

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## From the outside driving in Commuter students face long distance challenges in pursuit of their degrees

By Katie Wigginton  
THE BATTALION

most to get to Aggieland for class every day.

"I don't know which one to call home," said Gulam, a senior math major, who drives from Richardson, Texas, to sprint off the finishing 21 hours she needs to graduate.

While sharing an apartment with two other roommates in College Station and a husband in another apartment in Richardson, she said she can "feel the separation when everyday decisions need to be made."

Gulam lived on campus in Spence Hall for her first three years of college.

Gulam recalls easy moments of walking to class in five minutes, anticipating the thrill of football games and everything else that accommodates the typical Aggie experience.

Now, Gulam's experiences are anything but typical. She drives into College Station on Monday, her Tuesdays and

Thursdays are spent in an endless chain of classrooms and she gets back late Thursday night to catch up with her husband, whom she has not seen in three days.

Hook, along with her husband and son, reside in Bastrop, and she makes the hour-long commute everyday.

"I do feel like the outsider of the College Station community," said Hook, a postdoctoral researcher from the psychology department. "I wish I did more stuff with the people I work with in College Station."

Not all Aggies who commute drain a full tank of gas each time they need to attend class.

Justin Kling, a senior business management major, was born and raised in College Station and currently lives beyond the south side of town.

"I was always just the observer of the Aggie community but knew it was the school for me," Kling said.

Even though Kling has associated with the Aggie community since birth, he took it a step further and lived on campus to get even more involved in the realm of Aggieland. He lived in Cain and Hotard Halls for a semester apiece.

"My parents wanted me to experience dorm life, and I loved it," Kling said. "I found that I would vote in student elections more and become more involved on campus because I would hear about them through the dorms."

Eventually, living on campus and experiencing the other education proved academically negative for Kling and his grades suffered as a result. After trials of living in a duplex and private dorm, he realized that living at home was the best decision to improve his academic standing.

"I feel I made the right decision at the right time, but I do still miss hearing about the activities and taking part in the camaraderie," he said. "It just meant more to be with the community."

Such camaraderie that makes Kling and other Aggies beam is already an Old Army memory for Gulam.

"I would like to go to the football games and show my husband what A&M is like," she said. "But classes are the only thing to think about now."

In Hook's perspective, balancing the roles of teacher, wife and mother, and not particularly in that order, is all about manageability.

"I make the time for friends, and my family always comes first," she said.

Gulam smiles and still remains optimistic, hoping to find a sense of community in her new routine as a traveling Aggie.

"I would like to meet more commuters to share common dialogue," she said.

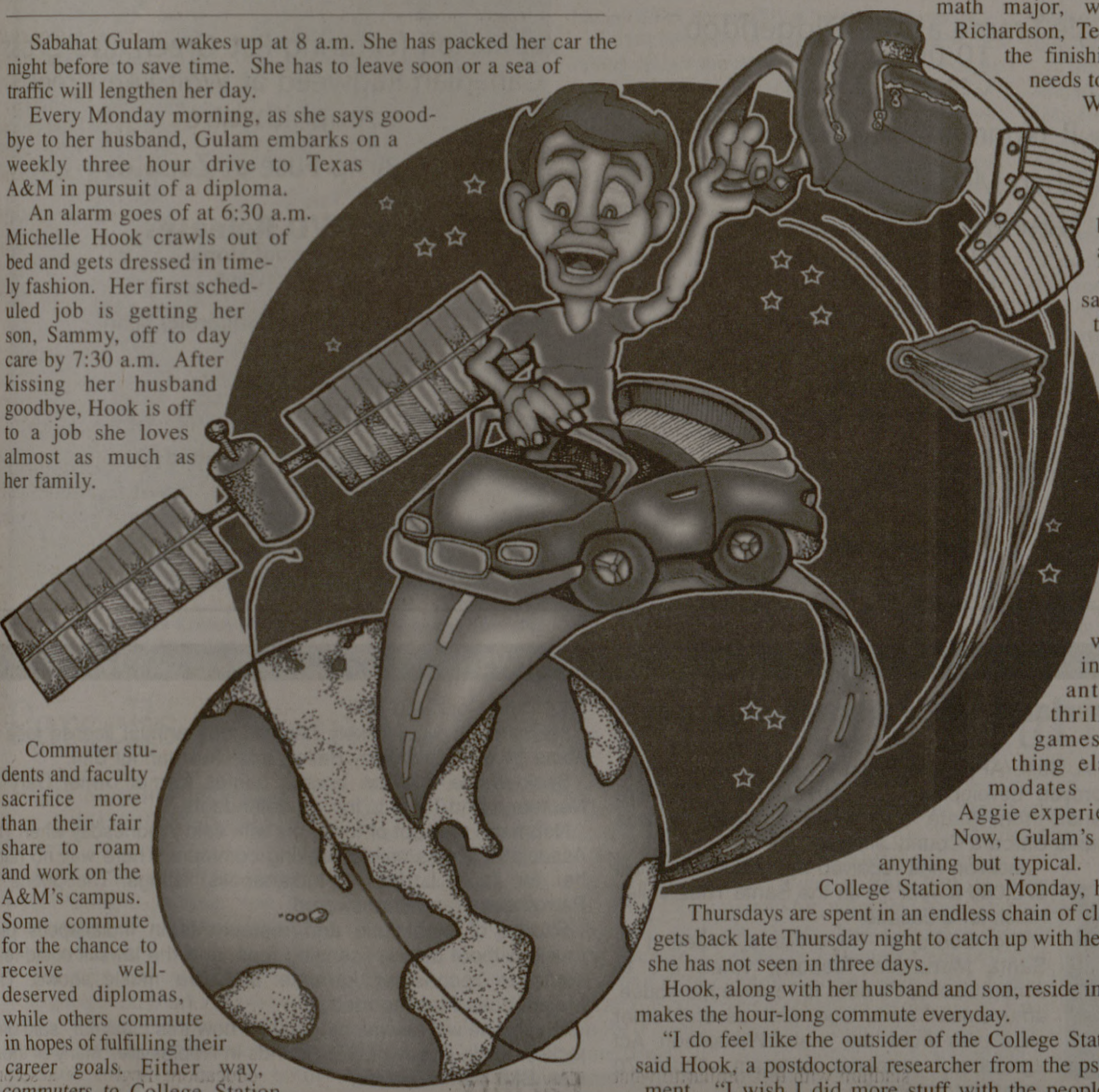
Even though she still drives alone, Gulam gets home to her Richardson apartment and feels that her drive was worth it because it will ultimately mean receiving a diploma, with her name under the A&M seal.

Sabahat Gulam wakes up at 8 a.m. She has packed her car the night before to save time. She has to leave soon or a sea of traffic will lengthen her day.

Every Monday morning, as she says goodbye to her husband, Gulam embarks on a weekly three hour drive to Texas A&M in pursuit of a diploma.

An alarm goes off at 6:30 a.m. Michelle Hook crawls out of bed and gets dressed in timely fashion. Her first scheduled job is getting her son, Sammy, off to day care by 7:30 a.m. After kissing her husband goodbye, Hook is off to a job she loves almost as much as her family.

Commuter students and faculty sacrifice more than their fair share to roam and work on the A&M's campus. Some commute for the chance to receive well-deserved diplomas, while others commute in hopes of fulfilling their career goals. Either way, commuters to College Station endure a harder lifestyle than



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ANTONIO BANDERAS SALMA HAYEK JOHNNY DEPP

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