

FINANCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY

With Africana Studies addition and fee increases, why not save other programs?

Through all the landmark changes that have visited Texas A&M this summer, one cannot help but think that something is wrong. It seems that with every administrative decision, A&M officials manage to make an academically perverse or backwards choice. It would seem that Barney Fife, the extremely incompetent but equally arrogant deputy from the Andy Griffith Show, was at the helm of the University.



MATTHEW MADDOX

Perhaps this season's best example of arrogant backwardness is the demolition of the popular journalism department. Charles Johnson, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, has blamed a lack of funds for the need to close the department, saying that it requires between \$250,000 and \$500,000. But how can there be a lack of funding for such an important department in this information age?

The College of Liberal Arts has managed to find funds to create a new minor in "Africana Studies." In this politically correct theme, President Robert M. Gates has also created the office of vice president for institutional diversity, sure to be a six-figure position plus staff. Additionally, moving ahead this fall will be the misplaced effort to memorialize Matthew Gaines with a statue last estimated at a cost of \$200,000. And don't forget the cost of the cadre of lawyers the administration will have to hire to defend its renewed use of racial preferences. As usual, Vision 2020 is the excuse for mediocrity.

According to Johnson, "The University of Michigan, Cal-Berkeley, UCLA and Cal-San Diego (Vision 2020 focus schools) do not have undergraduate degrees in journalism, yet they have programs to serve the needs of students who want to go into journalism." Maybe someone needs to tell the administration that it serves the citizens of Texas, not California.

For another view of incompetence personified, look at the Dairy Science Center. The dairy program, which serves the needs of hundreds of veterinary and agriculture students, was dismantled at the end of last year by administrators claiming a lack of funds. The Dairy Center, famous with Aggies for its ice cream, practically paid for itself.

The departmental budget shows that even in this year of depressed milk prices, the dairy only ran at a net loss of \$16,000. This contrasts against the \$200,000 in student fees alone squandered on MSC Aggie Nights or the estimated tens of thousands of dollars spent on the Bonfire-replacement known as the "Farmer's Fight Festival" last fall. It also contrasts with the money to be wasted on the "new tradition" of Convocation this year.

The dairy program was one of the top in the nation. How can it be said that eliminating a self-funded, nationally regarded program can be in keeping with Vision 2020? Then again, Berkeley probably doesn't have a Dairy Science Center.

The next example is the textbook definition of arrogance. University leaders have ceaselessly extolled the virtues of economic and racial diversity, and blame students for not creating "a more welcoming environment." Hypocritically, administrators are the ones putting up the largest roadblock. According to published financial data, since 1977, the mandatory tuition and fees at A&M have increased by 1,266 percent. In the past 10 years alone, tuition and fees have increased by 6.6 times inflation. In addition, the University has piled on thousands of dollars more in course-specific fees.

Despite this spending spree that no fiscally responsible person could justify, the A&M administration was not satisfied. During this summer, with pressure from administrators in the A&M and UT systems, Texas legislators passed "tuition deregulation," which eliminates caps placed on tuition prices by the state Legislature. Using this change in the law, administrators are now able to levy a new \$9 per credit hour charge on students for the spring in addition to the \$4 per credit hour increase for the fall. Together, the increases will cost students another \$1,500 during their undergraduate education.

These increases stand squarely in the way of middle and lower-class students. A&M regent Susan Rudd Wynn and Student Body President Matt Josefy were right to question if students will be able to afford to attend A&M in the future. Naturally, none of the millions in fee increases will go to journalism or the dairy center. Maybe instead, students will get a lavish tunnel under Wellborn or the Rec Center can get a \$5 million budget surplus. Wait, too late.

Administrators and the Board of Regents should not take the easy route and erase the Department of Journalism and the Dairy Science Center. It may take a few late nights going over the books, but that is the least that is owed the hardworking current and former students. Since the citizens of Texas no longer have a say in tuition costs, the administration should offer a gesture of goodwill and allow students to vote on the tuition



increases. Also, the board must learn to be independent thinkers and not simply yes-men for the administration. Most importantly, the public, especially former students, must take their rightful role as leaders of the University. A&M might employ a few Barney Fifes, but this doesn't have to be Mayberry.

Matthew Maddox is a senior management major. Graphic by Gracie Arenas

"It seems that with every administrative decision, A&M officials manage to make an academically perverse or backwards choice."

MAIL CALL

Bush administration intelligence forged

I never considered George W. Bush to be a flashlight in the dark, but the same should not be said for his cabinet or the rest of the administration. False intelligence claims in the State of the Union Address are not necessarily Bush's fault, at least not directly.

The blame must lie somewhere in the administration, the CIA or some imaginary friend of Department of Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. The American citizens have a duty to protect the U.S. way of life, and the government has the right to call the nation to arms.

But this social contract is only valid while there is mutual trust and accountability between both parties. Right now, the Bush administration is falling out of the sacred circle of trust.

Allegations made by Bush in national and international broadcast are now being said to have been based on forged documents. Our prophetic intelligence report that said Iraq had stashes of WMD have not come to fruition and the brilliant CIA can't seem to find out where Saddam Hussein or Osama's dialysis machine might be hiding out. Maybe ex-CIA director Bobby Gates should stop cutting A&M

faculty and go back to work for Bush.

Clayton Everett
Class of 2003

Journalism's closure bad for The Battalion

This is in response to all the nonsense I have read in The Battalion lately. First off, to clarify to Mr. Ferguson and his letter to the editor, not all journalism majors work at The Battalion, and not all writers for The Battalion are journalism majors.

Why would you suggest, Mr. Ferguson, that the entire major should be eliminated because a handful of people think and say things that you don't agree with? I hope as you finish your time here at Texas A&M, you will become a little more open minded.

Also, an Opinion page is full of yes, you guessed it, different opinions held by writers at the school's paper. I am a journalism major who does not work for The Battalion, and I am not "pushing agendas." All I hope for is that my effort at A&M is worth something, and that I will be able to graduate this May and find a job.

At this point, I know that any effort made by The Battalion might not be understood by small-minded people uneducated about the situation who

would like to get rid of the journalism department. But think about how terrible The Battalion will be in the future, with its staff full of people who have not taken any writing or journalism courses. It actually does require skill. (Believe it or not.)

All I can say is if you were in my shoes, about to graduate with a degree that our beloved University has deemed unnecessary and expendable, perhaps you would be upset and want things to change as well.

Amanda Stewart
Class of 2004

Lies in ads OK if they discourage smoking

In response to George Deutsch's July 24 column:

Mr. Deutsch, you're right. Lying in advertisements is wrong, even if it successfully makes people who are somewhat responsible for killing thousands of Americans every year look bad.

But you know what? In the end, if it makes just one teenager decide to not start smoking when his friends pressure him to, or convinces just one person to quit, it's worth it.

Meghan Getman
Class of 2006

Marital equality? America must recognize gay marriage

On July 15, the Human Rights Campaign hosted "Speaking on Equality," a presidential forum discussing issues affecting the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. While only seven of the nine democratic candidates participated in the forum, all nine responded to a questionnaire put forth by the HRC dealing with these issues. Probably the biggest issue up for discussion was whether people of the same sex should be allowed by law to marry or form a civil union.



TIMOTHY GILBERT

If America is to consider itself a country where freedom and equality prevail, the same opportunities and protections available to heterosexual couples should be available to same-sex couples.

According to Marriage Equality, an organization promoting equality regardless of sexual orientation, civil unions and marriages are different. Civil unions do not offer all the same legal protections that marriages do, and civil unions are not portable to any other state. This means that if a same-sex couple were to enter a civil union in a state that allowed them and then moved to another state, their union would not have to be recognized by that other state.

Civil unions are not enough to bring equality to everyone in the United States. Even if every state recognized these unions, which is far from being true since Vermont is the only state that does, same-sex couples still would not enjoy the same rights and benefits that heterosexual couples do. According to Marriage Equality these rights include "visiting a loved one in the hospital, applying for immigration and residency for partners from another country, and having joint parenting, adoption, foster care, custody and visitation" rights. All of these rights and others are enjoyed by married, heterosexual couples, and are not available to same-sex couples.

According to Susan Page of USA Today, "All nine Democratic presidential contenders on Tuesday endorsed legal recognition and partnership benefits for same-sex couples." However, all nine candidates do not support same-sex marriages. This is not a major dis-

crepancy because the necessary change needs to come from the government and the courts, not from the eyes of religion. Certain religions should be free to recognize and perform same-sex marriages as they please, but religion should not be allowed to dominate the public sector by telling some people they can receive certain benefits that others cannot. A civil marriage recognized by the government should not be conditional according to a couple's sexual orientation.

By this unequal treatment, this country tells same-sex couples that they are not worthy of the same things heterosexual couples are. It seems that this is just one more form of discrimination against people who are not the overriding majority in this country.

Furthermore, Daryl J. Bem of Cornell University says that while neither biological nor social factors are the sole determinants of sexual orientation, "Most men and women in our culture have an exclusive and enduring preference for either male or female persons; gender is, in fact, the overriding criterion for most people's erotic choices." This means that biology, a factor that no individual can control, is, at the very least, a major factor in determining the sexual orientation of an individual.

While the Supreme Court has said that consenting adults can decide their own sexual orientations behind closed doors, the fight for equality needs to be taken further. While every Democratic presidential candidate seems to be standing up for the equality of all Americans, the self-proclaimed "compassionate conservatives" do not seem to be compassionate at all in bringing about legal equality to everyone regardless of sexual orientation.

There is no legitimate reason that, in a country that prides itself on freedom and equality for all people, certain groups of biologically different people should be discriminated against based solely on these differences.

Timothy Gilbert is a junior sociology major.



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