

## Microsoft deal will benefit students

Students who don't buy Microsoft products will still gain from the agreement

Students may be asking themselves how any of the new fees and tuition raises implemented this semester will benefit them. Some feel there is no justification for some of the new fees they have to pay. In particular, there is controversy over the new Software License Fee that will sustain Texas A&M's new software-licensing deal with Microsoft. The deal is officially known as Campus Agreement 3.0 Subscription Student Option.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

During the term of the agreement, A&M students will be able to obtain popular Microsoft products, such as the Office suite and the Windows XP operating system upgrade, for the price of the CD that contains the software. Some students reason that because Microsoft receives money from them whether they obtain the software or not, that the deal benefits the software giant unilaterally. However, the Campus Agreement will prove to be a huge benefit for all A&M students.

Pete Marchbanks, associate director of customer sales & service of Computer & Information Services (CIS), explains that there are two primary benefits to the Campus Agreement. The first is that software acquired through the agreement costs less than the educational versions offered. Indeed, at the MSC Bookstore, an educational copy of Microsoft Office Professional costs \$220. To lease the software from A&M will cost a student \$15. Students who are still skeptical should consider how much this software costs in the real world. For example, the non-academic cost for Visual Studio.Net Professional, a package of development tools for computer programmers, hovers around \$1,000. A&M students will be able to obtain it for \$20, paying only 2 percent of the retail price.

Marchbanks said the new agreement has the indirect benefit of lowering the costs of obtaining licenses for software in the campus computer labs. Therefore, all Aggies benefit from the Software License Fee, regardless of whether they choose to buy the software.

Campus Agreement will allow A&M to remain competitive. Marchbanks said the University of Houston, Texas Tech University and the University of Texas already have

agreements with Microsoft in place. He said some of the satellite campuses in the University system already have a deal. Therefore, it made sense for A&M to pursue an agreement – but only after it asked for students' consent, which it did in a Spring 2002 election, according to the software.tamu.edu Web site.

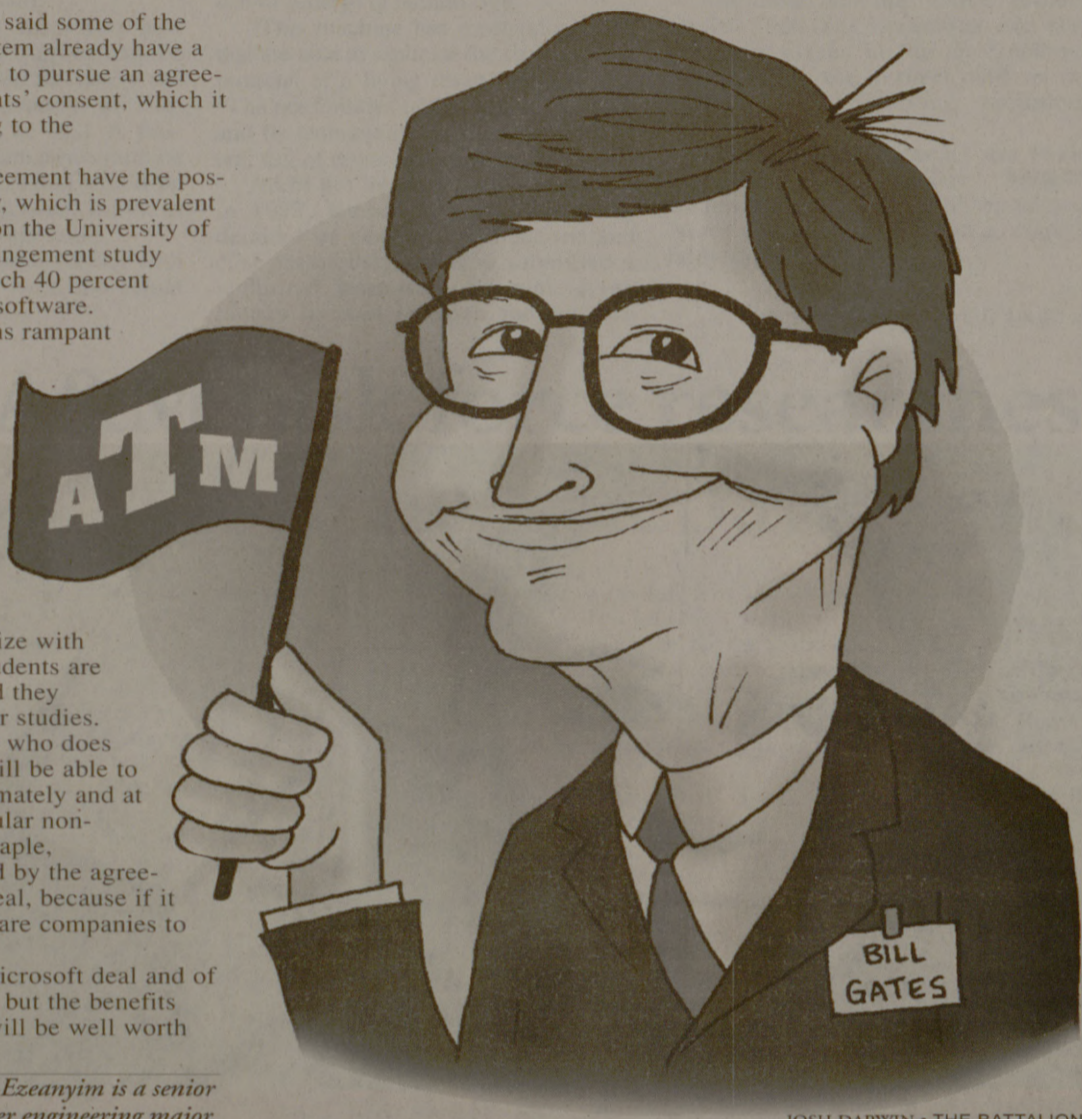
Licensing deals such as Campus Agreement have the positive effect of combating software piracy, which is prevalent among college students. A news report on the University of Florida Web site details a copyright infringement study that included a 2000-2001 survey in which 40 percent of college students admitted to pirating software.

Unfortunately, software pirating seems rampant on the A&M campus as well. Earlier this year, I purchased Maple, a number-crunching program used by engineering and math majors, from the MSC bookstore. The student cashier remarked in surprise, "You're actually buying Maple? Most people I know just get it off ResNet." She was referring to the popular network setup on campus whereby students can share music, movies and software.

To a certain extent, one can sympathize with Aggies who pirate software. College students are known for having little to no money and they need top-of-the-line software to aid their studies. But software piracy is wrong, no matter who does it. With Campus Agreement, students will be able to obtain popular software packages legitimately and at practically no cost. Although other popular non-Microsoft software programs such as Maple, AutoCAD and Photoshop aren't covered by the agreement, Aggies should still support this deal, because if it is successful it might entice other software companies to make similar arrangements.

Some students are resentful of the Microsoft deal and of having to pay the Software License fee, but the benefits Aggies gain from Campus Agreement will be well worth the costs.

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## Bush should compromise to pass security bill

Elimination of Civil Service Act would strip government employees of rights

President Bush has been pushing for the passage of his controversial homeland security bill for months. The bill backed by Bush and the Republican-dominated House of Representatives would create a cabinet-level homeland security department that would encompass 170,000 employees from 22 different agencies. This department would be responsible for homeland security and receiving intelligence, according to the Fox News Web site. However, the bill also calls for the elimination of Title 5 of the Civil Service Act, which guarantees federal agents collective bargaining rights, according to the American Federation of Government Employees Web site.



JENNIFER LOZANO

By demanding the removal of Title 5, the president hopes to gain more management "flexibility" in transferring and firing non-performing federal employees, but the Senate is vehemently set against this provision. As a result, the outcome for the homeland security bill remains up in the air and the president has threatened to veto the bill unless it gives him the flexibility he demands.

Although the issue of homeland security is always a matter of great importance, especially during times of conflict, Bush and his supporters would be unnecessarily exploiting the president's

power at the expense of due process. Bush must cooperate with the Senate and quickly come to a negotiated agreement.

According to a report by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Bush already has the power he needs for homeland security. The report cites 80 examples taken from federal law, the Civil Service Act and case law to prove the existing flexibility federal managers have. The report also ensures existing regulations "pose no legal barriers that would create delays in filling vacancies, promotions, step-increases and incentive awards." More importantly, the report shows there are 35 different avenues that can lead to termination of a federal employee, including an immediate removal option. The report also points to the Bush Administration's Office of Personnel Management's updated "Human Resource Flexibilities and Authorities in the Federal Government" handbook which tells its readers, "you may be surprised how flexible Title 5 is in meeting your organizational needs." Therefore, either the Bush administration has failed to learn the law or is blatantly trying to obtain too much power and eliminate federal worker's union representation.

The AFGE Web site makes the comparison between the Air Marshals and Border Patrol Agents to demonstrate the important role unions play in the federal government. According to the Web site, since 1978 the Air Marshals have been structured with no rights to union representation. Post-Sept. 11, sudden changes,

along with numerous undertrained co-workers, left the agency in complete chaos. However, when supervisors failed to heed employee's complaints, the Air Marshals had nowhere to turn. On the other hand, when Border Patrol agents were dissatisfied with security on the Canadian border, unions gave them a voice to express their complaints and collectively work for improvements.

Removing the collective bargaining rights of unions would expose federal agencies to corruption and politicization. By doing this, Bush would be taking a step away from democracy and everything that the department of Homeland Security strives to protect. According to Fox News, the Senate agrees with 85 to 90 percent of the version of the bill that Bush supports. Bush needs to let go of this power struggle and recognize the importance of this bill by working toward an expedient compromise that would better serve the country.

For the most part, federal employees care the most about homeland security. After all, they risk their lives everyday in the name of homeland security. This is not to say that there will never be a federal agent with poor morals. However, with adequate legal provisions already instated to deal with this problem, there is no reason to strip federal agencies of important employee protections.

Jennifer Lozano is a senior English major.

### MAIL CALL

#### 12th Man failed at football game

We should be ashamed! Never mind the fact that the offensive line had trouble with Virginia Tech's defense, and that our quarterbacks were throwing to white jerseys, and that some receivers were having trouble hanging on to the ball, and that the plays called were not executed. Football players and units have bad days, they are human like everyone else.

However, there is one thing that has always been a constant here in Aggieland, the 12th Man. It was not there on Saturday. A few bad breaks and we were gone. When it got quiet in Kyle, something that should not happen when the defense is on the field, the game was all but lost. The players gave a valiant effort despite struggling. Not once did they quit on us, or give us any reason to stop supporting their cause.

Shame on you, 12th Man. The going got tough and the 12th Man got going – home. I saw some Aggies leaving with six minutes to go. That hurts. Kyle Field is our home. Protect it, do not go down without a fight. If you plan on leaving early, you are wasting a seat for someone who would have stayed.

Don't get me wrong, there were many hard-nosed Fightin' Texas Aggies that gave it their all. For those of us who did give all we had, and who have no more voice, it is up to you to spread the spirit that can never be told. We cannot blame this on play calls, mishaps or lack of Bonfire (believe me, I want Bonfire as much as the rest of you). The spirit is always inside us. We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we. Be proud.

Jake Powell  
Class of 2004

## Regulate credit card solicitors

Like record players and betas, it seems that paying in cash is becoming obsolete. Eighty-three percent of undergraduates have at least one credit card and 47 percent have four or more, according to the Associated Press.

In an effort to control the marketing of credit cards on campus, Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., approached Congress to investigate the behaviors of credit companies. The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) said Dodd used evidence from a 90-page study conducted by Robert Manning, which outlines the negative effects credit card debt has on students.

In the best interest of the students, Congress should follow the proposal to investigate and regulate credit card soliciting on college campuses.

New students are easy targets for credit card solicitors. Dan Prendergast, a senior biology major, said college students who have never had to support themselves might have trouble paying off credit cards. "If you're a freshman, it can be hard to understand the implication of several monthly credit card bills," he said. "I didn't really

understand it all until I was a senior."

Educating students about the financial obligations and the consequences of having a credit card could save hundreds of students from wrecking their credit. Valerie Grizzaffi, a sophomore marketing major, said college students can get trapped in bad credit if they are not aware of the responsibility. "I had bad credit my freshman year and now, as a junior, I can't get the cards I want," she said. "Most students don't know that debt will hurt them in the long run."

The proposed legislation points to more education as the remedy for student debt. Yahoo! News said Dodd approached Congress with the idea of passing legislation that would boost financial literacy among college students, especially freshmen.

Colleges and universities should consider making credit card education more accessible to students, including adding it to their new student orientation program. The Student Activities office at Texas A&M offers students budgeting advice on their Web site and through counselors. The more informed students are, the more likely they can effectively regulate their own budget.

While the world is driven by credit cards and their ability to allow people to purchase things they could not, the privilege of owning one should be just that – a privilege.

Qualified applicants who want or need a credit card have no trouble getting a card issued in their name, and do not need the solicitation of issuers on campus to get one.

In addition, many students find credit card solicitors an annoyance. Karen Bauml, a senior speech communications major, said solicitors interrupt her routine. "Campus can get really crowded, and when you are just trying to make it to class on time it is really rude to have someone trying to get you to sign up for a credit card," she said.

Although credit card companies provide financial information to students, this might not be enough to protect them from debt. Grizzaffi said credit card companies can post information everywhere, but students are not likely to read it. "I just paid what I could every month, I didn't really look into my increasing balance," she said.

Soliciting credit cards on campus is a rushed process which does not lend itself to careful reading of credit card applications.

Paying off credit card bills is the responsibility of the card holder. However, colleges should promote better habits to educate and protect students. Legislation on soliciting credit cards on college campuses is a great place to start.

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