

A step towards student involvement

Student appointed to co-chair committee is a rare instance of representation

Texas A&M President Dr. Robert M. Gates recently appointed a student as co-chairman of the committee in charge of finding a new vice president of Student Affairs.



JENELLE WILSON

Brandon Hill, executive vice president of the Student Government Association and senior agricultural business major, will help lead the search to replace Dr. J. Malon Southerland when he retires next August. While students have been members of search committees before, none have served as co-chair.

This is a positive step for students because it allows them to have more control of issues that directly affect them. The new vice president will have many opportunities to influence the lives of A&M students, including student organizations, Fish Camp and the Memorial Student Center, and students have a right to have a say in who is chosen for the position.

Unfortunately, this right was given by President Gates — it was not something many A&M students actively fought for.

College students do not have enough input in matters that concern them and much of it is their own fault. Young people have become apathetic to public affairs. In 1998, the Pew Research Center asked a representative sample of Americans how many minutes they spent the previous day getting news from various sources. Those aged 18-24 only spent an average of nine minutes reading a newspaper and a quarter of the sampled young people had spent no time the previous day getting news.

As a result, young people are often ignorant about what is going on in the world.

The 1994 National Election Study found only two percent of those aged 18-24 could identify the chief justice of the United States Supreme Court; only 40 percent knew the Supreme Court decides

whether or not laws are unconstitutional and only 39 percent knew that the president nominates federal judges.

This lack of knowledge continues today. In 2000, the National Election Study found that only 26 percent of 18-24 year-olds followed politics most or some of the time, compared

to 73 percent of the elderly older than age 65. This generational knowledge gap did not exist 30 years ago.

Transient populations, which include college students, are the least-represented populations in the United States because they vote less than any other age group. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, during the 2000 elections, only 51 percent of people ages 18-24 were registered to vote, compared to almost 71 percent of those ages 65-74. Only half of the registered college-age population voted.

The Census Bureau report cites residency requirements as a hurdle to college students participating in the democratic process. As students move, they are constantly forced to re-register. It quickly becomes a hassle and, as a result, almost one-half of American college students skip the process completely.

Luckily, some groups on campus are not so apathetic. Aggies for Democracy, for example, are seeking greater representation of A&M students in the College Station City Council and even though Jared Copeland did not win the election, he tried to change how A&M students are treated in the local court system by running for justice of the peace. The MSC's Current Issues Awareness tries to raise the knowledge of A&M students about contemporary public issues.

Despite these efforts, there needs to be more participation.

If young people want issues that affect them to be addressed, they must become proactive. They need to do more to look after their own interests. After all, there is no reason for President Gates or elected officials to care about matters that affect college-aged people if young people don't really care themselves.



JOSH DARWIN • THE BATTALION

Jenelle Wilson is a junior political science major.

Tennessee fraternity should not be disbanded

Kappa Sigma members wore blackface and dressed as Jackson 5 for Halloween

In the early morning hours of Oct. 23,



JENNIFER LOZANO

Aneisha Davis, president of the Black Student Alliance was driving near the University of Tennessee campus when she encountered a man in blackface and a cango hat, according to the *Daily Beacon*, University of Tennessee's daily newspaper.

Blackface is the term for facepaint whites used to darken their faces while acting in plays which typically served to "lampoon Negroes, performing songs and skits that sentimentalized the nightmare of slave life," according to Musicals101.com, a Web site on the history of musical entertainment.

Davis was told that the man in blackface was a Kappa Sigma member who was impersonating Louis Armstrong. In addition to the Armstrong impersonator, five other members

were in blackface depicting the Jackson 5. Although Kappa Sigma members claim they were just having fun, Davis and other student leaders of the black community at the University of Tennessee have correctly pressed the administration for acknowledgement and reparations for this ignorant, racially insensitive and disrespectful act.

However, the strength of the 12-point proposal issued by the directors council, an organization composed of black student leaders, is diminished by not focusing on the importance of sound diversity education in the college community. Instead, the proposal includes several excessive demands that attack personal freedoms and only exacerbates the tense racial situation on campus and inhibit communication between the two opposing factions.

According to the *Daily Beacon*, the proposal asked for a public apology from both Kappa Sigma and the university, as well as suspension of the fraternity.

In addition, the proposal requested the creation of an honor code of respect to be signed by all incoming and current students, the creation of a minority judicial task force and a student-run board to monitor the increase of hiring, tenure and promotion of minority faculty and staff. Although some of these suggestions are progressive and fair, to ask for the immediate removal of the fraternity without an investigation or fair trial and the permanent placement of this "incident" on the record of those involved is excessive and off-target.

As Massimo Pigilucci pointed out in a *Daily Beacon* editorial, although the students involved should have known better, there is no way to know whether the students were maliciously and overtly trying to be racist or if they were simply being ignorant and naive. Although not a good excuse, if this is the case, they deserve a chance to speak their piece and give their subjective account of the matter before being expelled from school.

As for the permanent placement of this transgression on the students record, the U.S. Constitution protects all types of speech, not just the kind that appeals to the mass majority. The students have a right to such speech, therefore this transgression does not belong on the students' records. The incident needs to be viewed for what it is: a lack of education.

According to the *Daily Beacon*, Kappa Sigma had recently attended a sensitivity seminar regarding race issues and has had previous problems with blackface incidents.

However, the severity of the matter has yet to be comprehended. Unfortunately, no singular amount of punitive action or limiting of students' free speech can instill this type of understanding. Only with "long-term, encompassing" educational programs, as Pigilucci demands, can this type of racial understanding be achieved.

Jennifer Lozano is a senior English major.

MAIL CALL

Young Conservatives initiate IRS investigation

In response to Mariano Castillo's Nov. 12 column:

The Young Conservatives of Texas (YCT) is saddened but not surprised at the lack of facts in Castillo's column, particularly that Texas A&M returned need-based monies in excess of \$850,000 this year. To correct what Castillo writes about our Web page, we want progress for this campus. While YCT wants Texas A&M to move forward, Castillo and Vision 2020 would have the campus move left.

Castillo's argument that Gates' donation and Vision 2020's diversity imperative recruit and retain qualified minority students regardless of race defies logic. Race-based recruiting and scholarships do not disregard race — it is their only focus. It would be wise of Castillo to realize that one person's social commentary, misconstrued, becomes another's race-baiting fodder.

Castillo should be ashamed to suggest that YCT wish to block the admission of qualified minority students. What YCT does oppose is the use of scholarships and recruiting to fill racial quotas. "Diversity" has long been the shield used to espouse and practice discrimination on this campus. The word "racist" has become the cheapest defense against debate and the poorest argument against logic.

Castillo is right about one thing. YCT has not properly responded to the Texas A&M administration's use of race-based recruiting and scholarships. Heeding Castillo's call for action, Tuesday, YCT initiated an IRS investigation of the scholarship fund. Its use of race while maintaining a tax-exempt status is a violation of the IRS code 501 c 3. We would like to thank Castillo for helping us realize that empty rhetoric will no longer do and that real, substantive action is needed to fight racism. Aggies have a lot in common; let's try to focus on those aspects for a change.

Tyler Dunman
Chairman of the Young
Conservatives of Texas A&M

A&M has responsibility to recruit best students

In response to Mariano Castillo's Nov. 12 column:

The most racist implication of the Young Conservatives' rhetoric is their assumption that scholarship money intended to recruit minority students can only be used to recruit under-qualified students.

To fear this is to state that there are not qualified minority students to which administration officials can offer scholarships to. The administration is offering scholarships to minority stu-

dents in order to entice the best and the brightest minority students to our campus.

The Texas A&M University administration has an obligation to try to recruit the best, brightest and most diverse faculty, staff, and student body to create a community that is reflective of the ethnic, geographic, and economic makeup of the state of Texas. It is incumbent upon all of us to create an open and welcoming climate for students of any color, creed or background. The actions and statements of the Young Conservatives of Texas do not help us to achieve this.

Barry Hammond
Class of 2003

Coalition boycott similar to Civil Rights Movement

In response to Richard Bray's Oct. 23 column:

Martin Luther King Jr. was frequently criticized for using nonviolent direct action to correct injustice. In his letter from a Birmingham jail, King wrote, "You deplore the demonstrations, but your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations."

Richard Bray's column criticized the peaceful activism of the Coalition for Life while completely failing to address

the conditions that brought about these actions.

According to numbers reported by *The Eagle* and the Texas Department of Health, Planned Parenthood is now the leading cause of death in Brazos County. Annual deaths reported by cause: heart disease — 195, cancer — 165, accidents — 46, HIV/AIDS — 8, abortion at Planned Parenthood — 509.

Simply stated, Planned Parenthood's controversial facility in Bryan exploits women and destroys human life. For this reason, 60 churches and thousands of individuals in Aggieland have united in opposition to Planned Parenthood's harmful agenda. For this reason, more than 400 people have

committed to pray outside of the abortion facility, peacefully protesting every day and every hour the clinic is open. For this reason, people of faith want to know what businesses support Planned Parenthood so they won't indirectly underwrite that which they morally oppose. For this reason, community support for the Coalition for Life is growing more rapidly than ever.

Has this all gone too far? Absolutely: since 1999 over 1,460 children have died at Planned Parenthood in Bryan. That's why the Coalition for Life is doing something about it.

David Bereit
Executive Director, Coalition for Life

