

Diversification or racism?

Gates' donation may violate the law

Scholarship will help diversify A&M

Last week, Texas A&M announced the University President Dr. Robert M. Gates



MATTHEW MADDOX

donated \$50,000 of his own money for the establishment of a minority scholarship. This is one step forward to reducing the cost of higher education and two steps back for racial equality. A&M would like the public to believe that the racial gap between the census and A&M's student body is a matter of finances rather than a lack of qualified applicants. This is false. According to a May 2002 *Dallas Morning News* article, A&M returned 17 times as much money to the state this year as Gates' contribution. Those grants target students of color means with no restrictions on race. Gates' donation, therefore, seems more for publicity than substance.

In an Oct. 25 debate, Lt. Gov. candidate John Sharp explained the situation students are facing. "I happen to believe that there is a group of children in this state that we are discriminating against when it comes to college. If you happen to be the son or daughter of a wealthy family, you can get your college paid for. If you happen to be the son or daughter of a poor family, there's lots of needs-based scholarships for those children and that's great too, but God help you if you happen to be the son or daughter of a middle-class family. There's no scholarship for you unless you are a National Merit Scholar."

The *Houston Chronicle* recently pointed out the exorbitant salary paid to Texas university officials. Gates' compensation from the taxpayers and students is \$300,000 plus benefits. If Gates is willing to pay \$50,000 in lip service to "diversity," perhaps those "non-diverse" students and Texans should demand their money back and his salary reduced. Need I say more? If Gates truly wants A&M to be its best, he should fund a scholarship for students of all races.

The latest excuse for engineering "diversity" from local liberals is that the student population must "look like Texas." The fact is, the incoming class of freshmen most likely does not conform to the census. There are international and out-of-state students making up the A&M student body. Also, the most qualified students seeking to enter college in Texas do not "look like Texas" because individuals, not races, determine their own success. Minority and non-minority applicants succeed on the SAT or in school not because there is a racial quota in college admissions that needs to be filled — they do well because of their skills. The demand that privileges based on skill be instead allocated according to demographics

proves that race is the first and last thing administrators see in students.

Gates' pledge will count towards the Texas A&M Foundation's One Spirit One Vision fundraising campaign that calls for \$50 million in alumni contributions towards diversity. According to the foundation's Web site, it was created in 1953 to direct all major fund-raising activities and currently has a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt status. That may soon change.

The Texas A&M Foundation can lose its tax-exempt status if it is racially discriminatory, according to Roger Clegg, general counsel for the Center for Equal Opportunity. "The Supreme Court ruled in the *Bob Jones University v. United States* that, 'It would be wholly incompatible with the concepts underlying tax exemption to grant the benefit of tax-exempt status to racially discriminatory educational entities.'"

The Center for Equal Opportunity has notified the A&M Board of Regents that it may be in violation of federal law.

There is nothing wrong with good students of all backgrounds attending A&M, but rigging the system to discriminate against students for non-academic reasons cannot be excused. A&M should halt its de facto discrimination through recruiting practices and scholarships.

Looking like Texas is merely skin deep. Being ideologically or intellectually like Texas would be more academically relevant. Perhaps instead of a money-for-minorities program, the president could establish a "diversity" scholarship program to overcome the imbalance of non-conservative faculty, so that A&M "thinks like Texas."

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Recently, Texas A&M President Dr. Robert M. Gates announced he was donating \$50,000 to establish the Foundation Excellence Award (FEA), a scholarship designed to help minority students attend college. Students are eligible for the scholarships if they meet admission requirements and are members of a minority group, from economically disadvantaged areas or from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.



JENELLE WILSON

With this pledge, Gates is not only showing his dedication to ensuring diversity on the A&M campus, he's setting an example for other university presidents to try to decrease ethnic disparity in higher education, especially in areas that have banned affirmative action policies.

The FEA is granted through the Foundation Excellence program, which currently provides scholarships for 365 minority students at A&M. According to *The Eagle*, this program was formed four years ago, after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which includes the states of Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana, ruled in *Hopwood v. University of Texas Law School* that race cannot be a factor for admission at a higher education institution or for

awarding scholarships. As a nonprofit organization, the Texas A&M Foundation is not bound by these rules. It is legal for private scholarships to be awarded to strictly minority or economically-challenged students.

Higher education institutions in the Fifth Circuit and Eleventh Circuit, which has also ruled affirmative action policies in admission unconstitutional, have had to invent creative ways to increase the number of minority students on their campuses.

After Hopwood, the percentage of minority students noticeably decreased at A&M. The enrollment of black students in 2000 was just more than half what it was in 1995, before the Hopwood ruling. According to *The Eagle*, universities in states outside Fifth Circuit jurisdiction have been recruiting Texas minority students away from state universities because they can offer what Texas cannot: a way to pay for college.

The state of Texas responded to the decreased minority enrollment numbers by establishing the top 10 percent rule. Officials had hoped that if minority students knew they would automatically be accepted into a state university, they would actually apply and attend. The program, however, has not worked as planned. Top 10 admissions for whites increased steadily from 1996 to 2000, according to the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute, while the opposite is true for minority admissions.

The reason is money. While white students generally have little problem paying, minority students, in general, are less able to afford higher education. Only eight percent of Anglos in Texas are below the poverty level, compared to 26 percent of Hispanics and 19 percent of blacks, according to the Race and Ethnic Issues Institute. Half the minority students accepted to A&M in 1999 decided not to attend because they could not afford to, according to *The Eagle*. Unfortunately, according to *The New York Times*, merit-based grants going to students whose parents earn more than \$100,000 a year grew seven times faster between 1992 and 2000 than scholarships for those earning less than \$20,000.

While the FEA, which can provide up to \$2,000 a year for up to four years, will not pay for everything, it will help those who actually need it. It will get students who would otherwise skip college or attend out of state into an A&M classroom.

A&M is overwhelmingly white — more than 80 percent — even though, according to the 2000 Census, Hispanics and blacks make up 43 percent of the Texas population. These numbers are not going to change unless University officials actively seek to change them, which is exactly what Gates is attempting to do.

A more diverse and integrated campus is in the best interests of all A&M students because it helps them become more accepting and knowledgeable of other ethnicities. By pledging this money, Gates is not harming or taking away from white students. He is, however, trying to decrease the ethnic disparity present at A&M by showing he is personally committed to effecting change. The first step in doing that is to actually get more minority students enrolled and to help them pay for their education.

Jenelle Wilson is a junior political science major.

MAIL CALL

Offering \$1 million to fire Slocum tasteless

In response to David Sanguesa's Nov. 6 mail call:

A&M alumnus David Sanguesa urges that R.C. Slocum be replaced immediately, arguing that "For Vision 2020 we need leaders for our athletic programs." This suggests a profound misunderstanding of what it means to be a top ten public university (the goal set forth in Vision 2020).

As far as I can tell, the words "football" and "sports" do not occur anywhere in the main Vision 2020 document on the A&M Web site, "Creating a Culture of Excellence." This is as it should be, because universities are ranked on the basis of the quality of their teaching and research, not their sports teams' win/loss records.

Sanguesa says he will give \$1 million so a new head football coach can be paid a \$4 million annual salary. A one-time gift of \$4 million would permanently endow four distinguished professorships, a few times that many new junior faculty or many times that number of undergraduate scholarships. Any of these would genuinely further the goal of Vision 2020; a national football championship would not.

Perhaps Sanguesa has given large sums of money to A&M before, and perhaps his donations have benefited the University's mission of teaching and research. If so, I certainly praise him and sincerely thank him for that. But his Wednesday letter suggests a regrettably myopic view of what makes a university great.

Gary Varner Associate Professor of Philosophy

I find yesterday's mail call letter offering \$1 million disheartening. I could proclaim that I will give the University \$1 billion if they keep Slocum as coach, but it means little. I'm sure Sanguesa enjoyed publically touting himself as financially lucrative and a high roller, but his offer was in bad taste.

For someone who is apparently as successful as himself, I would think he would have a better idea of appropriate forum and method of delivery. If his offer is valid, I'm sure the athletic department would be happy to hear from him. By calling attention to himself and his agenda through public mediums, he has instead done a disservice to the coaching staff, the players and above all to the University he claims to care so much for.

Michael Balhoff Class of 2002

Slocum has given this University 30 years of his life, and has played a major role in preparing countless young men for challenges that they will face when football is gone. He took over as head coach at a time when A&M had a huge black mark against it, and has turned it into a reputable program. He runs a clean ship, and for the record, the Aggs lost to Tech three of the four seasons in which you were a student (1982, 1983 and 1984), so the comment about us becoming inferior to Tech doesn't hold much weight.

No matter how bad the team is, Slocum deserves respect, and if it is his time to go, he should be able to hold his head up high, knowing that the Aggies have supported him, both when we're winning and when we're getting outscored.

Andy Luten Class of 2005

A balanced education

Next generation of journalists must be better trained

As news consumers, readers should care about the education journalists are receiving. Just as you would learn about the education of a



MARIANO CASTILLO

doctor who will operate on a loved one, the public should show the same concern for the professionals who are recording the day's history. Readers should be aware that there is a raging debate over how journalists should be educated because the decisions taken by deans at journalism schools will directly impact the readers.

The debate regarding whether journalism education should be based around practical experience or academic theory is not new. For decades, universities have debated whether writing for the media is a profession or a craft. However, the debate has garnered greater attention recently after Columbia University President Lee Bollinger put the search for a new dean of journalism on hold. Bollinger instead put together a 30-member panel of journalism "all-stars" (filled with the likes of Bob Woodward and Clarence Page) to rethink the mission and tenets of the department.

With growing public discontentment for the media, the panel is a welcome sign. With luck, the attention it is producing will lead the public to expect more of professional journalists.

Increased technology has made communication easier. As a result, it is harder for journalists to find meaningful content to fill the greater number of media outlets.

Take, for instance, the coverage of the sniper shooting. On any given day during the crisis, there was a very limited amount of actual news. The filler that CNN and the other major networks were spewing was repetitive or irrelevant to the audience. One report depicted a female journalist shooting at a target to demonstrate how easy it is to fire a rifle.

Another important criticism of recent media coverage is its inability to understand the scope and importance of international news. Last month's bombing in Bali, for example, was an incident that, because of its terrorist

links, should have been played much more prominently by the American media. Instead, it was mentioned as foreign occurrence with no impact on U.S. audiences. Wrong. When terrorists strike with a plan of that magnitude, it is of definite impact to Americans. The media did not take as many lessons as it should have from Sept. 11.

These criticisms are valid evidence that who reports your news matters.

The next generation of journalists must be better trained, and the solution to the debate is a simple one. Journalism schools must develop the right balance between experience and theory for the good of the American public. A journalist must gain hands-on training to be effective in the craft of writing, but must be intelligent enough to question whether the work they are producing is meeting the expectations of their audience.

"The flap over Columbia's new dean and direction ... misses the point," wrote New York University's Jon Katz. He is absolutely right. "Journalism's urgent need isn't in the choice between craft or scholarship. It needs help with relevance, and the courage to undertake real change and reform."

This issue is especially important to college-age people. As Katz correctly points out, "Journalism has become irrelevant to younger Americans, and marginalized by those vibrant and ascending new information cultures — computer gaming, movies, music, graphic design, software, popular culture, the Net and the Web."

Not only is the public giving up on the idea of an objective, accurate media, but journalism students are also affected. There are some journalism students who find themselves disenchanted with the way the media covers certain events and are changing career paths. The result is a decrease in the would-be journalist talent pool, and an increase in the number of law school applicants.

Journalism educators would be wise to listen to the public's criticism and create a balance between the practical and scholarly that meets those standards.

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