

FORUM

THE BATTALION

Page 8 • Friday, September 19, 2003

A commitment to excellence

A&M students should take advantage of research opportunities open to them

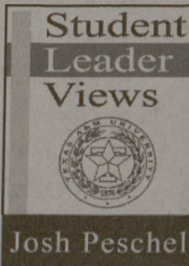
The mission of Texas A&M is to offer an outstanding education to students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At our University, an integral component of this process is the pursuit of new knowledge through research and creativity. A&M is a research institution and a world leader in many fields; however it is not always clear to students the role that research can play in their academic careers.

As an undergraduate student at A&M, I was admittedly in the dark about research. To me, research was something that my professors seemed to care more about than anything else. Book reports and chemistry experiments were often things that came to mind when the term "research" was mentioned. There appeared to be no practical component and thus, research could never be useful to me in the "real" world. If there was ever a time in my life that I was completely wrong about something, this was it.

Conducting research is about a commitment

to excellence. Discovering and applying new knowledge requires dedication to continuous learning, not just when homework is assigned or an exam is approaching. Leadership is developed as a student becomes the one responsible for tasks and results. Written and verbal skills are enhanced since the student must be able to explain various details to individuals at many different levels. All of these characteristics are desired by employers regardless of what a student decides to do in his career.

Among the many A&M students already including a research experience as part of their education, several are focusing on topics related to the state of Texas. One undergraduate student in ocean engineering has developed a new



Josh Peschel

method to predict beach erosion along the Texas coastline. Another student in political science has outlined the influences of change in Texas politics with regard to a shifting Hispanic majority.

Students are also impacting other parts of the world. Research related to tracking and classifying marine mammals on naval weapons testing sites was conducted in the Bahamas by one A&M student last year. Economic relations between Japan and the United States were modeled by a student in interdisciplinary studies, which yielded several predictive scenarios for future markets in the Far East.

There are many ways that A&M students can become active in research.

Approaching a professor in your department

is the best start. They will be able to tell you about their current interests and help you find a way to get involved. Sterling C. Evans Library, another outstanding resource. Library staff is committed to helping students excel in all areas of academics.

The upcoming Pathways Research Symposium (<http://www.tamug.edu/sympo>) and Student Research Week (<http://srw.tamug.edu/srw>) provide venues for all A&M students to showcase their efforts.

Every student at A&M has the opportunity to be a leader in research and to contribute to the betterment of our society. Whether it is curing cancer, outlining a new political policy or discovering a new chemical, the time is now for all Aggies to take advantage of this facet of their education.

Graduate Student Council President Josh Peschel is studying biological and agricultural engineering.

MAIL CALL

Music downloading story inaccurate

In response to Sept. 17 Aggiefife:

I was quite dismayed to read the article in The Battalion regarding MP3 sharing on Wednesday, both for its lack of research and its bias in what sources were quoted. Consider this: the Web site most often quoted in the article, www.musicunited.org, is known to be run by the RIAA. Of course it's going to say that MP3 sharing is bad.

In addition, there are numerous references to the act of "stealing music." The issue at hand is copyright infringement, not theft. They are two separate and distinct crimes in law.

As for the argument that file sharing hurts new and up-and-coming artists, that is outright false. The vast majority of new music groups today enjoy the ease of publicity available via P2P connection, since it is near impossible to get a record deal with certain large recording companies.

Alleging that file sharing hurts the artists would be a valid point, if the RIAA gave the music artists their

due from the sale of their music. However, most musicians make very little off of their CDs, and many are left wondering where their money is after inking recording deals.

Nathan Spanel
Class of 2006

P2P programs lead people to buy music

I'll admit, I've downloaded music from peer-to-peer clients. Much of what I downloaded I didn't own. However, I also own more than 100 CDs. Moreover, I wouldn't own the music I have now (with limited exceptions) if it weren't for Internet sampling.

I would never have bought a Korn album if my only exposure to their music was their singles on the radio. I wouldn't have gone to Ag Kickoff to hear Pat Green, and I would have never even considered going to a concert hall to hear my now-favorite symphonies.

The RIAA, though, would label me a thief. They don't see the stacks of CDs I have. They don't remember all the times I bought albums I

remembered downloading before. All they see is the digital media stored on my computer.

The RIAA wants people like me to stop downloading music. Fine. But while I'm at it, I'll stop buying albums too. I'm not going to pay to support a group which makes me feel like I'm being persecuted for looking for music I've never heard.

Thomas Critz
Class of 2005

Evolutionary theory is scientific

In response to Sept. 18 mail call:

Mr. Rainey, I think, is kind of mistaken on just what theory means. A theory is a framework that surrounds the data that we've got over the years and does its best to explain the problem posed by that evidence. The Theory of Evolution is just a theory; it can't be proven. It can only be disproved, which hasn't happened yet because no one can disprove it. It's still the best explanation for what the scientists have found all over the world.

And it has nothing to do with

entropy, which is a problem of physics, and it's not really a mystery. It's the natural order of things; all things go towards chaos. Why it's like that is the mystery; but again, that's physics. It has almost nothing to do with evolution itself.

In addition, the missing link is a byproduct of the Theory of Evolution. It wouldn't exist but for that theory, so saying it can't explain the missing link is, well, an odd thing to say. Of

course it can't find the missing link. It's the missing link because Darwin's theory says there should be something there, but we haven't found enough evidence to positively identify every australopithecine or hominid that came between us and the point where the chimp family and ours split.

Billy Brantingham
Class of 2003



MIKE LUCKOVICH

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