

## Mob mentality

Students and faculty stress importance of group work's place in academics

By Lauren Romero  
THE BATTALION

When Rae Lynn Mitchell was hiring potential employees during her career in public relations, one thing she always asked references was, "Is he/she a team player?"

To Mitchell, an assistant lecturer at Texas A&M, knowing how to work in teams is one of the most important skills a student can have.

"I think it is important for students to learn how much more can be accomplished by teamwork rather than working independently of others," she said.

During their college careers, students are often assigned group projects. While some students may find these projects frustrating, others feel that group projects prepare them for professional life after graduation.

Abby Woller, a senior journalism major, said that since the professional setting often involves teamwork, it's a good idea to learn how to successfully cooperate with people in college.

"That way, you can tell potential employers, 'Yes, I have experience working in teams,'" she said.

Mitchell said she realized the importance of group work when she got into the professional world.

"I think it would have been helpful for me to have done more group work in college," she said.

Woller said the concept of group work is a good idea, because everyone shares the work. However, she said that groups can become a problem when the work is not evenly divided.

"If one person doesn't pull his weight, then the whole group will suffer," Woller said. "You have to trust that the other people — who you may or may not know well — will have the same work ethic that you do and will want to do the best job possible."

Katie Klauke, a senior psychology major, is glad that professors can compensate for slackers by having peer evaluations. That way students can let the professors know who was doing their work and who wasn't.

"If everyone knows you'll be grading each other, they'll want to do their work," she said. "It gives you assurance for your own mind because in the end you will have a say in their grade."

Mitchell said she always provides a means for students to notify her of any problems and gives students instructions on how to handle a situation where they may not be working well together.

One of the other typical problems with group work arises when students must find time to get together.

"It's hard to find schedules that fit, so it's just really frustrating,"

Klauke said.

The type of group project can also affect students' attitudes toward group work.

Klauke and Woller agree that doing group papers is one type of group work they don't like to do.

"Everyone has different writing styles and abilities. Either the paper doesn't seem consistent at the end, or one person is stuck fixing it before it's finished," Woller said.

all got to benefit from his skills."

Mitchell summed it up when she said, "Iron sharpens iron."

Klauke said she doesn't like having to give presentations in front of the class, but she said the presentations aren't as bad if she has a group with her to back her up.

"It takes a lot of the pressure off of you when you're up there," she said. "Also, if you can't explain something well, then the other group members will have another way of saying the information to clarify it."

Klauke said group projects have usually positively affected her grade.

"If you have other people depending on you, you'll work harder because you don't want to let them down," she said.

Klauke said she doesn't do any more work than if she was working individually, but she pays more attention to deadlines.

Mitchell said she has not seen a negative effect on students grade-wise in regard to group work. In general, she said the grade would either be the same or improved as a result of the group work.

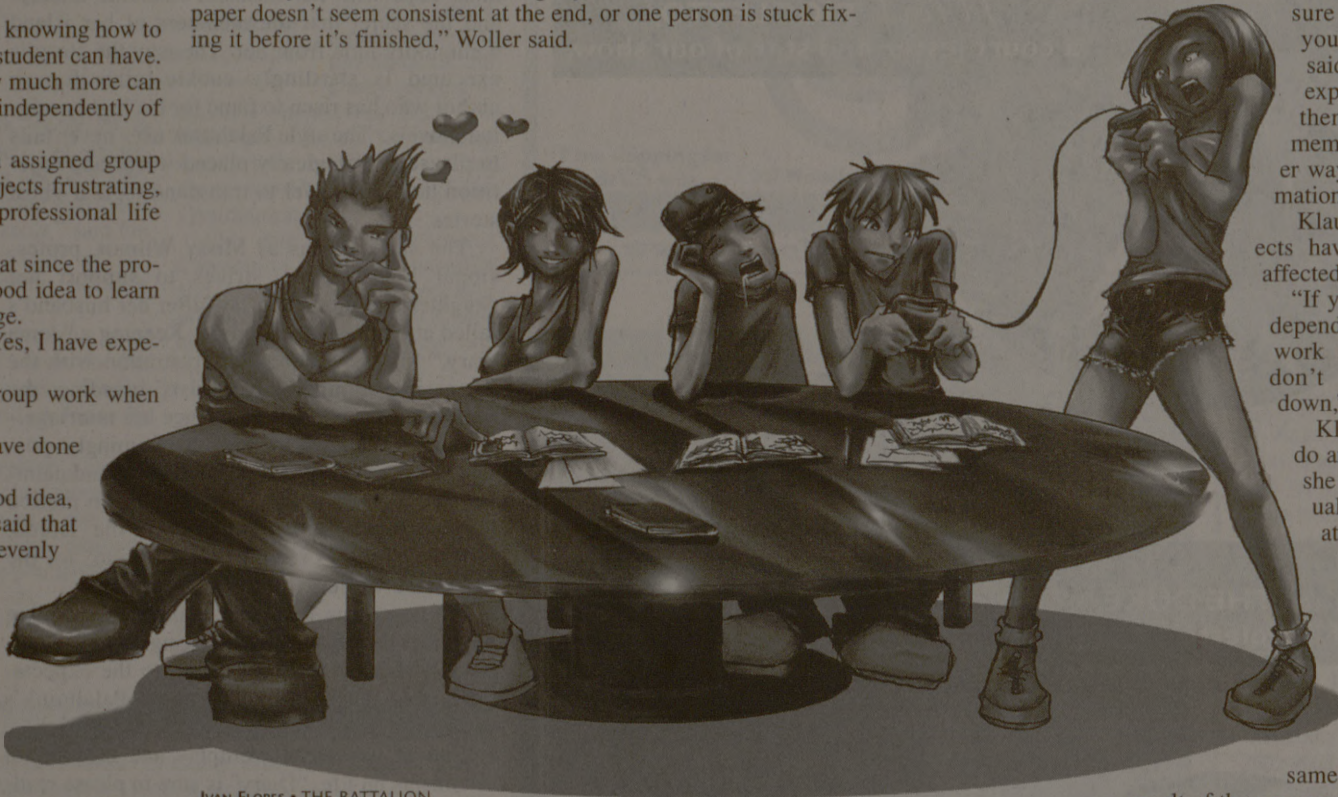
The amount and type of group work depends on the classes a student is taking.

Woller said that when she was a biomedical sciences major, she rarely had to do group work.

"In journalism, working in teams is more practical," she said.

Mitchell said that regardless of what discipline a student goes into, or what career he chooses, working in teams is an important skill.

"Employers are looking for that," she said. "It's all about teamwork in the professional world—you just accomplish more."



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Despite group papers, she thinks group work is positive since there are several people's ideas and involved, rather than just her own since several people can contribute to the project and different perspectives can be implemented.

She also said each person in the group can bring skills that not everyone else has.

"In one of my journalism classes, one of the guys in our group was very good with graphics," she said. "Individually, the rest of us would have had trouble with that part of the project, but instead we

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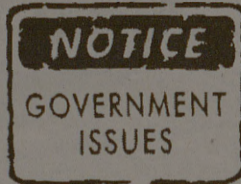
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