

# OPINION

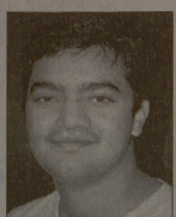
THE BATTALION

Page 11 • Monday, October 20, 2003

## Preferential treatment

### Legacy admissions are just as biased and unfair as affirmative action

An article in the Oct. 7 issue of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram told the story of two applicants to Wesleyan University, a prestigious liberal arts school in Connecticut. Student One had straight 'B's with the exception of a single 'C' during his high school career and an SAT score in the high 1300s (Wesleyan's average is 1410). Student Two had decidedly better grades: straight 'A's and 'B's and an SAT score only 20 points lower than that of her classmate. Both students were from the same public high school and had participated in extracurricular activities. In the end, Student One received an acceptance letter, while Student Two was turned away.



MIDHAT FAROOQI

The deciding factor between the two applicants was not race. Student One was not a minority applicant who "stole" the position from a white Student Two. Rather, the only difference between the two candidates was that Student One was a child of a Wesleyan graduate, while Student Two had no family connection with the university. This admissions policy, known as "legacy preference," is just as unfair and biased as affirmative action.

Almost all major schools, from Harvard to Texas A&M, include legacy preferences in their admissions process. According to A&M's admissions Web site, applicants are asked to share their alumni relatives with the admissions committee in an optional application essay. If they indicate such a connection, it plays a role in their admission.

Sons and daughters of graduates enjoy sharply higher rates of acceptance. Harvard has an overall acceptance rate of 11 percent, but accepts 40 percent of legacy applicants. The University of Pennsylvania takes 41 percent of legacy applicants, compared with 21 percent of all other students.

Furthermore, just like the University of Michigan gave extra points to minority applicants under its well-known 150-point "Selection Index," children of alumni are automatically awarded bonus points as well. There is no basis in merit for these points: Such students just had the luck to be born to the right parent or with the right skin color.

Legacy preference is just as biased as affirmative action. The policy, written in the early 20th century, was intended to limit enrollment of Jews in Ivy League Schools, according to The Wall Street Journal. Hence, the very foundation of legacy preference is steeped in racial discrimination. Even today, the rules overwhelmingly benefit white applicants as opposed to all other races.

At the University of Virginia, 91 percent of legacy applicants accepted are white; of the others, 1.6 percent are black, 0.5 percent are Hispanic and 1.6 percent are Asian. Also, consider Texas A&M, an all-white school until 1963, and where today, 76.4 percent of Aggies are white. It doesn't require much thinking to figure that legacy preference at A&M overwhelmingly benefits white applicants, too.

Still, many students call for A&M to stop supporting affirmative action without mentioning legacy preference. Since they feel the admissions process should be race-neutral and based on merit, a valid opinion as opponents of affirmative action, they should be against legacy preference as well.

But some argue that universities can keep legacy preference, while doing away with affirmative action, since the former is necessary to keep alumni happy and more willing to donate. John Blackburn, dean of admissions at the University of Virginia, admits this quite candidly: "In light of very deep budget cuts from the state, our private support particularly from alumni is crucial to maintaining the quality of the institution. The legacy preference helps ensure that support by recognizing their financial contributions."

However, Glynn Custred, a conservative who co-authored California's landmark anti-affirmative action initiative Proposition 209, makes no distinction between affirmative action and legacy preference. "The mission of publicly funded universities is to serve the tax payers of a state. Such institutions should never grant preferences to one group on the basis of race, ethnicity or how much money dad gave to the alma mater."

He is right: The amount of money an A&M graduate gives to this school should not help, even indirectly, to get that person's child into the University. If it does, then A&M might as well sell acceptance letters, or better yet, auction them off. After all, it seems to be the money that counts, not the quality of the students.

The next time a group on campus decides to hold an affirmative action bake sale, they should make a stand and include legacy preferences in their prices. Charge white males \$1, white females \$0.75, Hispanics \$0.50, blacks \$0.25 and children of A&M alumni \$0.10. Actually, if the person who wishes to buy a cookie is a third generation Aggie, just give it to them for free.

Midhat Farooqi is a senior genetics major.



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION

## University must take action to prevent sexual assaults

Recently, Texas A&M has been making strides in protecting students from the many dangers of life. Presentations on drinking and driving and even sexual health have found their way into Fish Camp and other programs geared toward Aggies.



JUSTIN HILL

Although the University is working hard to protect the student body from life's dangers, it has chosen a minimalist approach in confronting sexual assault. Sexual assault has become one more problem people choose to ignore. According to the National Institute for Justice, over the course of a college career (average five years), roughly 25 percent of women will fall victim to rape or attempted rape. People tend to find this number grossly exaggerated, but it is often referred to as a conservative figure.

In a recent report by the Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, researchers found that approximately 20 percent of females in Texas reported having been sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Of that 20 percent, only 20 percent of them actually report the crime. Every minute, a woman is raped in the United States, yet sexual assault is

widespread and constantly ignored.

The public must be educated on this issue. Many Aggies are victims. One in particular, whose name will not be disclosed, described the terror and helplessness she felt. She explained the personal torment, counseling sessions, feelings of isolation and reaching of the overall conclusion that she had been a disappointment in some capacity. It has been five years and she is just now beginning to believe that it was not her fault. She blamed herself because she felt she did something wrong. Like the majority of rape victims, she had been raped by a close friend. She thought that someone so close to her that she trusted would not do that unless she had caused it.

The young woman who shared her story exemplifies the victim mentality. Young women face many personal problems after something so traumatic. In this area, the University has been exemplary in providing support services for survivors of sexual assault. A&M has a host of programs for women who need them, including support groups and counseling services, medical assis-

tance and housing relocation. While this helps take care of the problem after the fact, it does nothing to minimize the number of victims.

A&M must focus more energy on minimizing this number.

Survivors of sexual assault often seek solace in help from others. A&M has provided services to fulfill those needs, but by the time those needs are in place, it is too late. The time to act is before there has been an assault.

A&M students may not know the legal definition of consent or the laws and consequences of sexual assault. Victims may not know their rights and protections when they come forward as a survivor in an attempt to bring a legal resolution.

This is where the University falls short.

A&M has been content with the status quo of providing the programs that others other schools do. A&M has a need to benchmark other schools in the Big 12 to decide the direction of policy. It is time to be the pacesetter.

A&M is one of the friendliest and safest campuses in America. It is time for the

University to start working toward being the most respectful campus in America. There is plenty to gain by publicizing and educating students about sexual assault. The school needs to drop the anachronistic policy of reaction and become proactive in confronting this issue.

College is intended to prepare people for the rest of their lives. The school can no longer be content in the suppression of reality. Vision 2020 will be incomplete if there is not a move to empower and protect the student body. Students want to leave college not only with an education but also with a blueprint on reality.

If A&M allows students to leave the University with no skills and no education on confronting the true rigors of their lives, it has done an injustice to its students.

To many, A&M is not only a university, it is home, and likewise the school officials must begin protecting Aggies proactively. Programs aimed at rehabilitation are no longer sufficient. It is time for prevention. This is an opportunity to set the standard in sexual assault prevention and it is time that students and faculty recognize this and push for reform.

Justin Hill is a senior management major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Teenagers incapable of making decisions

In response to Chris Lively's Oct. 17 column:

Mr. Lively seems to live under the impression that middle and high school teenagers are capable of making adult decisions and that the responsibility of sex can be left up to them if safe-sex is taught in school. How far from the truth! If we don't expect these kids to make proper decisions about drugs, alcohol and smoking, can we then expect them to make proper decisions about an emotionally charged action that affects themselves, their lovers and potentially unborn children simply because they are taught the "safe-way" to be immoral?

Safe-sex education gives a false sense of security. It tells children who are already overflowing with hormones that safe sex is OK because diseases and pregnancy can be prevented. However, these programs fail to address what happens when condoms do break, and

the facts that sexually transmitted diseases can still be spread by oral sex and through condoms, and that emotional attachment is involved with sex. Sex is an adult decision with adult consequences that teens are not prepared to accept. Only three things will lower teen pregnancy rates and STDs in America: abstinence, will power and a society that promotes the first two things.

Mike Shaw  
Class of 2003

#### Many of today's youth lack self-control

There were several things in this article made me very sad. I am sad for this country and where it is headed and I am sad for the people who are not going to have the privilege that I had. I have been married to another Texas A&M student for almost three months now, we dated for four-and-a-half years before we were married and here is the big surprise — we were both virgins. The facts stated in the article by Mr.

Lively were somewhat one-sided and flawed.

He said there is "no scientific evidence that abstinence-only programs are effective." My husband and I are evidence. Neither of us have STDs, we have experienced no unplanned pregnancies or other physical problems that can come from having sex. We also have no emotional baggage that can result from having multiple sexual partners. The problem is not with the ideology of abstinence. The problem lies with the lack of self-control exhibited by many young people today.

Ashley Cook  
Class of 2005

#### Religion should not be used against gays

In response to an Oct. 17 mail call:

Granted, I don't spend every second of my spare time reading a Bible, and maybe even memorizing it, but there are three things I should like to point out about everyone who

keeps saying these sort of things against gays in the name of religion.

One, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, it says that you should not eat pork or some seafood, yet so many Christians see no problem with it at all. Why? Because in the New Testament, God proclaimed that all that he made was clean, to symbolize that the Gentiles were just as important as the Jews.

Two, there is so much that is in the Bible that has been translated into different languages so many times that every translation is different. So how are you to know exactly what the Word of God is?

Three, you don't live in the Diocese of New Hampshire. He was elected by the people of his diocese, and they were happy to have him, not because he was homosexual, but rather because of his good works and his ministries. And that is what you should remember. We are all given gifts by God, and they are different, but that makes us no better, no worse in his sight.

Sarah Fremgen  
Class of 2004

#### The dangers awaiting bikers on campus

I am a biker who is sick of having to compete to use the bike lanes. Usually I don't mind swerving to miss a parked car or a group of pedestrians, but I experienced something that enraged me. I was riding to the Read building, and notice a van parked in the bike lane (a normal occurrence, mind you). I am about to go around the van, and some guy in a Mustang zooms by me. It's either get run over by him or hit the van, so I take a tumble into the cold steel of an Texas A&M van.

In short, please don't park in the bike lane unless you are willing to part with your side-view mirror or deal with a few dents in your door. And, if you are driving an A&M van, please use your 24-hour "I don't really park here anyway but it sure is nice to have it if I need it" tow-away spot.

Lainey Hoekstra  
Class of 2004