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OPINION

STUDENTS MISREPRESENTED

Residence Hall Association too concerned with unimportant internal matters

It's one of the largest student organizations at Texas A&M. Every student who has ever lived on campus has been a member of it, yet few people have heard of it, and those who have often don't have a clue as to what the organization does.

The name of this gigantic yet seldom-heard-of organization is the Residence Hall Association. In its constitution, RHA claims as its members the more than 8,500 students currently living in residence halls, and defines its purpose to include representing on-campus students and helping residence halls to govern themselves. Yet lately, RHA has become more concerned with unimportant internal matters and projecting a positive image than



NICHOLAS NEUMANN

actually passing productive legislation.

RHA meets biweekly in general assemblies and requires each residence hall to have two members of its hall council in attendance.

According to its Web site, rha.tamu.edu, RHA voted last semester on six resolutions, yet only one of these dealt with non-internal matters; those that would directly affect the people RHA represents. The remaining resolutions dealt with the structure of the RHA bureaucracy and its official stance on issues irrelevant to on-campus students or anyone not on the hall council.

This hardly fulfills RHA's mission of representing its constituents.

This semester is no different, as RHA has passed only one resolution beneficial to its public, concerning Muster. The remaining resolution proposals, too, were of little consequence to on-campus students. When an organization spends more time arguing over itself than doing things that really matter, something is wrong.

Sadly, RHA's work this school year has had very little to do with its original reason for existence, and is instead an example of what happens when bureaucracy becomes so rampant within an organization that no actual work is accomplished.

Over the years, the RHA bureaucracy has grown to include a Board of Directors that contains more than 20 positions, most of which are appointed by an executive board. Almost all of these are voting positions, which detracts from the influence and voice of the representatives each residence hall sends to RHA meetings.

Last semester, some within RHA were upset with the growing influence the Board of Directors was having and presented a resolution to take away the voting rights of non-elected positions, thus taking a first step toward eliminating the weight of the bureaucracy. Not surprisingly, the resolution was defeated, likely because those who would have had their voting rights removed voted on the resolution.

Along with becoming too much of a bureaucracy to get useful things done, this year, RHA has focused too much energy on making people think it is important instead of truly doing important things. Last semester, it established and enforced a controversial business casual dress code that was never voted on at a general assembly. When opposition to the imposed dress code mounted, RHA Vice President of Relations Chris Mahaffey sent out an e-mail to the RHA listserv stating, "We are aiming to be the premier organization at this university, and I'm afraid that looking ratty isn't

going to cut it."

While trying to project this aura of importance, RHA has also become more of a nuisance to some hall councils and on-campus residents than anything else.

Clements Hall's RHA Delegate Alex Metcalf said he could not recall a single thing that RHA did in the past year and a half that has had a positive impact on his hall.

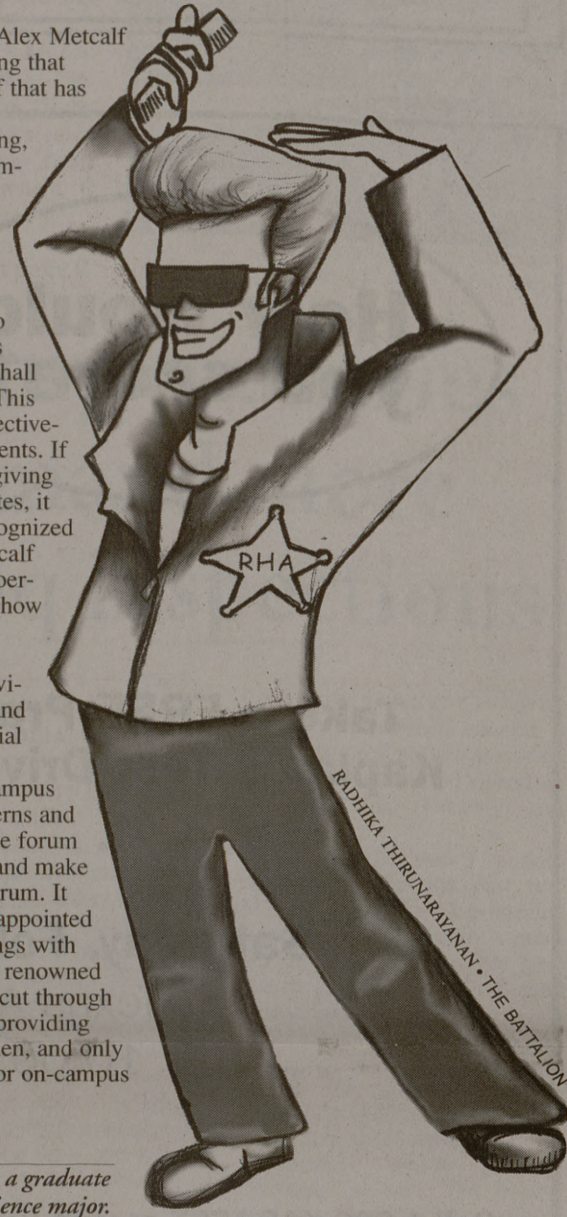
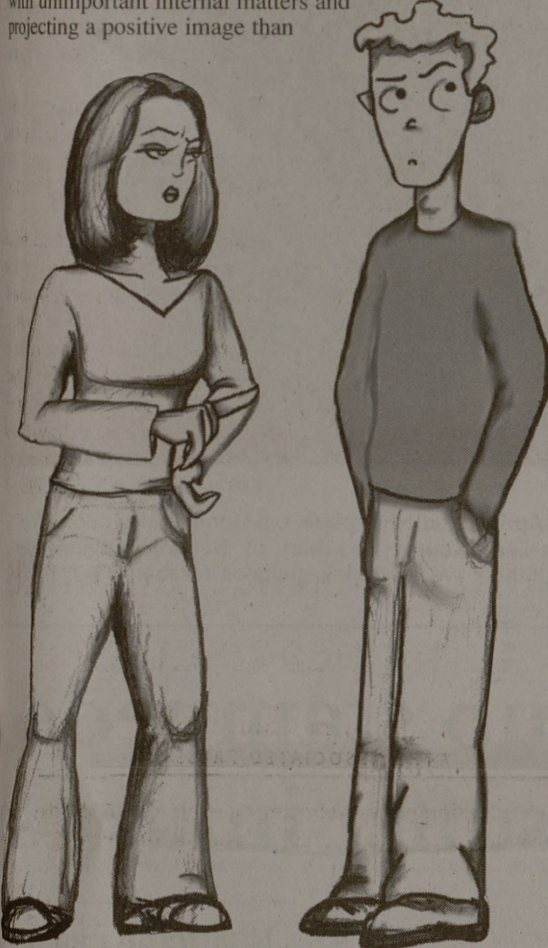
RHA forces halls to do its bidding, regardless of halls' wishes. For example, if a hall accumulates three unexcused absences from general assemblies, RHA will issue a request to have that hall's financial accounts frozen.

Each hall is required to send two delegates to a leadership retreat this semester and must give \$160 of its hall council's money to RHA to do so. This \$160 could be used much more effectively on programs for each hall's residents. If a hall council does not comply by giving RHA \$160 and sending two delegates, it faces the penalty of not being a recognized student organization next year. Metcalf said RHA has to "use threats and coercion to get participation shows just how unnecessary it is."

RHA was created with a worthwhile purpose. Over time, it has deviated from what it should be doing and concerned itself with more superficial matters.

Thousands of students live on campus and need a way to voice their concerns and opinions, and RHA is an appropriate forum for this. RHA needs to realize this and make a concerted effort to become this forum. It should remove the voting rights of appointed officers and stop dominating meetings with internal arguments. It can attain the renowned status it strives for, but first it must cut through its bureaucracy and focus more on providing services to on-campus residents. Then, and only then, will RHA become the voice for on-campus residents that it used to be.

Nicholas Neumann is a graduate computer science major.



RADHIKA THIRUNAVARAN - THE BATTALION

Gays denied rights

Marla Dukler, a 17-year-old high school honor student, and the American Civil Liberties Union are suing Klein Independent School District in Harris County for its failure to approve a proposal to form a Gay-Straight Alliance, according to The New York Times. The school district has been sitting on the proposal since October, despite a federal law guaranteeing students the right to form such a club if other non-curricular clubs already exist at the school.



JENELLE WILSON

continued to allow other clubs, including the drama club, student council, the Beta Club, and cheerleading and sports teams, to continue to meet.

The Rev. Tim York of the Heritage Temple Free Will Baptist Church was the club's most ardent critic, and organized protests against the club. York fears the GSAs are recruiting high school students to become homosexuals, according to The New York Times. This paranoia is so pronounced in some members of the community that the club's sponsor is even prohibited from saying hello to one student whose parents feel he could be turned gay.

These people really need to be reasonable. GSA clubs are about tolerance and not about sex or "recruiting." They are about making GLBT students feel safe and accepted. If students come out as a result of a GSA club, it is not because they were "turned" gay; they already were, but were just too insecure to admit it.

According to Dukler, Klein High School needs something to help promote tolerance "to make it bearable to walk down the hallway." She told The New York Times about a day in December when she was shoved into a wall of lockers and called a "dyke" and a "faggot." She says, "There is verbal abuse everywhere."

Schools have a responsibility to make sure all of their students feel safe and are not attacked while walking down the hallway. If supporting a GSA will help to promote a little tolerance, then that's what the school should do, nevermind that it's required to do it. The school's main focus should be its students, not the homophobia of parents or community leaders.

The opening of a GSA will not lead to a sadomasochism or bigamy club, as Bill O'Reilly on Fox News recently suggested when he interviewed Capehart. It will not lead to students turning gay and having sex in the hallways. It will, however, lead to GLBT students having some allies during a very difficult part of their lives, which is the most important thing.

Jenelle Wilson is a senior political science major.

Title IX hurts men's sports

Title IX, a law banning sexual discrimination in collegiate and high school sports, has aided many female athletic departments in getting recognition and funding for teams that might not exist without it. Since its enactment in 1972, women's athletic programs have grown exponentially, from less than



SARA FOLEY

Coaches Association filed a lawsuit last year, protesting the significant amount of wrestling programs cut to comply with equality figures stated in Title IX. This, along with many other complaints, caused Education Secretary Roderick R. Paige to establish a commission to review the current Title IX practices and

to possibly dilute the strength of this contradictory law, according to cnn.com.

The commission, which concluded Jan. 31, provided Paige with a list of suggestions, most of which were geared at clarifying current procedures. One suggestion is to allow campus surveys to gauge student interest, and to establish programs based on the results. The most controversial change would allow for as little as 43 percent of the varsity slots to be allocated for females, despite the percentage of female students being higher than that, according to Washingtonpost.com. Although these amendments might seem to be taking a step backward, in actuality, they would provide equality instead of a growing preference toward women's sports, an unnatural partiality mandated by law instead of real interest.

The original law involves a three-part test, stating that either the male and female participation in sports must be proportionate to the student body composition, that female athletic opportunities must be added, or by verifying that the interests of women

at the school are being met. The result of this has been the continual addition of sports programs for women on college campuses and the elimination of some male programs, due to budget constraints. The law wasn't designed to put males at a disadvantage, according to an interview Paige had with the Washington Post.

Legislation demanding equality will only bring about ineffective results, such as the unnecessary addition of women's programs strictly for the purpose of equality. While Title IX has brought women significant strides in equality, the necessity of the ruling has timed out. Women's sports will continue to grow, with or without legislation to force its growth. Considering the significance women's sports now hold, Title IX will give women aid they don't need at the expense of men. This has already happened on several college campuses, such as Providence College, which was forced to cut three men's sports programs to allow room in the budget for female programs that have drawn little interest, according to cnn.com.

The suggestions raised by the commission head in the right direction, and are scheduled to be reviewed and decided upon by Paige by the end of February, according to Washingtonpost.com. By adopting a more relaxed attitude toward Title IX enforcement, schools will take steps to achieve equality instead of merely proclaiming compliance with it.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major.

MAIL CALL

Protesters forget history

I was once again annoyed at seeing the various articles in The Battalion today about antiwar protests throughout the world. Nothing agitates me more than young people assuming they have all the answers and are the sole source of wisdom. Consequently, it's not coincidental at all that most of the antiwar protesters are young. I'll wager that few of these people know why wars happen. In their youthful idealism which

they disguise as cynical questioning of the establishment, they do not realize that the only worse alternative to a brutal war is a false peace that leads to a far more brutal war later on. I am of course talking of World War II.

These people have forgotten what their grandparents have gone through. They have never known what it is like to hear rumors of German troop movements on the border on Monday and have their country occupied on Friday. Ever been to Blitzkrieged?

My grandparents have, and keep in mind this was only 60 years ago and both of them are alive and well with very clear memories. It was practically yesterday. WWII happened because the established peace-keeping body, the League of Nations, refused to take a stand, assuming that the Kellogg-Briand pact, which supposedly outlawed war, would restrain Germany.

Lars Doucet Class of 2006