

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 5B • Thursday, October 9, 2003

## Dates that live in infamy

### Student-faculty relationships should not be strictly prohibited by universities

Earlier this summer, the University of California system adopted a new policy that prevents faculty members from having a "romantic or sexual" relationship with students, according to The New York Times. This policy is one in a growing trend of universities' attempts to curb the liability such relationships encourage.

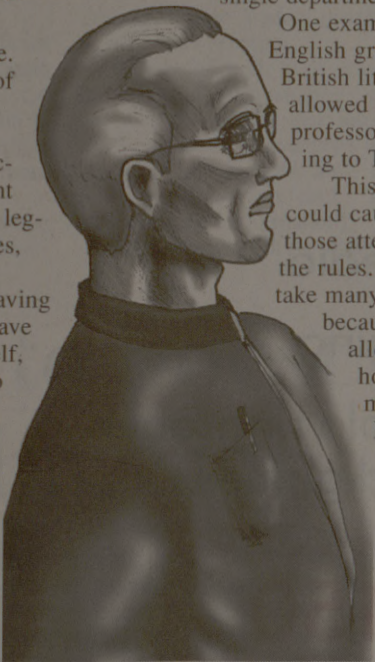


MATT RIGNEY

Policies like this inhibit the freedom of students and faculty of universities and should be repealed so as to leave only a skeleton of rules that regulate student-faculty relationships, instead of the corpulent mass of rules that now exist. This type of legislation attempts to legislate personal lives, instead of professional.

The UC system policy bans faculty having relationships with students whom they have direct authority over. This rule, if by itself, is perfectly acceptable for a university to adopt. Many workplace policies inside and out of academia enforce similar rules. This ensures that there is no special treatment for a student who is engaging in a relationship with a professor, protecting the other students in the class. This type of rule also protects against any backlash from the faculty member or student if the relationship was to turn sour.

The UC system rule does not stop at simply prohibiting authoritative relationships, according to The Times. Faculty members cannot engage in a relationship with any student who they "reasonably expect" to have authority over. This means that no student with a history major could engage in a relationship with any history professor. What's uncertain is how the policy will extrapolate to relationships outside a single department.



TONY PEDRA • THE BATTALION

One example is how an English graduate student of British literature may not be allowed to date an assistant professor of history, according to The Times.

This broad wording could cause confusion for those attempting to interpret the rules. Students are able to take many types of classes because many majors allow for free elective hours. An engineering major might take an English class as an elective, so by these broad standards, he may not date any professor or assistant professor of English.

According to the Daily Californian,

the student newspaper of UC-Berkeley, the rules do not include prohibiting graduate students from having relationships with undergraduate students. In many undergraduate classes — especially at large universities such as the University of California or Texas A&M — teaching assistants or graduate students are responsible for grading quizzes, assignments and even tests. If professors are subject to such stringent policy, graduate students should be subject as well.

Other universities have much more practical policies for governing professor-student relationships.

Duke University, for example, requires that if a faculty member and a student become involved in a relationship, the faculty member must report it to a dean, who will remove the professor from all control over the student. The university only "strongly discourages" relationships between faculty and students, according to The Times.

This type of policy achieves exactly what it was meant to: Keeping a level playing field between students and faculty. It does not intrude needlessly into the personal lives of faculty or students, but keeps the policy on a professional level.

Strictly prohibiting relationships may not be the most effective way to guard against a relationship of this nature. If a university wanted to discourage them, it could release a statement of discouragement such as Duke.

These types of solutions are sometimes more effective than black-and-white-banning. For example, there is no A&M regulation that states students must take their hats off inside the Memorial Student Center, but everyone complies with this tradition, if not out of respect for what the gesture supposedly means, out of fear of being scoured by other students.

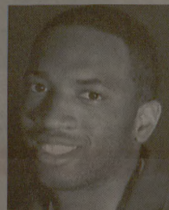
This type of social unacceptability might have a greater effect on the behavior of professors than an outright ban.

The type of far-reaching policy that the UC system has adopted steps too much on the personal liberties of the faculty and students. A modern university should realize that the students who attend are adults capable of making their own decisions, and it should stick to making policy that only affects the students' education.

Matt Rigney is a junior journalism major.

## Commentary made by Limbaugh is offside

What would be the reaction of the Reggie McNeal faithful if Texas A&M started Reggie McNeal not because he is the best played suited for the job, but if his skin color was the determining factor? This, according to the flawed logic of Rush Limbaugh, is exactly the case in Philadelphia.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Limbaugh had been hired by a foolish ESPN to give football commentary from a fan's perspective on the network's "Sunday NFL Countdown" pregame show. During last week's program, Limbaugh uttered the now infamous racist comments that ended his blessedly short sports commentator career.

Limbaugh called Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb, who happens to be black, overrated. He said, "I think what we've had here is a little social concern in the NFL. The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well. They're interested in black coaches and black quarterbacks doing well. I think there's a little hope invested in McNabb, and he got a lot of credit for the performance of this team that he really didn't deserve. The defense carried this team."

Limbaugh's racist comments were defended by ESPN. ESPN executive vice president Mark Shapiro told USA Today TV Sports columnist Rudy Martzke, "Rush was arguing McNabb is essentially overrated and that his success is more in part (due) to the team assembled around him."

But by last Wednesday, Limbaugh had resigned and ESPN seemed to have changed its position. "Although Mr. Limbaugh (now has) stated that his comments had 'no racist intent whatsoever,' we have communicated to Mr. Limbaugh that his comments were insensitive and inappropriate."

ESPN shouldn't have given time for Limbaugh to resign. Upon hearing his blatantly insensitive remarks, they should have fired him immediately. Even three Democratic presidential candidates — Wesley Clark, Howard Dean and Al Sharpton — called on ESPN to fire Limbaugh.

Limbaugh's comments were startlingly stupid on a number of levels. For one, it was simply an inept football opinion. Anyone who listens to Limbaugh's radio show regularly knows Limbaugh erroneously claims to be a football expert. But by calling McNabb — who has led his team to two NFC championship games and was runner-up for the Most Valuable Player award in 2000 — overrated, Limbaugh shows he knows embarrassingly little about the game he claims to love. But claiming McNabb was overhyped by the media is not the problem.

The problem is that Limbaugh had to inject race into his opinion. This is especially troubling considering Limbaugh's past negative remarks about blacks. This is well-documented by the national media watchdog group Fair and Accuracy in Reporting. According to FAIR, Rush once told a black caller to his radio show, "Take that bone out of your nose and call me back."

Limbaugh's defenders claim the firestorm of criticism following his comments is further proof that "political correctness" is robbing freedom of speech from conservative white males. This is nonsense. Limbaugh has the right to say anything he

wants. Members of the media in turn have the right to call his comments wrong and bigoted. This is the same argument defenders of the president used against the Dixie Chicks earlier this year.

**"ESPN shouldn't have given time for Limbaugh to resign. Upon hearing his blatantly insensitive remarks, they should have fired him immediately."**

In an ideal world, Limbaugh would apologize to McNabb for his mistake. He would also apologize to all black athletes for suggesting their accomplishments are made, not through hard work and talent, but through complicity by the media.

Ideally, Limbaugh would also apologize to conservatives for dealing such a serious blow to their movement. Some conservatives and Republicans are trying to show blacks and other minorities that their movement is not hostile to minorities. But it's difficult when conservatives such as Trent Lott and Limbaugh poison the conservative movement with their venomous racial rhetoric. It is not difficult to imagine why, despite their agreement on many issues, so many blacks have such a difficult time trusting conservatives.

But it's not an ideal world and McNabb and others will never hear the arrogant and overrated Limbaugh utter an apology. Most likely, he'll find a way to blame his idiotic remarks on the Clintons.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

### MAIL CALL

#### YCT demonstration doesn't belong at A&M

While walking on campus Wednesday, I saw a number of pickup trucks displaying paper signs emblazoned with the Texas A&M Young Conservatives name. One of these signs featured the slogan "Texas A&M: Where girls like guys, and guys like girls."

Not only is this statement disrespectful, but it also demonstrates blatant ignorance of homosexual population. It is foolish to think that, although the majority of Texas A&M students consider themselves to be straight, it is acceptable to ignore or ostracize the significant percentage of students who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Our University promotes diversity, which means tolerance and recognition of every lifestyle, culture, and ethnicity. Are the Young Conservatives exempt from this tolerance?

Jennifer Dulin  
Class of 2005

those who missed it, members of the organization rode around campus with large banners on their trucks with slogans such as "Student Fees should not be for STD's!" and "Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

Everyone at this University and around the world is entitled to their opinion, and also has the right to lobby for that view, but that is not the way to go about it. Their method of getting the point across was just rude and intrusive. If they want to rally support for a cause, they should hold an interest meeting for their organization. Those that want to hear you will come. But the appearance of members riding around in a caravan with people standing in the truck-bed invokes thoughts of young and immature high school students looking for a good rout. Is that the image the Young Conservatives want to portray?

Trey Davis  
Class of 2005

#### Hatred and bigotry shame A&M students

I was shocked and outraged at one of our campus organizations, the Texas A&M Young Conservatives, riding around our campus in trucks marked with slogans of hatred and bigotry. The trucks were clearly

marked with their group name and messages like "One Man, One Woman, Satan is a Flamer." It seems obvious to me that this behavior is a reaction to Coming Out Week. While I respect the right of this group to have their own opinions regarding the morality of homosexuality, it is unconscionable for them to parade around proclaiming their absolute intolerance and hatred for the way other students on this campus live their lives. I have friends at other universities who flatly refuse to even visit College Station because they consider this community openly prejudiced and discriminatory. For the first time in four years here, I really understand why. There are a lot of great things about being an Aggie, but days like today make me more than a little ashamed to be a part of this University.

Adam Rowland  
Class of 2004

#### Sweatshops represent capitalism at its best

In response to Jonathan Steed's Oct. 3 column:

Sweatshops are a great example of the virtues of free trade and freemarkets. Consider what condi-

tions the citizens of third world countries live in before the multinationals arrival. Healthcare is non-existent, and everyone works through subsistence farming almost from the time they can walk.

The multinationals that build factories in poor nations face many challenges: oppressive and unpredictable governments, long distances, language barriers, primitive roads and labor activists back at home. They choose to do so because the lower marginal productivity of the workers in poor countries allows them to save on labor costs. The workers of the sweatshops choose to work there because they consider it better than the alternatives: the endless toil of subsistence farming, prostitution or crime. They are free to quit or look for another job anytime, but they remain at the factories because they consider it their best alternative.

All the efforts to ban, boycott or otherwise shut down third world factories will do nothing but lead to the starvation and death of the people activists claim to protect. The best thing we can do to help citizens of third world countries is to support free markets that bring the wonderful benefits of capitalism to every poverty-ridden country in the world.

David Veksler  
Graduate Student

#### A&M athletics keep secrets from students

Being on a limited budget, I considered not getting a sports pass this year. After the hiring of Coach Fran and not wanting to be heckled about being a "2 percenter," I caved. And here we are, with midseason bringing serious whispers about potentially losing to Baylor at home. As we all stand in the sun and bake Saturday, remind yourself that each of us is paying nearly \$10 an hour for the privilege. Sorry, too, if you have a visitor, because they'll be paying \$20 per hour. If that isn't salt in the wound of anyone without daddy's credit card, consider that you could be standing in Norman watching an annually consistent national championship contender for almost half the price: \$107 per season.

Either the Sooner athletic department has a money tree or someone's not telling us the full story. I'll bet on the latter. Begin the hissing, and continue to do whatever this University says without thinking, because that's exactly what they want you to do. Oh, and sports passes have already gone on sale for 2004. It's the dawn of a new era, and you can get them for only one arm and one leg. Two legs for all sports.

Kevin Walter  
Graduate Student

#### Parade portrays immature image

I am not a homosexual student, but I was taken aback by the crass display put on by the Young Conservatives on Wednesday. For