

WOMEN CAN YELL TOO

Aggies should overcome their fears and elect a female yell leader

No one expects elected officials to perfectly reflect the makeup of their constituency. But sometimes the homogeneity found at certain positions is ridiculous. For example, despite the fact that Texas A&M has a sizable female population, there has yet to be a female yell leader. Therefore, if a female Aggie who possesses the popularity, the determination and — most importantly — enough Aggie spirit to become an A&M yell leader, she should not hesitate to run for the position.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Unfortunately, the prospect of female yell leaders has proven controversial in the past. For example, in 1972, Student Senate leaders protested a resolution that would delete the word "female" from the necessary yell leader qualifications. Committee chairman Fred Campbell told

the Eagle that the change was initiated "to keep with the changing makeup of the campus." But Campbell was quick to point out that most members of his committee were not "gung-ho for the idea of having a girl yell leader." The controversy continued in 1975 when Rajesh Kent, a representative of Law, Puryear and Cain halls was denounced at a Puryear Hall Council meeting because he had voted for the resolution that would allow women to run for yell leader, according to The Battalion.

"Nominating one of their outstanding female cadets as one of their 'Corps Bloc' of candidates would send a strong message to the A&M community that anyone... should have the consideration of student voters."

In a Battalion article earlier that year, writer Robert Cessna asked, "When will we have women yell leaders? Or will they always be out of place?" Cessna asked the then current yell leaders and their consensus was "female yell leaders would only make us a carbon copy of other schools." This is a ridiculous statement. Whether filled by a male or female, the A&M yell leader is a one-of-a-kind tradition and never a "carbon copy." It is disappointing that some of A&M's previous yell leaders allowed their prejudices to blind them to the strength and mar-

velous nature of their own position. In the Cessna article, one of the yell leaders, Jim Mickler said of a female yell leader, "I can't see a girl doing some things... There would be a lot of problems." Hank Paine, head yell leader for the 1972-'73 academic year, agreed, telling The Eagle he feared "... females would not be able to meet some of the more physically demanding requirements." These fears are silly. Granted, anyone who runs for yell leader must have the mental fortitude to withstand the scrutiny associated with the position. But the notion that only males can handle the physical requirements is laughable.

For instance, some proponents of a male-only yell leader policy may argue that men's voices are naturally deeper and louder than women's, therefore making them more suitable for the position of "yell" leader. But despite their title, yell leaders yell quite infrequently and often use a microphone when addressing a crowd. Male-only supporters might point out that male yell leaders are better equipped to race up and down the sidelines during football games. But this argument ignores the fact that standing up during an entire football game is a strenuous activity, and thousands of female

Aggies do so every game day. Male-only proponents may also argue that female yell leaders might feel uncomfortable being handled by mostly male Corps freshmen when the yell leaders are chased, caught and dunked in Fish Pond after an Aggie victory. But any female running for yell leader would know that this activity is part of the position's duties and would do anything possible to keep A&M tradition alive.

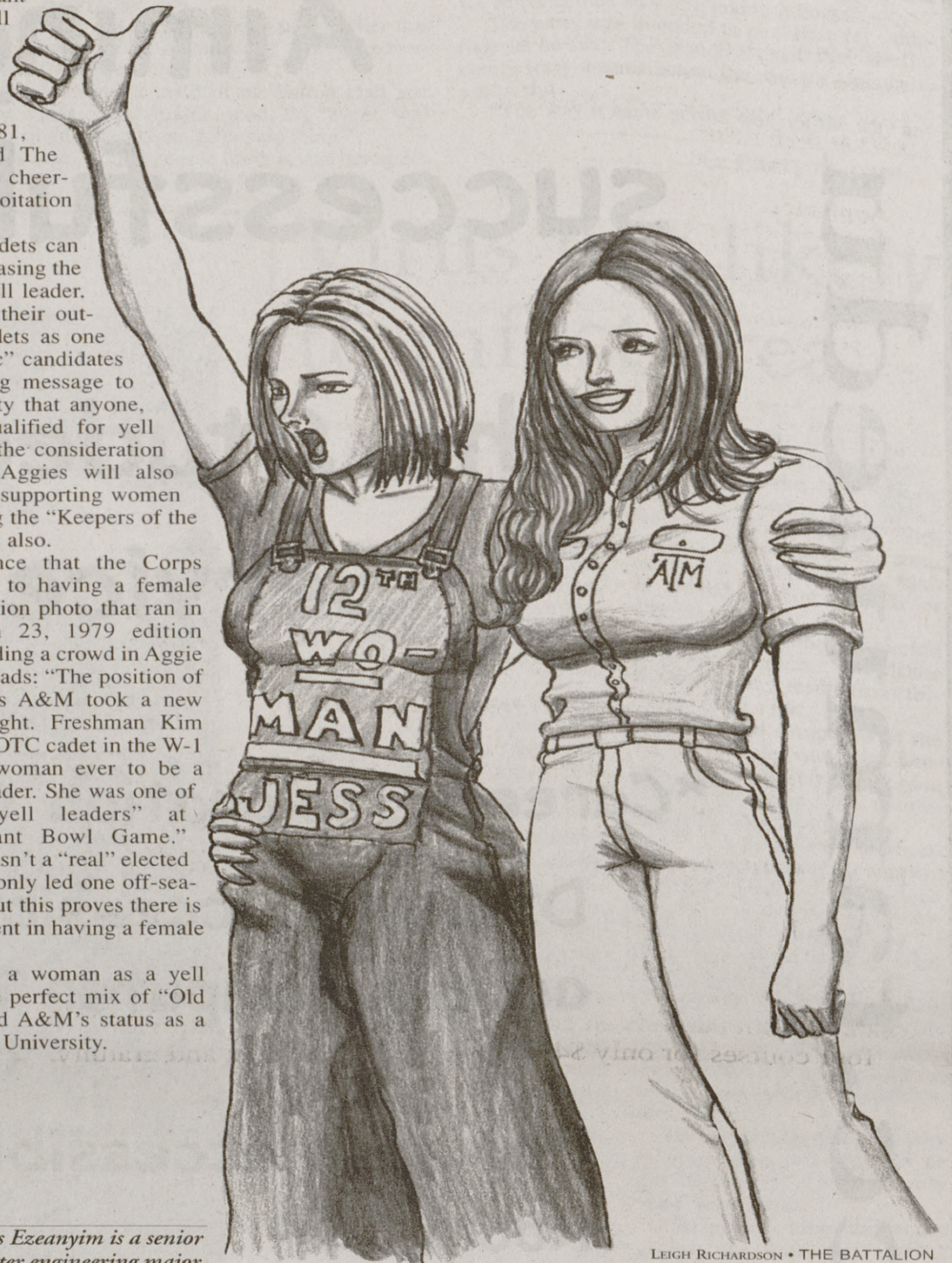
Many Aggies fear female yell leaders will automatically lead to cheerleaders. But this fear is irrational. And it's misogynistic to think that a female yell leader

will automatically want to remake the yell leader tradition into a cheerleading position. In fact, one woman who ran for yell leader in 1981, Sarah Findlay, told The Battalion, "I despise cheerleaders. It is an exploitation of women."

The Corps of Cadets can play a large role in easing the way for a female yell leader. Nominating one of their outstanding female cadets as one of their "Corps Bloc" candidates would send a strong message to the A&M community that anyone, male or female, qualified for yell leader should have the consideration of student voters. Aggies will also have an easier time supporting women yell leaders knowing the "Keepers of the Spirit" support them also.

There is evidence that the Corps would be receptive to having a female yell leader. A Battalion photo that ran in the Friday, March 23, 1979 edition depicts a female leading a crowd in Aggie yells. The caption reads: "The position of yell leader at Texas A&M took a new shape Thursday night. Freshman Kim Manuel, an Army ROTC cadet in the W-1 unit was the first woman ever to be a Texas A&M yell leader. She was one of five freshmen 'yell leaders' at Thursday's Elephant Bowl Game." Granted, Manuel wasn't a "real" elected yell leader and she only led one off-season March game. But this proves there is a successful precedent in having a female yell leader.

Indeed, electing a woman as a yell leader would be the perfect mix of "Old Army" tradition and A&M's status as a large, cosmopolitan University.



Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

LEIGH RICHARDSON • THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Gates' stance was mischaracterized

For the record, I am compelled to correct several errors and misimpressions in the two articles that ran on Jan. 15, based on an interview between myself and a representative of University Relations.

With respect to the article on improving the faculty, I did not say — and have never said — that we need to improve the "quality" of our faculty. The faculty we have are terrific. What I did say in the interview — and many times elsewhere — is that we need to increase the number of the faculty, their pay and the number of endowed chairs and professorships.

With respect to the article on Senator Ogden, diversity and me, I did not say that the new vice president for institutional diversity would have little authority and would have only an advisory role. I said that the position would have a very small staff, much like the vice presidents for government relations and Development (both of whom have authority), and that I wanted the person in the position to be a facilitator and a positive influence on the campus — not a divisive person.

Your headline suggests that The Battalion is trying to pick a fight between Sen. Ogden and myself on diversity. Yet, you quote him as saying that diversity is "about making A&M a more welcoming place, not filling quotas." That is exactly my position, and Sen. Ogden and I have discussed this. The initiatives have nothing to do with quotas, preferential treatment, lowering of standards or the

like. They are intended, as the Senator said, simply to make this campus a more welcoming one for all, repeat all, members of the Aggie family.

Robert M. Gates
Texas A&M President

Bush targets Iraq for a reason

In response to Brieanne Porter's Jan. 15 column:

Porter's argument that the Bush administration hasn't recognized North Korea as a dangerous threat is preposterous. On several instances since Sept. 11, 2001, I have heard Bush include North Korea with Iraq in the axis of evil. Porter quotes the Associated Press on news that has already happened. North Korea has already built such a weapon during the time in which it was in agreement with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. She goes on to say, "The Bush administration has stated repeatedly that it would prefer a diplomatic approach to the situation." Porter doesn't seem to understand that Iraq is more dangerous because it has used weapons in the past.

In a card game knowing your opponents hand often yields to confident play. Knowing that North Korea has a nuclear program with weapons is better than not knowing and fearing what Saddam is hiding.

The Bush administration has tackled the North Korean problem in a diplomatic way through economic sanctions. Here Porter

states that the United Nations should have imposed sanctions after North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. What more sanctions could you impose? Lets just take their food away and let them starve and see if they want to fight.

Imposing more sanctions is not the answer to this solution. Bush doesn't want to starve the North Koreans to war. We also don't want to fight a war on two fronts. Lets take on one evil at a time, and live to fight the next one.

I also wanted to comment that slandering two national leaders is not good policy. You can't say that Jong Il is a porn lover based on a cartoon in an editorial, nor should you wrongfully or ignorantly question a President's policy.

David A. Johnston
Class of 2003

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.

Socializing Texas higher education dangerous

The cost of public education in Texas could soon be on the rise for at least half of the state's residents if a group of Texas legislators and education officials has its way. The Dallas Morning News reported on Jan. 10 that the state's top public university officials are asking the Texas Legislature to give them the power of setting their own tuition rates.



KELLN ZIMMER

The plan, first unveiled to the University of Texas Board of Regents in December by Mark Yudof, UT System Chancellor, would call for the Texas Legislature to relinquish its yearly duty of setting public school tuition rates and would pass the task on to the universities themselves. Universities already have control of fees they bill to students; fees which make up the majority of student costs. These have been steadily rising, and if the power to set tuition rates is given to unelected university officials, there is no telling how high the price of public education in Texas will explode. Given the \$30 million that Texas A&M is asking the government for this year, either students or the public will pay more, or A&M will have to go without. Sen. Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, is quoted in the Dallas Morning News article as saying, "If you totally deregulate tuition, I'd be hard pressed to explain to anyone how public universities would be any different from SMU."

According to the plan described by Yudof, there is a possibility that tuition and fees will be waived for students with

family incomes less than the \$41,000 state median. This would affect more than half of the families in Texas. The average cost of attending a Texas public institution is slightly more than \$2,800, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The costs of attending Texas schools has risen more than 63 percent in the last decade; Texas tuition rates are currently \$44 per credit hour.

In the Dec. 14 edition of the Austin American Statesman, Yudof addressed the UT Board of Regents, telling them, "We can take care of one heck of a lot of Texans if you'll let us manage it. If you want to give the Board of Regents the authority over tuition... we'll make sure we can take care of at least half of all Texas families."

It would seem that by waiving tuition and fees for more than half of the families in Texas while leaving no real surplus of funds for universities. It is unreasonable to think that students from higher-income families should be forced to pay higher tuition rates for the same education as lower-income families. Financial aid and scholarships should be used to expand accessibility to the university rather than selectively increasing tuition. The beauty of the Texas system of higher education is the fact that tuition rates are reasonable enough to allow many Texas families to afford to send their children to Texas schools.

The state is facing a \$10 billion state deficit, and with that news there is expected to be no additional funding for A&M or UT in the coming year. This creates a prime environment for the deregulation issue to be pushed to passage. Proponents will argue that if

the state cannot provide schools with the funds they need, then universities should be allowed to acquire funds in other ways. Gov. Rick Perry, Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, and possibly House Speaker Tom Craddick have all been reported to be in support of deregulation.

It is a noble goal to attempt to exempt students from tuition, thus granting access to higher education to a much broader range of Texans, but unfortunately, that is not the goal of tuition deregulation, and it should not be seen as such by Texans. Saying that half of Texas families will not pay tuition is a piece of rhetoric offered by proponents of deregulation in order to obtain its passage. This is not an issue about making Texas education more affordable or accessible; it is about making money at the expense of Texas families.

Students and their families should be aware of the deregulation issue and voice their concerns. The issue of tuition deregulation has a strong possibility of passing during the Legislative session that convened this week. Legislators should cherish the system, the quality, and the affordability of Texas public universities. University officials should not be given unlimited control of their school tuition rates. Just as it is the responsibility of the Texas government to ensure the quality of its public education, it is also Texas' responsibility to ensure that higher education remains within the economic grasps of all Texas families.

Kelln Zimmer is a senior english major.