

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 9 • Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Local police should focus on real crime

Some recent *Battalion* headlines read like a violent work of fiction, most notably: "Student kidnapped at gunpoint and robbed" and "Police reports indicate rise in car break-ins." But amid these car burglaries and student kidnappings, the University and College Station Police Departments appear to prefer focusing their efforts on asinine things such as The Noise Abatement and Alcohol Task Force, which is in its third year. The harsh reality for students is that until these police forces collectively choose to address these serious crimes and stop harassing those they are paid to protect, this campus and College Station will never achieve its maximum level of security.



GEORGE DEUTSCH

According to an Oct. 9 *Battalion* article, car break-ins in College Station have increased 26 percent from last year. One particular theft victim had more than \$3,000 worth of merchandise stolen from his vehicle. In a city with two separate police departments, this is unacceptable.

Last year saw an increase in the nearly 1,500 citations issued by the task force, mostly given to dorm and apartment-dwelling A&M students. As the police departments focus their attention on students and petty noise violations, crime throughout College Station escalates. This, too, is grossly unacceptable, and it is time A&M's student body held its law enforcement agencies accountable.

The area police departments occasionally make their presence felt on campus, only not in a helpful or productive way. The UPD, CSPD and Bryan Police Department recently teamed together to work security for Midnight Yell Practice. But instead of merely standing aside and ensuring things went smoothly, they took it upon themselves to needlessly check every bag, purse and backpack that entered Kyle Field without having received any actual threat. Many students missed Midnight Yell entirely, and there were likely crimes being committed in the B-CS area with much of the three major police agencies concentrated at Kyle Field.

To make matters worse, these police departments mismanage their resources. Take, for example, the CSPD's unmarked patrol cars and plain clothes officers. From Thursday to Saturday nights on the weekends of home football games, they can be found making their way from party to party issuing citations. As Bob Wiatt, UPD director of security, smugly told *The Battalion*, "We are sneaky like that." While noise might be a problem to some, to most it is trivial and Wiatt's efforts at being "sneaky" would be better spent trying to apprehend those that pose a legitimate threat to others instead of those with active social lives.

Unfortunately, the disregard for real police work and the utter indifference shown to students is evident from even the top positions of UPD. In a now-infamous quote, Wiatt said earlier this year, "when kids get in apartments, they go crazy, and other residents don't like the drunk screaming." With that one comment, Wiatt has reduced every A&M student to a child and a drunkard, and every student, in turn, should take this as a slap in the face. Student fees and state money should not go toward funding this garbage.

The life of college students is hard enough without being insulted by the very officers paid to protect and serve them. B-CS police agencies should assess their worth to the A&M community and find ways to overcome their faults and turn their focus toward legitimate criminal activity. If they choose not to, crime will continue to increase, and student respect and support for the police, in turn, will not.

"Wiatt has reduced every student to a child and a drunkard, and every student, in turn, should take this as a slap in the face."

George Deutsch is a senior journalism major.

Vision 2020 not to blame

University rankings will inevitably rise and fall



MARIANO CASTILLO

Last month, when the overly-coveted *U.S. News & World Report* rankings lowered Texas A&M's standings in several categories – knocking the University from the top tier – many students jumped at the chance to denounce Vision 2020 as a failure.

Those who are inexplicably satisfied with the idea that the tenets A&M has used in the past are necessary for future success feel vindicated at the news. The setback in rankings, the argument goes, is evidence that Vision 2020 has failed to do anything but increase fees. Furthermore, according to this view, Vision 2020 is responsible for fostering an atmosphere that is killing Aggie traditions, causing racial divides on campus and destroying the conservative aura of the University.

If it seems hard to believe that the leaders of this tradition-rich university would erase the foundations of the school and engage in discriminatory practices, that's because it is not true. It is absurd to believe Vision 2020 is a conspiracy to destroy A&M's heritage and history.

To the contrary, Vision 2020 is the third long-term vision undertaken by the school, with the goal of preserving A&M's uniqueness while keeping pace in an ever-changing and competitive world. Aggie traditions, unity among students and political atmosphere are debatable issues in themselves, but in the end are in the hands of students. They always have been and always will be.

A drop in rankings – whether it is in the AP Top 25 poll or *U.S. News & World Report* – is frustrating. The blame game, however, is severe when applied to Vision 2020 because it has created a growing number of myths and misconceptions. More troubling is that these misconceptions are being accepted by students and propagated by certain groups on campus. The most damaging myths being circulated around campus regard the diversity imperative outlined in Vision 2020.

The obviously confused staff at *The Examiner*, for instance, featured an article written in a defensive tone titled, "Whites aren't diverse?" which boldly asserts that "Vision 2020 and the diversity issue it created are robbing our school's distinctions of the attention they so duly deserve."

Had the editors performed minimal fact checking, they would have discovered that Vision 2020 did not "create" a diversity issue. Debate regarding the make-up of the campus population dates back to at least 1963, when women were admitted to A&M on a limited basis. And how diversity is linked to "robbing" the University's distinction is anyone's guess.

Many students on campus are mistakenly drawing lines and inventing injustices where there aren't any. Vision 2020 has been demonized because it is apparently "the epitome of racism," as one *Battalion* reader wrote.

Quotas and the admission of under-qualified minority students is wrong. But this is not happening, nor is it a goal of Vision 2020.

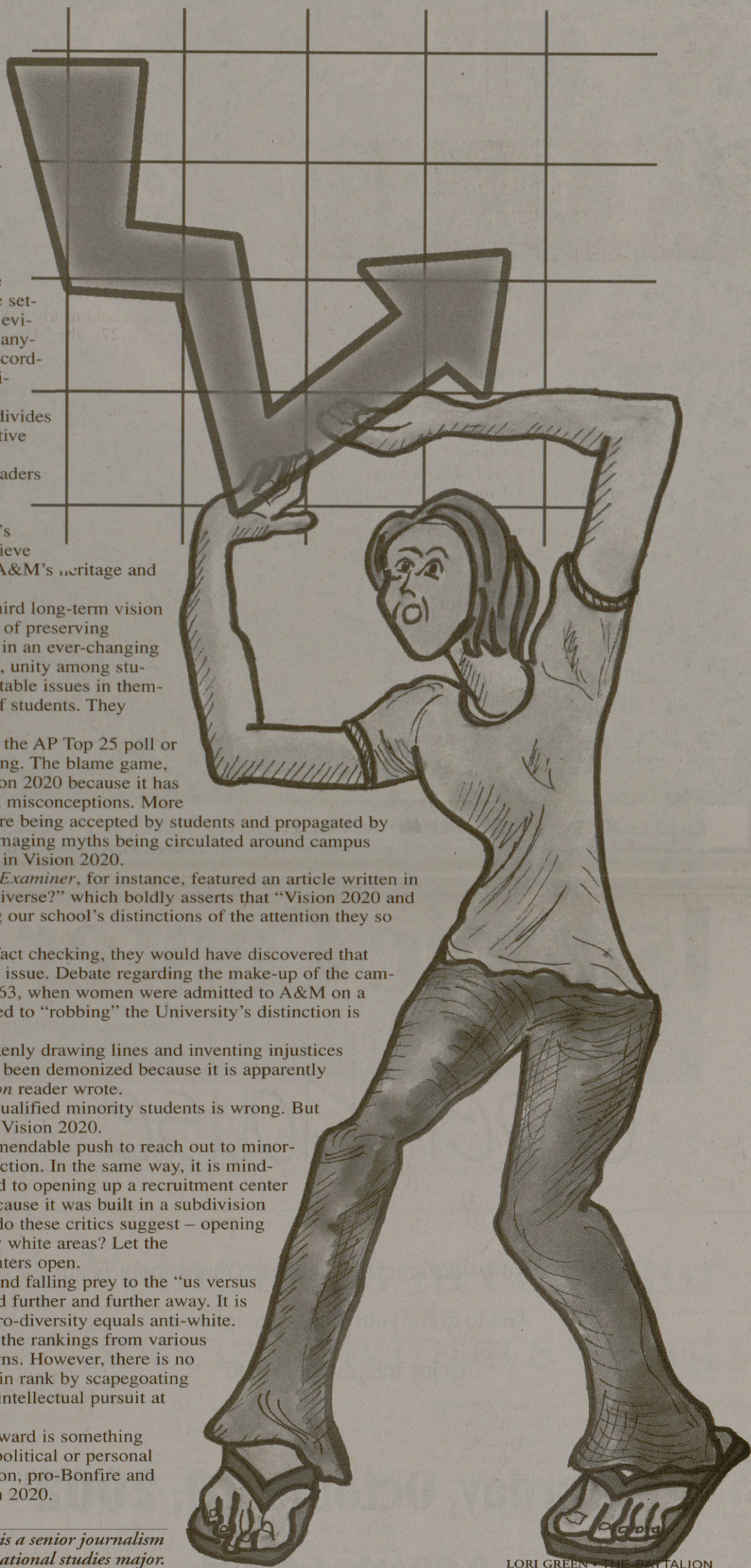
The administration is making a commendable push to reach out to minority students, but that is not affirmative action. In the same way, it is mind-boggling that some students are opposed to opening up a recruitment center to attract qualified students to A&M because it was built in a subdivision with a high minority population. What do these critics suggest – opening up recruitment centers in predominantly white areas? Let the University's needs dictate where the centers open.

By drawing sides along racial lines and falling prey to the "us versus them" mentality, campus unity is pushed further and further away. It is worrisome that some students believe pro-diversity equals anti-white.

As A&M heads toward Vision 2020, the rankings from various sources will no doubt have ups and downs. However, there is no need to fuel the frustration of dropping in rank by scapegoating Vision 2020, which is ultimately about intellectual pursuit at A&M.

Supporting a plan to move A&M forward is something everyone can get behind, regardless of political or personal beliefs. One can be anti-affirmative action, pro-Bonfire and hate Ray Bowen and still support Vision 2020.

Mariano Castillo is a senior journalism and international studies major.



LORI GREEN • THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Divestment campaign a step in the right direction

In response to Collins Ezeanyim's Oct. 15 column:

From the French revolution to the development of on-campus public interest research groups, student involvement in social and political affairs has been of paramount significance.

Student activist groups stood up to the governments to resist racism, fascism, to stop wars and the use of nuclear technology and colonialism. The Israel divestment campaign is no different.

Calling the students involved anti-Semites is shameful! That's a cop-out and an easy way for you to look the other way. I marched in Washington hand in hand with Palestinians and Jews alike, hoping that our government might actually do something about the criminal, murderous occupation of Palestine.

As for the divestment campaign itself, some of the same listed corporations and many of today's largest are also responsible and were awarded by the Third Reich

for their invaluable efforts during WWII. Some of these include G.E., Ford Motor Company and Chase Bank. The State of Israel uses U.S. aid to purchase the latest technology in guns, airplanes with bombs, tanks and Caterpillar machinery to enforce their occupation, curfews and settlements.

I do not condone any act of terrorism. However, the state-sponsored colonization of Palestine must not be tolerated. The whole point of a University education is not only be given the facts, but to act upon them. This campaign, like the anti-apartheid campaign, is a step in the right direction.

Chris Young
Class of 2004

The *Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 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 also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebatt.com. Attachments are not accepted.

MIKE LUKOVICH

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