

## Too much work, no credit

Engineering 111 and 112 classes are too difficult for number of hours given

Many Texas A&M students couldn't imagine having to build an air-powered car on a budget of \$50. Nor could they imagine a class that requires the design of a device that launches pingpong balls, while at the same time has them completing complicated problem-solving homework, creating intricate and detailed drawings and passing tough common exams. But this is what freshman engineering students taking the engineering 111 and 112 courses deal with every semester.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Many engineering students feel these courses are two of the most rigorous offered by the University, which is why it is surprising that students who survive them are only rewarded two credit hours for their efforts. The college of engineering should increase the number of credit hours given for engineering 111/112 so they more accurately reflect the intense effort involved in passing these courses.

Fortunately for future engineering students, a task force headed by Dr. Jo W. Howze, associate dean of engineering for the college of engineering and assistant director of the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, has been set up to assess engineering 111/112. The task force will reportedly suggest whether to increase the number of credit hours given for the classes and has sought input from students who have taken the courses.

This is important because many engineering 111/112 students believe that the two courses are "weed out" classes. That is, they are designed to filter out an arbitrary number of students from engineering by whatever means possible — including making them undergo strenuous course work while only getting slightly more credit than the standard kinesiology course.

Dr. Mark Holtzapple of the Department of

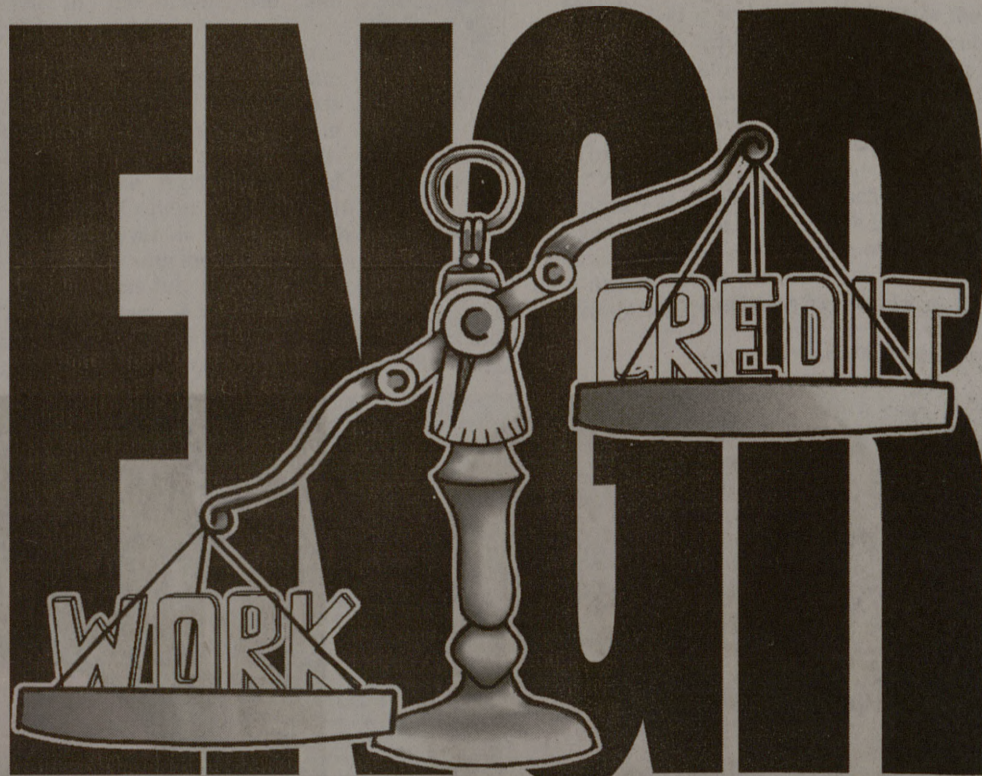
Chemical Engineering, an engineering 112 professor and co-author of "Foundations of Engineering," the textbook used by engineering 111/112 students says the college of engineering doesn't make any attempt to weed out students. "In fact, the truth is the exact opposite. There is a lot of concern among the administration that we retain engineering students," Holtzapple adds, "In our effort to retain students, we did not want to dumb down the course."

Holtzapple is correct. The amount of material covered in engineering 111/112 shouldn't change. But according to the history of engineering 111/112 available at the engineering 112 Web site (engineering112.tamu.edu), before the formation of engineering 111/112 in 1998, freshman engineers took engineering 109, a three-hour course that introduced students to the engineering discipline, and environmental design 105, a two-hour graphics course. Administrators then decided to fuse the two courses "... into a single two-semester course sequence designated engineering 111 and engineering 112."

Essentially, engineering 111 and engineering 112, which have a problem-solving component and a graphics component, are two courses in one. Logically, it would make sense if each were a five-hour course. Even a four-hour course would prove beneficial to engineering students, but rewarding two hours for the amount of work involved is not fair.

Holtzapple said, "The reason for two credit hours is historical. When engineering 111/112 was created, there was a concern among the engineering departments that the state was going to limit the total number of credit hours for graduation. Also, at the time, there was a very large core curriculum in the humanities that squeezed the number of credit hours allowed for engineering courses."

It appears these reasons no longer hinder the addition of credit hours to engineering 111/112.



"Since that time, there has been a reduction in the humanities core curriculum," Holtzapple said. "Also, in the last few years, I have not heard of an effort by the state to reduce credit hours."

Holtzapple says he favors adding credit hours to engineering 111/112. "Perhaps the time is right to relook at this issue and consider adding credit hours." He said the number of credit hours given for engineering 111/112 makes some freshman engineering majors cranky.

There may be one positive with only giving two credit hours to engineering 111/112. "One

way of looking at it is that it costs you more money to take classes with more credit hours," Holtzapple says. "Look at all the education we provide in engineering 111/112 for a discount price!" True, but many engineering majors would likely be willing to pay the higher cost if it means the blood, sweat and tears involved in completing engineering 111/112 is properly reflected on their transcript.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major. Graphic by Radhika Thirunarayanan.

## Tax cuts inappropriate during time of war

President Bush's proposal is bad politics

(U-WIRE) LOS ANGELES — At the height of the Cold War, President John F. Kennedy stood in front of the nation and boldly declared that sacrifice was something required of all Americans. When he proclaimed, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," the American public took him seriously and was willing to forego short-term luxuries in exchange for long-term benefits. How times have changed!

Today, at the height of our war against Iraq, President George W. Bush is declaring a lot of things to the American public, but a call to sacrifice is not among the White House's declarations.

Instead of focusing on issues that benefit the common good, Bush has been playing to America's greed, promising huge tax cuts for those who don't need it. It seems rather hypocritical of the Bush administration to call on some Americans (our troops fighting in Iraq) to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country, while giving benefits to others (the wealthy targets of the tax cut).

If the Bush administration were to have a motto, it could easily be "Ask not what you can do for your country, but what your country can do for your bank account."

Now, I am not necessarily criticizing the need for a tax cut. Some economists, who know a lot more than I do about governmental fiscal policy, seem to think it's a pretty good idea. I am criticizing

Bush's timing. It is completely inappropriate to be discussing a huge tax cut for the rich while soldiers, many of them poor, are dying.

Bush sends a mixed message to the American people when he asks so much from our troops — those he calls "our best citizens" — and so little from those who can afford to give much more.

Bush's proposal calls for a \$674 billion tax cut and its centerpiece is a \$300 billion tax reduction resulting from the elimination of the dividend tax. If you think I'm playing class warfare when I call it a tax cut for the rich, take a look at the numbers.

Let's use our soldiers as an example. Mark Shields, a nationally known columnist and CNN commentator writes, "Bush's tax break won't do much for those Americans doing the fighting, you see, because the base pay for a staff sergeant is \$21,247.20 and for a first lieutenant it's \$30,182.40, which would mean an average tax-cut for all American service personnel in those ranks or below of approximately \$148." That is not enough to buy a quarter's worth of books at the UCLA bookstore!

What about the wealthiest Americans? Don't worry; they are well taken care of. Under Bush's plan, someone pulling in about one million dollars per year will get a tax break of approximately \$90,222 — more than enough to pay for books, housing and tuition at the University of California at Los Angeles for more than six

years. A tax cut for the wealthy? Obviously. Does it help those who are currently risking their lives to defend us? Not at all.

I am not the only one who thinks this is the wrong time to discuss a huge tax cut.

In his first "60 Minutes" debate with Bob Dole, Bill Clinton stated, "Never before have we had a big tax cut in times of national crisis. Lincoln didn't. FDR didn't. With over 200,000 young Americans in the Persian Gulf, we shouldn't. It's wrong and it's bad economics." Admittedly, Clinton is not a very unbiased source of criticism, but he makes a good point.

Traditionally, the United States has waited until the bullets stop flying to talk tax cuts. This is a good precedent to follow.

Victory in Iraq is a good thing and tax cuts are a good thing, just not together. With the war approaching a speedy end, Bush should realize that his tax cuts can wait a few months out of respect for our soldiers.

Kennedy's call for sacrifice is as applicable today as it was 40 years ago. Let's hope that Bush echoes his call and reminds people that in times of national crisis, Americans, both rich and poor, need to do whatever they can for their country. We can wait on the benefits of what our country can do for us.

Doug Ludlow is a columnist at the University of California-Los Angeles.

## Easily saved lives

Needle exchange programs need funds

If politics consisted exclusively of black and white facts, there would be no partisanship for the proper policy, role of government would be clearly defined and there would be no room for dispute. However, political affairs often contain gray areas in which decisions must be made to obtain the greater good, sometimes through the means of what many believe to be a lesser evil.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

For example, for some time a debate has existed in the United States over whether it is proper and effective to use federal money to fund needle exchange programs. In such programs, injection drug users are permitted to exchange potentially contaminated syringes for sterile ones, resulting in the decrease of needle sharing and the spread of blood-borne pathogens such as HIV.

No person familiar with the effects of injection drug use can effectively label the habit a positive practice. However, no person familiar with the effects of AIDS can label the virus a pleasant experience. When the federal government is able, it should work within its power to prevent more people from contracting this horrible, terminal disease.

Every year, approximately 40,000 Americans are infected with HIV, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. One-half of these Americans are younger than 25 years old. Despite the popular belief that sexual intercourse is the predominant cause of AIDS, one-half of all new HIV infections are

caused by injection drug use, according to the AIDSscience Web site.

There is sound reason behind the plans President George W. Bush announced during his last State of the Union address for AIDS prevention in Africa. The life expectancy rates in African countries such as Zimbabwe have dropped from 65 to 39 years due to AIDS, according to CNN. However, the president must not forget that almost one million Americans are living with and dying from AIDS. The average infected American lives less than two years after contracting the virus. America must fund programs to prevent more people from suffering from this deadly disease.

Why has the federal government been resistant to implementing NEPs, which are supported by the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United Nations? Why did the federal government put a ban on the use of federal funds for NEPs in 1998?

First, the United States has long enforced a zero-tolerance policy toward illicit drug use, preferring criminal punishment to medical prevention and treatment. This mentality often leads to the belief that NEPs result in increased drug use. However, studies from the AIDSscience Web site show that these programs do not increase the rate of drug use or crime in areas where they are used. The programs do not encourage or assist drug use. They merely ensure that a person who cannot or will not cease needle drug use will not be at risk of an HIV infection.

In fact, NEPs serve as piv-

otal starting points for drug treatment and rehabilitation. According to the Dogwood Center Web site, Dr. Robert Brooner of Johns Hopkins University conducted a study that demonstrated the effectiveness of the combination of NEPs with more traditional drug abuse programs. The study showed that in new admissions to a drug treatment program, those referred by NEPs showed significant reduction of drug use and criminal behavior. NEPs do not only lower incidence rates of HIV transmission, but can be complementary to programs that reduce and eliminate drug use altogether.

Opponents to NEPs cite the cost that would result with their administration. However, NEPs prevent significant numbers of HIV infections among clients of the programs, their drug and sex partners and their children, according to a study conducted by the University of California-Berkeley. Because these programs do avert many HIV infections, their average annual budget of \$169,000 falls considerably below the average lifetime cost of treating one HIV-infected person, which is estimated at \$195,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The disease of drug addiction can be cured by drug counseling and rehabilitation. Drug counseling centers can use NEPs to help injection drug users rid themselves of their addictions, while preventing the spread of HIV through infected needles. There is no cure for AIDS. Needle exchange programs save lives.

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