M community, student leaders are subject to scrutiny within the public eye. The actions of student leaders are unrelated to their performance as students, and Aggies have a right to know what their leaders are doing. Academic records should be, indeed, protected by Buckley, but the University's poor attempt at image management with legal wrangling is pathetic. If that is what A&M officials want to do, they should appoint leaders instead of electing them.

MSC Director Jim Reynolds will tell students he is doing what A&M System lawyers have instructed him. But this case is not about tipping the balance of jurisprudence. It should be about doing what is right, and student leaders should be held accountable to those who have elected them — they are always in the purview of their constituency. Anything that negates that foundation of democracy is a disgrace to the University and Aggies.

Texas is a state where laws guarantee access to documents produced by governmental agencies. Texas A&M is such an agency, and should comply with all state open-meetings and open-records laws. But A&M has chosen to exempt itself, allowing only the release of documents that propagate a positive image of the University. But this fiasco is anything but bright light. In fact, it is a pretty dark day in A&M history.

Whatever the MSC administration is hiding will be uncovered, rest assured of that. In the meantime, if things continue as they are, A&M's spin doctors and their protegés should prepare for the wrath of the state attorney general, because if they keep secrets from students, their day is coming.

Brady Creel is a junior journalism and management major.



CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

Television should acknowledge September terrorism

With the horrific attacks of Sept. 11, many people turned to television for information and comfort. In response, some television dramas have rushed to address this need. While television is not based on reality, many shows, such as those that take place in New York City, seem odd and far-fetched the longer they continue without addressing what has happened. TV shows can help America deal with what has happened and should address the terrorist attacks.

The television drama "Third Watch," which is about New York's fire fighters, police officers and paramedics, rushed a show about Sept. 11. The show's characters are shown as real life people on the day of the attacks and what emotions they felt. These dramas capture some-

thing news programs can never portray — the emotion and pain. According to Caryn James of the New York Times, "Doing what fiction does best, and what news rarely can, these episodes recreate the profound emotional effects of a life-changing tragedy."

"Third Watch" continues in the aftermath with an episode about the psychological consequences of that day. Other shows hastily put references to what happened without directly addressing the attacks. "N.Y.P.D. Blue" inserted references about the attacks into an already-scripted episode of the show. These awkward references are better than what most other shows have done — nothing.

Other shows, which take place in New York, have yet to address the attacks. While television is escapism, audiences can only suspend their disbelief for so long. With everything that happened and the role the attacks play in the media, it seems strange that shows based in New York go on without any acknowledgment of this American tragedy. These attacks have changed American life unlike any event since the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. For most of television to not respond to this change is irresponsible. Television shows are seen as a response to what the American people want. At this point in history, people desire a sense of understanding

and truth in what they watch on television.

"The events of Sept. 11 were of such magnitude, and the aftermath so preoccupying, that war and now bioterrorism have become part of the fabric of television," James said.

While television shows have a cushion in that they are fictional, this cushion does not protect them from not addressing something so life-altering. This change has not affected a few people, but the nation and the world in general.

Shows such as "Third Watch" and "N.Y.P.D. Blue" are right and in-tune with what the public wants by making reference to the attacks. Other shows need to follow suit and address what has happened. These events have changed the core of American life and television needs to respond more thoroughly to this change.

Brianne Porter is a junior political science major.

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BRIANNE PORTER

MAIL CALL

Perry forgot the Texas law

In response to the debate which has been taking place regarding Gov. Perry and the issue of school prayer, I urge people to set their beliefs aside for a moment and remember that Gov. Perry ignored the law.

It should not matter whether you support prayer in school or not. What matters is Gov. Perry's blatant disregard for the Supreme Court ruling banning any kind of prayer in school.

By ignoring this ruling and taking part in a Christian prayer during a mandatory school assembly, our governor set a terrible example for the children present and made a mockery of his position.

According to Gov. Perry, the law is something to be obeyed, unless of course, you really disagree with it.

It is good to see that the children learned something at the assembly.

Pro-life is not the only free speech at A&M

The University's apparent bias towards the pro-life group, which was on-campus Monday, was very disappointing. That the pro-life people were able to reserve the area in front of the academic building for their purposes alone is abhorrent.

What is free speech when all groups who have positions on a subject are not allowed to voice themselves in the same venue and conditions?

While the Aggies for Life comfortably protested near a building that symbolizes this campus and encompasses a variety of disciplines, the pro-choice Aggies setup a table by the MSC, blending in among many other groups.

May I remind the administration that our Supreme Court struck down "Separate but equal" legislation because separation implies inequality. It was the university's duty to place these groups next to each

other and give the impression that both had legitimate arguments. I want to be clear here, I am not speaking up because I am pro-choice, I am speaking up for freedom of speech.

To correct this problem, the university should make the area in front of the academic building issue based, instead of reserved for one group.

Therefore, anyone who would like to provide alternative views on a subject could do so without feeling discriminated against. Furthermore, if the university wants to preserve this constitutional right then it should make sure its actions do not insinuate bias on any issue.

At a university as large as this one, in a nation as diverse as the United States must be recognized that there will be multiple perspectives on every issue.

More than any time in history we must embrace this strength.

Lee Bacon
Class of 2002

Ryan McLemore
Class of 2003

EDITORIAL



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WHERE THERE IS A WEB, THERE IS A WAY

Congratulations to A&M's new online registration

Texas A&M students this week had the option to register for classes via the Internet — the first time at the University. This is a welcome change from past semesters where frustration from hours of busy phone lines was the norm.

Although there were a few kinks in the system, including an hour and a half on Monday when the system was closed, online registration has been a resounding success thus far.

The Office of the Registrar, Computing and Information Services (CIS), the Office of the Provost and everyone else who contributed to this

success should be commended for initiating and implementing online registration. This service is a welcome and necessary addition to student life at Texas A&M. With the advent of the Internet and explosion of its usage among college students the past decade, Web registration is long overdue and a welcome.

Aggies should be proud to join other universities who utilize this method as a way to decrease the hassles of signing up for classes.

On Monday, the first day this service was available, 1,541 of the 3,401 Aggies who registered for classes used

the Internet. This number will increase dramatically in the future. Proponents of this long-needed service deserve congratulation for organizing and executing the logistics of the operation.

With more than 40,000 potential users, the possibility for glitches were many. But CIS responded in an efficient manner to eliminate the problems. There will be much smoother sailing for registering students now and hereafter, a much welcome change from frustrating phone registration.

As a result, students will have one less headache to deal with as the semester winds down.