

FORUM

THE BATTALION

Page 8 • Friday, September 12, 2003

Out of service

Students must be well-informed before voting on fee increases

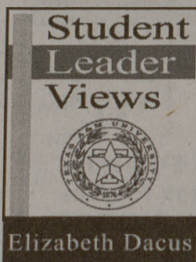
The past year brought a whirlwind of change for Texas A&M: a new University president and new campus administrators, a tuition and fee increase and a branch campus in Qatar. Changes are continuing in the 2004 academic year as students begin to experience a reduction in student services. Last spring the student body was asked to raise student fees for the Student Recreation Center, computer usage and the cap on Student Service Fees.

However, students rejected the increase in these fees and are now suffering from the results of these decisions.

One of the first effects was felt this summer, when the Rec. Center's hours were cut. Students still see those reduced hours on the weekends now that school has begun. Additionally, the Rec Center was forced to increase rates for aerobics passes, intramural teams and facility usage.

There have also been cuts in services due to current budgetary constraints and the inability to raise student service fees. The Student Service Fee Advisory Board had authorized \$300,000 in increases to create and expand student programs produced by the Memorial Student Center and related facilities and services, including Aggie Nights, Film Festival, Shakespeare Festival, Aggie Women's Leadership Forum and numerous others. Without the increase in Student Service Fees and with the required budget reduction, the MSC actually lost more than \$500,000 from its anticipated budget.

Important student programs, including MSC Aggie Nights, have been downsized, and the Craft Center and Browsing Library were closed because money is no longer available to offer these services to students. Other departments such as Student Life, Student Counseling, Student Activities and Multicultural Services have also been forced



Elizabeth Dacus



Elizabeth Dacus

to cut their anticipated budgets. Students do not have the opportunity to affect many of the fees that they are charged each year, but they do have the opportunity to affect Student Service and Rec Sports fees. Conversations with a number of students indicate that many students did not realize what would be the actual effect of not passing these fee increases.

There were certainly campus-wide efforts to make the campaign for these programs known. However, few students took interest in what was being communicated from knowledgeable sources about these fee increases. They simply heard from third-party sources that fees were going to be raised, and they assumed that wasn't what they wanted.

It is my hope that when fee referendums come around next spring students will seriously consider what these fee increases could mean to them before they cast their votes. Whether you vote "yes" or "no" on fee referendums, make sure you make well-informed decisions about the future of the University.

MSC Council President Elizabeth Dacus is a senior accounting major.

REMEMBERING 9-11

A nation moving on

A lot of things have changed since 9-11: our nation has embarked on a war on terrorism, an evil regime has been toppled and we have developed a Department of Homeland Security to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Most importantly, we have been able to move on, as a nation and as individuals. Families have begun to put their lives back together after losing those that were so close to them. Their memories will live, as we commit to never let the tragedy and the lives lost be forgotten.

Our nation has moved on as well. Our military has gotten stronger, and proven its strength and willingness to fight by defeating our enemies.

Life has continued day to day and we have all continued to work or go to school. But the memory of what happened and how we felt stays with us. May we never let go of those feelings. The only way that anyone could ever break us, or our national pride, is if we let them.

Todd Scarborough
Class of 2001

Hope and understanding

There are few days in my life that I can remember with absolute clarity, but I remember well what happened that day in September two years ago. I was shocked to see what happened on the television, but I never cried.

Tragedy, in spite of great loss, often brings out the best in people. I heard of firefighters dying, heroes in the air and on the ground, and I was proud. But when asked my perspective on how to move forward, no one quite understood my response. I said that we couldn't let this affect the way we lived our lives. We couldn't live basing our actions on fear and hatred.

Today I see a country, a people, moving forward, with a few uncertain steps, but the same country that I have loved all my life. Unbowed in the face of hatred, but sometimes losing sight of the common vision to live in peace when it doesn't come immediately. All we can do is wait, hope and understand as we work for a better tomorrow.

Sarah Fremgen
Class of 2004

TS out of touch with students

I think it's great that the people over at Transportation Services can count empty parking spaces and come to the conclusion that they're empty because people have left the garage. Good job!

TS failed to consider just why we students pay nearly \$400 dollars to park in a garage: it is so we leave campus as often and as long as we like and come back and have a guaranteed spot just for us. Yes, we may leave that spot. If we never had to leave, we would not have brought a car to school with us. Also, TS seems to think that the convenience of having a garage spot is location. Wrong.

The convenience is that we do not have to spend several minutes looking for an open space. I guess TS is so out of touch with the students that they do not even realize why we choose to use some services over others.

Cody Sain
Class of 2006

Garage proposal not justified

I am a Southside garage space holder. I have been a space holder going on three semesters. Prior to my garage space, I parked in red lots. I have received the mass e-mail sent to Southside parking garage holders informing us of a "proposal" to open the garage to extraneous space holders.

I personally am frustrated and disgusted at the evidence used by TS to justify this proposal. First of all, the main contention for approval in the above mentioned e-mail is that out of the 1,974 spaces provided by the Southside parking garage, at any given time "hundreds of these spaces are vacant due to a variety of factors." The factors listed include students or staff who leave the garage to attend meetings, visit

MAIL CALL

friends, and take sick leave. It was my intention, when I paid the extra money for a garage space, to have a parking space to facilitate my busy life and the trips I make off campus. Opening the parking garage and overselling the spaces will solve no problems.

Courtney Kinney
Class of 2005

Stress to find a parking space

Much to my dismay, I received an email from Transportation Services informing me that either immediately or in the near future, the Southside parking garage will no longer have assigned spaces. Instead we will be able to park in the first available space.

At first, this may sound like a good idea. However there are many reasons that this is horribly unfair. The reason that I pay two times more than those who pay for a spot in the red parking lots goes much further than having a parking spot that is protected from the rain. I pay that extra money so that I am guaranteed to be able to drive into the garage, drive straight to my spot, and be back to my dorm within only a few minutes. If these changes take place, I no longer have this guarantee. I understand that the possibility that everyone who signed up for a spot will show up all at once is remote, but it is a possibility nonetheless. A greater concern is that the stress of having to find a parking spot — a stress that I pay a lot of money to avoid — is now a concern.

Travis Richards
Class of 2005

TS plan is absurd and inconvenient

I am enraged at the e-mail that I received from Transportation Services. The proposed elimination of reserved spots in the resident

parking garages is an absurd plan that would cause more inconvenience than anything for students who live on campus. I spent the last two years of my life here on campus hunting for parking spots and then hunting for my car the next time I needed to leave. The only thing that made the bearable was the thought that I would soon have my own spot in the nearby parking garage to park in. I would know exactly where my car was at all times and I would also know that I would always have a specific place to park. Now that I do have a spot in the Southside garage, I love it. It makes the inconvenience of going off-campus a little less inconvenient.

Amy Ge
Class of 2003

More parking needed

I was alarmed to find a message from Transportation Services in my Neo account which is never a good sign since it usually involves me getting charged more money. Well, it turns out that TS has decided to oversell the Southside parking garage. You might exclaim, "Say it ain't so, Anne!" The reason I am paying \$390, over double what red lot spaces cost, is to have a guaranteed covered parking space. They cannot do this.

Oh yes, they can. In fact we do not have a choice in vetoing this proposal. We only get to choose if it takes place immediately in Fall 2003 or Fall 2004.

I think I should at least be charged a significantly less amount of money if I have to fight to get a parking space. We pay this much money for convenience and we should get what we pay for. TS should either provide more parking or quit punishing us for its shortsightedness. I am sick of picking up the national deficit of my tuition bill.

Anne Shropshire
Class of 2003



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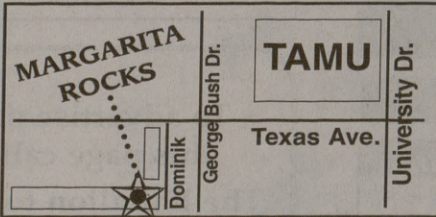
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