

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 11 • Monday, December 1, 2003

EDITORIAL

FLAWED EDUCATION

The Texas A&M Department of Journalism came one step closer to meeting its demise last week when University Provost and Executive Vice President David Prior gave a tentative thumbs up to Dean of Liberal Arts Charles Johnson's plans for a journalism education operating without a department to guide it. The approval dashed student hope for saving journalism and capitalized on the plight of a department facing the chopping block with little student input allowed in the process.

Johnson and Prior sketchily approved possible journalism certificate or minor programs involving classes with outside professional involvement and credit for working at The Battalion and other internships. Much of Johnson's plan is vague or taken from plans already implemented by the journalism department. Instead, students contemplating becoming Aggie journalists need a definitive plan of education that will guarantee that they can compete in the field after graduation.

The biggest problem with this revamped plan is that students can't be taught journalism without learning about journalism ethics, media law, mass communication and basic news concepts including journalism's history. The proposals demonstrate a faulty view of journalism as a field of education. The University has a chance to minimize the damage of years of neglecting the Department of Journalism or to cut journalism education entirely. A plan to educate journalists that fails to include basic principles and necessary fundamentals of a media education will fail the University and its students.

Johnson's claim is that the department is unstable and in need of change. Reconstructing an incomplete education plan can only end in repeating the mistakes of the past. If the department is rotten enough to be sliced out of the University's budget and realm of support, A&M will not serve the students clamoring for an understanding of journalism by endorsing a partial program of education doomed to fail. If Johnson's goal is to revitalize and reform journalism at A&M, he must take adequate and more clearcut steps to that end goal, rather than swaying to the steps of an old and tired — and inherently flawed — tune.

THE BATTALION

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Getting played

Microsoft must not be forced to dumb down product

The very mention of the name Microsoft conjures up many different ideas in people's minds, but lately these ideas tend toward legal matters. Anti-trust litigation that began a few years ago has now spread overseas, where the European Union is investigating more monopoly claims. Though these claims may have little direct effects on Americans, they reveal an error in public thinking — that everyone has a right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," rather than a right to the free pursuit of it.

In these hearings, regulators are charging Microsoft with abusing its operating system dominance by including a free copy of Media Player with every copy of Windows to fend off competitors RealPlayer and Apple QuickTime. Media Player plays audio and video files. If it wins its case, Microsoft could be fined more than \$3 billion and be forced to make a version of Windows without Media Player included.

But are Microsoft's competitors' rights really being violated by the way Microsoft sells its products? RealPlayer and Apple believe that including Media Player free as a Windows feature hurts their chances to sell their own product to consumers, who typically don't purchase alternative programs for ones they already have. Their appraisal is certainly correct, since Media Player plays almost all the same files as RealPlayer and Quicktime.

The business world does not guarantee a profit simply because one has a product — sometimes the consumer may for his own reasons decide not to purchase it. The fact that another company's product may be better suited to the customer's needs doesn't infringe upon competitors' rights — it simply means they are unsuccessful and should either make their product more competitive or find a new line of work.

"Bundling" a soft drink with every



MIKE WALTERS

McDonalds meal does not violate the rights of a Pepsi-owned vending machine around the corner. It is up to the customer to decide if he would rather pay for a soft drink separately and which of the two options offers certain beverages, free refills or a cheaper price. In both examples, the only control a company has on making a sale is the control of its product. To attempt to boost sales by directly oppressing a competitor by any other means than bettering its product is to engage in an act of coercion against the other company. When a competitor such as this uses coercion, as RealPlayer and Apple are trying to do, they violate a company's rights.

In this case, Microsoft's rights are being violated.

RealPlayer and Apple display obvious disregard for legal rights in the proposed "solution" to their problem: They want Microsoft to create a new program, a version of Windows without Media Player. What authority can they claim in forcing another company to send programmers and testers to work on a program when they don't have to? RealPlayer and Apple claim no such right, only their desire to be on an "equal playing field."

This "playing field" is an illusion that inferior companies try to create for themselves. RealPlayer, Quicktime and Media Player are not equal, despite any litigation or coercion the companies may try to exercise. All these programs have individual differences, which are up to the customer to evaluate. The choice between generic cola and Coke is one of preference, in which the customer weighs cost over taste to decide which is the best choice. The principle for buying soda and computer programs is identical — it is the choice of a free consumer.

Microsoft refuses to produce a product that is inferior to the version of Windows it



PAUL WILSON • THE BATTALION

has worked hard to produce, and no one has the right to force the company to sacrifice its integrity because of other lazy corporations who find it easier to shackle their superior competitor rather than work harder to make a better product. Their case is a mockery regarding the principles of justice and capitalism — exchanging the best of the customer's productive effort for the seller's best product.

Should Microsoft lose this case, the economic impact of fines and extra work would undoubtedly return upon the American consumer in the form of higher prices, but the moral loss would be far worse. The legal system must never be used as a tool for irresponsible companies to pervert justice for their own ends. Competition must get out of the courthouses and back on the shelves.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

MAIL CALL

Respect is an Aggie value

A strong sense of unity and Aggie family is one of the hallmarks upon which this great University was built. Prejudice and hate in all its forms have no place within the Aggie family.

We are very fortunate to learn from each other, all members of the same Aggie family, who convey appropriate respect and empathy. Within our Aggie community, it is our responsibility to uplift and enlighten.

Crude insults, understandably interpreted as mean-spirited attacks on members of a discrete group, merit no place in our Aggie family. Such insults contribute little, if anything, to a responsible marketplace of ideas, yet inflict injury to individuals and targeted groups, to the collective quality of campus life, and to our highest aspirations.

Members of our Aggie family are most effective when we engage each other in respectful and open-minded dialogue. We encourage all to continue to discuss varying perspectives, to challenge one another responsibly, and to do so with the grace and intelligence as befits the members of the Aggie family. We build a unified Aggie family by learning to appreciate and accept the uniqueness of each individual. We celebrate our Aggie family as people of difference who work together for the benefit of all.

All members of the Aggie family should respect the dignity and worth of individuals of all backgrounds. Respect is an Aggie value.

Elizabeth Dacus
President, Memorial Student Center

Julio Jana
President, International Student Association

Matt Josefy
Student Body President

Chris Mahaffey
President, Residence Hall Association

Will McAdams
Corps Commander

Josh Peschel
President, Graduate Student Council

Pablo Rodriguez
Vice President for Diversity, SGA

Megan Stephenson
Executive Vice President for Policy, SGA

Building up team takes time

As the season has progressed and unfortunately for us Aggies, the losses have continued to

pile up, many have jumped off the Franchione bandwagon and have started to complain about what he's done for the team so far. The problem with this is that people seem to have the idea that he's been here for years and have already placed huge expectations on him.

People need to realize that it takes time to turn things around and shouldn't have these huge expectations from him in his inaugural season. Even Bob Stoops, head coach of Oklahoma, didn't win a national title his first season taking over the helm in Norman, Okla. As for Coach Fran, he's taken over two other teams in his past in our same situation, New Mexico and Texas Christian University. With both teams, he managed to turn the team around after two years leading to winning, bowl-eligible seasons.

We've seen glimpses of how strong the team can be in performances in the first halves against Virginia Tech, Pittsburgh and even Texas. We need to learn to have some patience and let Coach Fran implement his system and recruit the players that he needs to turn this team around.

Martice Hoskin
Class of 2006

Support from alumni poor

I was lucky to be standing in the student section during the t.u. game. However, I was horrified when I looked across the Kyle Field to the alumni stands midway through the fourth quarter. The second and third decks on the alumni side of the stadium were only 10 percent full.

While I understand that we were being outscored on the field, I had always been proud that Aggies stayed and supported their teams to the end. I guess once you graduate the spirit of the Twelfth Man is left behind. I felt fortunate that I was in the student section where the majority of the people who started the game were still there at the end of the game.

Everyone needs to keep the spirit alive. I wouldn't be upset if it wasn't for former students complaining about the spirit of the current students. You only need to look in the stands at the end of the game to see that the spirit is alive among the current students.

Brian Mozisek
Class of 1997

Civilized debate necessary

The Young Conservatives of Texas at Texas A&M is appalled by the recent actions taken by unnamed individuals or organizations who posted fake flyers using the YCT A&M logo

around campus in an attempt to discredit us. The flyers implied that YCT A&M supports racism. This is false.

YCT A&M's stance has always been that racial discrimination or racism of any kind is immoral. That is why YCT A&M held an "affirmative action bake sale" protesting the creation of a Vice President of Institutional Diversity at Texas A&M and the 33 percent race-based hiring quota in the College of Engineering. YCT A&M opposes the creation of the VP of Diversity because President Robert M. Gates' vision of increasing diversity at Texas A&M has been clearly racial: making A&M's student body mirror the Texas census statistics. There is nothing wrong with racial diversity, until the government discriminates to promote it.

Recently, President Gates distributed a letter to students and faculty speaking on the subject of civility at A&M. YCT A&M joins President Gates in encouraging students to participate in civilized debate, such as at the affirmative action bake sale, and encourages students to reject disparaging remarks made about students, such as when professors label conservative students as racists. Count on YCT to continue to cut through the innuendo and euphemism of the administration and deliver factual, anti-discriminatory messages about University policies.

Sarah Davis
Executive Director of A&M Chapter of YCT

Nathan Blalock
Class of 2005

