

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 7B • Thursday, December 4, 2003

## Broadening horizons

### Hispanic studies department would benefit the reeling College of Liberal Arts

Diversity seems to be the word on everybody's lips recently. Racial and ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity, religious diversity, diversity of sexual orientation are all hot topics of debate and discussion in the realm of academia. However, often overlooked is the need for academic diversity at Texas A&M, a school that focuses so many of its resources on a few select programs while neglecting others. The proposed addition of a Hispanic studies department reflects a new-found drive to remedy this problem.

A&M, while renowned for agriculture, engineering, architecture and business degrees, has a less-than-stellar though slowly improving reputation for liberal arts, which leads many outstanding students to choose the University of Texas instead. If students do choose to attend A&M, they end up grumbling in frustration over the lack of liberal arts class offerings. For instance, UT boasts 650 Spanish majors compared to A&M's 111, as well as more Spanish professors and graduate students, as reported in the Bryan-College Station Eagle.

Granted, liberal arts students did elect to attend a Texas agricultural and mechanical university. Nonetheless, as A&M moves toward a more well-rounded curriculum to compete as one of the top-10 public schools in the nation, deficiencies such as the anticipated lack of a journalism department, inadequate representation in the fine arts and relatively limited language classes hinder this goal.

Imperative Four of Vision 2020 recognizes all of these needs and shortcomings with the acknowledgment that "the best public universities have stronger and deeper liberal arts programs and a fuller range of such programs with a significantly higher institutional commitment ... It is abundantly clear that we will never be seen as a premier institution nationally without a far stronger letters, arts and sciences program."

While a far cry from a complete solution, the possible addition of a Hispanic studies department constitutes a positive move towards realizing some of A&M President Robert M. Gates' goals by building a program that contributes to academic diversity. Currently, a Hispanic studies minor is available, which the new department will encompass and augment by including courses on the Spanish language, Hispanic political and cultural issues and a University first, courses in Portuguese, according to the Eagle. The new department will create additional Hispanic studies classes, and an interdisciplinary doctoral



LINDSAY ORMAN

program offered in cooperation with other A&M System universities in Laredo, Corpus Christi and Kingsville.

The creation of this new department aptly addresses the increasing focus on diversity as well as the need for stronger add liberal arts program. Dr. Craig Kallendorf, interim head of the modern and classical languages department, told the Eagle that sub-par language studies will "become history fairly soon." Already, two new Hispanic studies professors have joined the faculty, and Kallendorf anticipates that in combination with the teaching assistantships created by the graduate program, these measures will begin to assuage overcrowding experienced in undergraduate classes.

Still, more progress is being made. Last year, Italian I was only offered during the fall semester, with Italian II in the spring. An average of 60 A&M students travel to the Santa Chiara Study Center in Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy, each semester on A&M programs in the humanities, social sciences, business and architecture, according to the Santa Chiara Web site. It seems that greater efforts would be made to make beginning Italian readily available in the spring, which would especially benefit students attending the summer program. For the upcoming spring semester, one section each of both Italian I and II is offered, a marked improvement, but still

lagging behind the number of sections offered in German, Russian, French and Spanish.

These positive changes assure current and prospective students and faculty that A&M does indeed have a place for liberal arts. However, an increase in Italian I sections or the opportunity to earn a doctorate in

Hispanic studies may do little to ease the doubts of journalism students, an increasingly rare species of Aggie that is doomed to be extinct. With only 14 theater classes and 10 music classes at the undergraduate level for next semester, fine arts students may be equally skeptical about the University's commitment to liberal arts.

Although the name of the university is now simply Texas A&M, shortening agricultural and mechanical cannot hide the fact that these are still the emphasized aspects of academics.

Programs like the Hispanic studies department will help alleviate this, but don't expect another letter added to the name anytime soon.



GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

Lindsay Orman is a senior English major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Aggie ancestors would be proud

In response to a Dec. 2 mail call:

If the Aggie ancestors that Mr. Chandler cites were aiming for a homogenous mass of docile and unthinking students, then I would agree with him; they would not think favorably of the "lack of satisfaction" currently seen on campus.

However, I do not think this is what our Aggie ancestors wanted. Coming from the University of Houston, I am perhaps not as well schooled in Aggie traditions as most, but it seems to me that this institution was founded to be an intellectual forum, where diverse ideas could be disseminated to and discussed by a free-thinking student body. Contrary to Mr. Chandler's concern, I think Sul Ross or Bum Bright would be quite happy with the recent debates on campus. The "happy-go-lucky, everything is great" message that you advocate not only reveals his own apathy, but has dangerous implications for that most cherished of liberties, freedom of speech.

Joseph Abel  
Graduate Student

#### Aggies of all types can whoop together

I have to say I am a bit confused about the issue of diversifying A&M and how that would cause a loss in traditions. Can a black person not whoop? Can a homosexual not stand as the Twelfth Man? Can a Jewish person not participate in Elephant Walk? Can a woman not be in the Corps? The answer is clearly "no" to all those questions. So how does diversity change traditions? Participating in traditions is purely a matter of personal choice. Sure, this University started with only white men, but that does not mean every white man wants to take part in our honored traditions. I guarantee that there is a big group of them who go to that school in Austin that couldn't care less. We can all be different people who all love A&M.

Leslie Higgins  
Class of 2006

#### Analogy does not represent economy

In response to Mike Walters' Dec. 1 column:

Mr. Walters' analogy of McDonald's bundling sodas with their meals is grossly inaccurate. To make it a valid analogy here would be the case: McDonald's would be the only place where you could purchase a lunch meal, and people only drank a soda with their lunch meal. Then if McDonald's started to bundle sodas with the meal, it is clear that would be using their monopoly in one market to perform unfair and anti-competitive behavior by jumping into the soda market. His description of free markets is accurate, but that assumes a healthy market with viable competitors where the consumer has a choice. Exceptions must be made when a monopoly is involved or else the consumer is the one that will be hurt in the end.

Brandon Green  
Class of 2006

#### Football players shouldn't talk trash

As I sat watching the game Friday afternoon, I saw one of the poorest displays of sportsmanship I have ever seen from an Aggie player. It involved the much touted "Real Deal." Mr. McNeal scored a touchdown and proceeded to drop the horns down hand signal on the fans and the ABC telecast. As much as I were in favor of the dismissal of R.C. Slocum, the things I could always count on from him and his players was class and dignity. There were very few times where players on an R.C. Slocum coached team showed up players on another team or talked trash. That was one of my favorite attributes of Aggie football teams throughout the years. I felt that it always separated us from the mouthy Longhorns.

Maybe it has less to do with the coach and more to do with the players themselves. My feeling is that this team had nothing to celebrate

this season. Pathetic performance after pathetic performance does not give players the right to celebrate like that.

Steven Rasch  
Class of 1997

#### Passing train ruins mood of Silver Taps

Silver Taps stirred two emotions in me last night. One emotion, intended by the ceremony, was a sense of loss, as this time the Aggie honored was closer to me than the stereotypical sixth degree of separation.

The second was anger directed at Union Pacific Railroad for disturbing and almost destroying the solemnness of the occasion. After the rifle volley, the buglers began to play as usual. A fourth bugler joined in a few seconds later, though this one was not atop the Academic Building like his fellows. He was driving the train down the tracks straight through Bryan-College Station. Through about half of the bugle call of Taps, the fourth bugler was the only one to be heard. After the second set, I almost turned to leave because I thought the Bandsmen had finished.

This problem has occurred before. It will occur again if nothing is done. Why can't Traditions Council contact UPRR and work something out with them? I have a maximum of eight remaining Silver Taps before I graduate. I hope there are none, but for those that are necessary, I hope that they are uninterrupted, undisturbed and properly solemn.

Albert Archer and Christina Gilliam  
Classes of 2004 and 2005

#### Bake sale divides student body

In response to a Dec. 1 mail call:

It is sad that the YCT wants to sugarcoat its practices as "peaceful protesting and debate," but from what I saw, the bake sale was anything but "peaceful." The recent fliers incident just goes to show how people are highly offended by what your organization did, and this is from people of

all races.

Instead of trying to divide the Aggie family, it is imperative that we stick together and celebrate differences and the fact that people here are getting opportunities they wouldn't have in the past. To be honest, the YCT bake sale was in vain, all it did was spark anger but it actually did not facilitate any change in the decision to increase diversity. The YCT has to understand that what happened has greatly embarrassed Texas A&M so much that President Gates had to send out a letter denouncing such useless protests. As an African American student at Texas A&M, I was embarrassed to have to explain to my peers at other universities what the bake sale was all about. I just advise that next time before the YCT has another "peaceful" protest, they should think about it a little longer.

Onyinyechi Okoro  
Class of 2006

#### Larger sized shirts were printed

In response to a Dec. 3 mail call:

We would just like to apologize on behalf of Class Councils for the misinformation given regarding the availability of certain T-shirt sizes. We did have, in fact, XXLs on sale in the MSC from Nov. 10 to Nov. 24 and then on site on Nov. 25 (the day of the event) and did not sell out until sometime that day with the rest of the T-shirt sizes. We're sorry that you

were unable to purchase the shirts you desired. In the future, if anyone has any questions regarding a Class Councils event, please call the Class Centers or come visit us in the MSC, as we are always glad to accommodate the needs of our constituents. Class Councils is here to serve the class in any way that is possible, and we are terribly sorry that you felt that we were not living up to our duties.

At this time we would like to thank all the students who attended Jr. E-Walk. You showed this campus the kind of unity that exists within the Class of 2005 as well as at Texas A&M.

Hayley Henderson  
Junior E-Walk Director

Tim Soeken  
Class of 2005 President

Cindy Smith  
Executive Director

Kristy Tyler  
Public Relations Director

Cynthia Heredia  
Diversity Director

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net

