

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

PAPERS FOR ALL

Program benefits students

For the next six weeks, Texas A&M students will have access to a valuable luxury. Until March 2, five newspapers will be available, for free, to students as part of a program designed to encourage students to read newspapers.

Every A&M student should support this program that will benefit everyone involved and pick up a newspaper.

After this trial program is over, which is paid for by USA Today, the student response will be evaluated and another trial program will be implemented in the fall. If the student response is positive, the program will be put into place permanently, and the Student Government Association will explore ways to cover the cost, according to SGA Vice President for Student Affairs Chris Diem.

Possibilities include a fee paid for by students or a department of the University picking up the tab, Diem said. Even if students were to bear the cost of this program, it would be money well spent.

Students graduating from Penn State — the university that first implemented the program in 1997 — hit the workforce better informed about world events with a more up-to-date education than the students of A&M, who, until this week, didn't have easy access to affordable newspaper coverage from across the nation.

Coupled with local news provided by The Battalion, these five papers — The New York Times, Houston Chronicle, The Dallas Morning News, The Bryan-College Station Eagle and USA Today — will enhance the student body's ability to stay informed on national issues.

Students will never have a better opportunity to begin reading some of the best newspapers in the nation at such a bargain. Take advantage of this program while you have this chance to get informed.

THE BATTALION

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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

To fee, or not to fee?

A&M must reassess fees before approving increases

As another semester begins in Aggieland, students are again frustrated with unnecessary and confusing fees assessed by Texas A&M. As in semesters past, students can't help but notice that they pay exorbitant fees without ever seeing direct benefits.



JOSH LANGSTON

To make matters worse, there is currently a referendum on the table that seeks to increase student fees again. However, before any fee increases are approved, A&M must reevaluate its current fee system and cut fees that some students don't use.

The Student Recreation Center usage fee is a major source of frustration, and it is one of these fees that needs to be revamped. Many Aggies do not use the Rec even though they pay \$78 a semester for it.

Senior microbiology major and single mom Lindsey Sutton cannot use the Rec Center because of her 4-year-old son.

"Not only was I informed that he was not allowed in the building, but we were escorted off the premises by the Rec staff," she said.

Why is Sutton forced to pay for use of the Rec Center when she does not even use it? Angela Stanton-Anderson, the marketing coordinator for the Rec Center, said that to keep individual cost low, it is necessary to charge the Rec Center fee to everyone.

When comparing the cost of using the Rec Center for a semester to the cost of a membership at a less-equipped local gym, the Rec Center is less than half the cost. While this is wonderful to many A&M students who use the Rec Center for pennies a day, it does not account for the many who are taken advantage of by this blanket fee. Making the Rec Center an optional fee would ease the burden on those who choose not to use the Rec Center, while

leaving it as a more affordable option than many private gym facilities.

Other sources of frustration are the fees charged by Student Computing Services for computers that not everyone uses.

"Lots of my friends don't even know where the SCC is," said senior parks and recreation major Lance Haynie. "I use the computers on campus all the time, but they all have computers at their houses."

The on-campus computer fee is similar to the Rec Center fee as it seeks to divide the overall cost of operation by burdening many who will never use a computer with the fee. If the SCC fees were also optional, students who never use the computers would not have to bear the cost of others.

No discussion of outrageous

would be complete without mentioning Transportation Services. One point of contention has been the sharing of parking permits. TS uses a policy of overselling parking lots under the assumption that not every permit holder will use the lot at the same time.

If students were allowed to share permits it would accomplish the same objective in that each permit would represent a vehicle and the lots could still be oversold, to a smaller extent. This, however, would cut down on the number of permits sold and the hefty revenue that TS produces. To balance both sides of the equation, TS should let a certain number of students share one permit. If two students could share one permit, this would cut the cost in half for students, which could result in more students buying permits.

All student fees have supporters and opponents; every student will have inexpensive services he loves and charges for ones he finds useless.

However, now that the University is seeking a sizeable increase in tuition, fees must be reassessed to determine their relevance to the student population. Making several student fees optional, based on desire for usage, could eliminate considerable costs for many students.



GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

Josh Langston is a senior biology major.

States must retire flag

Aside from its wilderness, pristine beaches and rich Civil War history, South Carolina has been a prime center of debate regarding one of the most contested symbols in America. In 1962, the Confederate flag was hoisted into the air to mark the anniversary of the start of the Civil War, and it flew in front of the Capitol until 2000. Following rigorous opposition by the NAACP and other rights activists, a compromise was finally reached that put the banner next door at a soldier memorial, according to Fox News. Although some protesters were content with this decision, many remain determined to make sure that the discordant symbol never again flies at any prominent location on state ground, and for a legitimate reason.



CHRIS LIVELY

fought, a period has come where people must begin looking to the future of a nation rather than a divisive history. The flag is a symbol of racism, no matter how historically significant, and a racist symbol has no place flying in front of a state Capitol.

It's hard to believe that after 150 years, the flag that many white supremacist groups — including the Ku Klux Klan — have selected as a symbol still waves on state property. No person would want to wave this flag in front of those who view it as a symbol of racism and oppression. Proponents of the flag may not even mean for it to be a symbol of distaste for some Americans, but the actuality is that many will always see oppression and segregation. That reason alone should set the premise for its removal from any state's public ground.

South Carolina, the first state to secede from the Union, has not been alone in the recent debate concerning Confederate flags and the state. In Texas, President George W. Bush took measures to remove the banner from the state Capitol while he was governor in 2000. Mississippi and Georgia have Confederate flag images on their state flags and have also been under significant pressure to change them. There has been a seemingly progressive movement to eradicate the symbol in its entirety, but there is still work to be done.

In a November interview with World Net Daily, Wesley Clark made an exceptional point when he said, "I fought for the freedoms of every American regardless of race, creed, color, religion, sexual orientation or any other discriminating factor, and I am not going to stop now."

Statements like that ought to be the leading battle cry for anyone with a respectable vision for the country's future. It is time for America to take action in securing its principles and values. Following the ideologies that politicians such as Clark have set forth by having offensive flags removed from prominent public locations is not a bad place to start.

"There is no doubt that the flag is one of the most resonant representations of Confederate history, but people must realize it has evolved into the most divisive symbol in American history."

The issue was most recently publicized this past Martin Luther King Jr. Day, as it most often is. This year it received special attention as Democratic presidential hopefuls Wesley Clark and Al Sharpton rallied nearly 2,000 protesters in front of the South Carolina Capitol demanding the flag be laid to rest. The rallies followed another anti-flag rally by the NAACP that preceded MLK Day. Their voices were heard by some, but ignored by many.

Flag proponents, including pro-flag rally organizer Robert Clarkson, often claim the flag to be a symbol of heritage and honor in addition to being a dedication to Confederate soldiers who lost their lives for a cause in need of remembrance. In a recent statement regarding the protests of the flag opponents, Clarkson mentioned that the NAACP simply "needs a cause," dismissing its protests as ridiculous publicity stunts. However, it is not outrageous for a group such as the NAACP to protest the display of the Confederate flag on state property, especially if one has any notion of what the flag represents in modern-day American culture.

There is no doubt that the flag is one of the most resonant representations of Confederate history, but people must realize it has evolved into the most divisive symbol in American history. While its presence contributes to the authenticity of such a rich history and honors those who

Chris Lively is a senior sociology major.

MAIL CALL

Women still work for equality

In response to a Feb. 6 mail call:

Ms. McReynolds is indeed a lucky woman to have never experienced injustice due to her gender. But just because she has never experienced gender-related bias does not mean that women's organizations are not necessary.

The proof was exhibited in the very same newspaper that Ms. McReynolds' letter was in: In one week, on this campus, two different women were sexually assaulted.

Crimes like sexual assault and rape are not about sex; they are about power and are hate crimes in the truest sense of the term. If these crimes are occurring right here on our campus, then this abundant equality talked about cannot truly exist. The move to end violence against women cannot be separated from the move for women's equality, and therefore I will continue to support women's organizations and feminist interests until I feel it is safe to walk around campus alone at night.

Jennifer Singleton
Class of 2007

Watkins must be held accountable

After traveling to Waco for one of the poorest displays of athletic performance ever, I realize how terrible the Aggie basketball program is. The Ags were simply dominated by a team consisting of six scholarship players and five walk-ons, an unheard-of number in any basketball program.

The Aggies' only bright spot was their domination of the boards. They accomplished this without seven



footer Andy Slocum playing much of the game. Slocum is known for being able to bench-press 400 pounds, but he has only managed five blocks on the season. The short comings on defense are not only left to Slocum. The 2-3 zone displayed Saturday night at Baylor proved to be too slow and ineffective against the Bears' three-point shock-and-awe shooting attack.

The Aggies also went on a seven-minute scoring drought. This can be attributed to Coach Watkins' offensive scheme, which compares to the most intricate of Little Dribblers offenses.

The sad part of this whole situation is nobody cares. Nobody includes the students and the athletic department. Imagine if Coach Fran went winless in the Big 12 in football, how many of us would want him dismissed? At any other program in the country Watkins would have already been fired. If Watkins is not held accountable for his team's 0-8 Big 12 performance, then the future of Aggie Basketball may be in the Big 12 cellar for a long time.

David P. Good
Class of 2006

Bonfire tradition stands alone

In response to a Feb. 8 mail call:

First of all, Aggie Bonfire has not moved off campus. To call the annual off-campus shenanigans "Bonfire" is a disgrace to the tradition of Aggie Bonfire. Where is the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band? Where are the yell leaders?

Although they mean well, the organizers of the off-campus construction are completely missing the point behind the Bonfire tradition: the way it brought together people on campus and unified them as they worked together toward a common goal.

Secondly, if you think that a bus route should be moved solely on the premise of where the tradition is held, then I guess we should move the Elephant Walk bus route on-campus and the Fish Camp route to Palestine, Texas. Instead of complaining about what the administration should and shouldn't do, why don't you step up and try to do something about it?

Bridget Malone
Class of 2005