

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

HEARING THEM OUT

University denied PMC its First Amendment rights

Students should be concerned with the hazing allegations that have surfaced against Texas A&M's Parsons Mounted Cavalry, but they should be furious with the University's immoral and unconstitutional handling of these allegations.

The University's ineptitude in handling this case has been apparent since the very beginning, when charge letters were issued to those accused of hazing, stating they had violated University rules. However, it was not specified in these letters when this supposed conduct occurred, or even what the conduct was or who it had been committed by. This is a sloppy, lazy and arrogant way to pursue a serious matter and merits a firm denunciation from the entire A&M community.

Incredibly, the University sought to deny the accused cadets their First Amendment rights. Accused cadets were put under gag orders not once, but twice by Col. Shady Groves and by the investigative panel created to examine these allegations. This is outrageous. State District Judge Richard Davis, a former member of the Corps of Cadets, ruled that the University must rehear the case and called the attempt to silence the accused cadets "the most amazing position Texas A&M has taken in this case yet" and noted "prior restraints on freedom of speech have long been disfavored in American Law."

These incidents are part of a disturbing pattern of University administrators disregarding students' rights. No matter how damaging allegations might be to the University's reputation, A&M officials have absolutely no right to deny students due process.

The hazing incidents alleged with Parsons Mounted Cavalry are embarrassing, but so is having a former cadet tell A&M that it must always act with conduct becoming of a world-class University.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Bush has right to campaign off Sept. 11

Recently, there has been a lot of complaining by liberals and Democrats about the use of 9-11 footage in our commander in chief's campaign commercials. However, I believe that George Bush has a moral duty to campaign aggressively, not only for his own re-election, but for the lives of our soldiers and for the posterity of our nation.

We are at a critical juncture, when people will not only be electing a president, but will be deciding whether they want the United States to continue existing as a nation. Naturally, if Bush is re-elected, our country will continue to be defended and loss of American life will be minimal. But should John Kerry be elected, our enemies will be emboldened, and the lives of our citizens and soldiers will be endangered ten-fold.

Knowing the sheer gutlessness of the Democratic Party, terrorists will strike at us relentlessly if Kerry is elected. By electing Kerry the United States is acknowledging that their evil will go uncontested. The thought of such harm being wrought upon America is undoubtedly sickening to President Bush, and he knows his re-election must be secured at any cost, lest our nation fall to the terrorist onslaught.

By using any means necessary to ensure that our country will remain defended after the next election, Bush is acting with the utmost sense of rightness.

Kurt Branagan
Class of 1993

Americans should support Bush initiative

Our great country once again has one highly controversial topic that has liberals and conservative Americans battling it out: the topic of same-sex marriages.

Massachusetts recently granted homosexuals all the rights of marriage, giving political idealists one more thing to fight about. When you sit back and think about where our country is today in contrast to where it was 50 years ago, it is alarming to see the direction we are headed.

Every day in this country we pledge allegiance to our flag as one nation, under God. I Corinthians 6:9 states very clearly; Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals ... will inherit the kingdom of God. How can any state in this country, which claims to be one nation under God, allow homosexuals to join together in legal marriages and even be married in the house of our Lord.

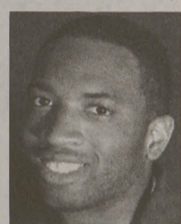
Please do not misinterpret the ideals behind this letter. It is not my goal in life to go around making life difficult for homosexuals. Although, as you can tell, I firmly believe homosexual acts are wrong, I do not discriminate against a person for choosing to live his life this way. I do have a problem, though, when a state tells the world that it is OK to live your life this way and will support you in earning all the rights of marriage.

Marriage is a very holy thing between a man and a woman, and that needs to be protected. We as Americans need to support the president on his new initiative to put a nationwide ban on gay marriages. I am a big advocate of states' rights as well, but it appears that some northern states have lost their way.

Katie Saalfeld
Class of 2007

Beating Bush in 2004

Kerry should select Edwards as his running mate



COLLINS EZEANYIM

It was fun while it lasted, but the Democratic presidential primary process is essentially over. Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry will be the Democratic nominee. Now that the question of who will run against President George W. Bush has been answered, a new question has emerged: Who will Kerry choose as his running mate? Although there are reports that Kerry and Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C.,

have not gotten along, Kerry should select Edwards as his running mate, and Edwards should accept, because a Kerry-Edwards ticket can beat Bush.

Popular conservative columnist George F. Will wrote in Newsweek, "The political potency of vice presidential candidates usually is about as minuscule as the formal duties of a vice president."

But a recent CBS poll shows registered voters preferred a Kerry-Edwards ticket to Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney by a margin of 50 percent to 42 percent, according to USA Today. When Kerry is polled alone, he falls into a tie with Bush. Therefore, Kerry's vice-presidential choice will be important. Furthermore, it is obvious that Edwards would be the ideal running mate.

Democrats have been clamoring for a Kerry-Edwards ticket since the New Hampshire primary, but Kerry might be cool to the idea. Specifically, The New York Times reports that Kerry disapproves of Edwards' lack of military and foreign policy experience. In addition, The Times also reports that Edwards believes Kerry sometimes acts with "snobbish behavior."

Though the senators themselves might not like the idea of becoming running mates, the pairing could be perfect for several reasons. Kerry's top criteria for choosing a running mate will be whether he trusts that person to run the country, according to USA Today. This is a wise way to select a vice president, but Kerry should trust the Democratic faithful when they say Edwards would make a good vice president and, if necessary, a good president.

It is true Edwards' main weakness is his lack of experience in international and military affairs. But serving under Kerry in a vice-presidential role is an excellent way to gain experience.

In the same way that Kerry complements Edwards in foreign policy,

Edwards can help Kerry on key domestic issues. Kerry strategists have said a candidate's ability to help Kerry gain votes will be his third-highest priority when selecting a running mate, according to USA Today.

But the most important swing state, Ohio, has been hemorrhaging jobs since Bush took office, and Edwards has proven himself particularly adept at explaining his positions on the issues of jobs and trade. As a senator, Edwards concentrated on being a consumer advocate, according to The Times. This can only be an advantage in a presidential contest in which the economy will be the key issue.

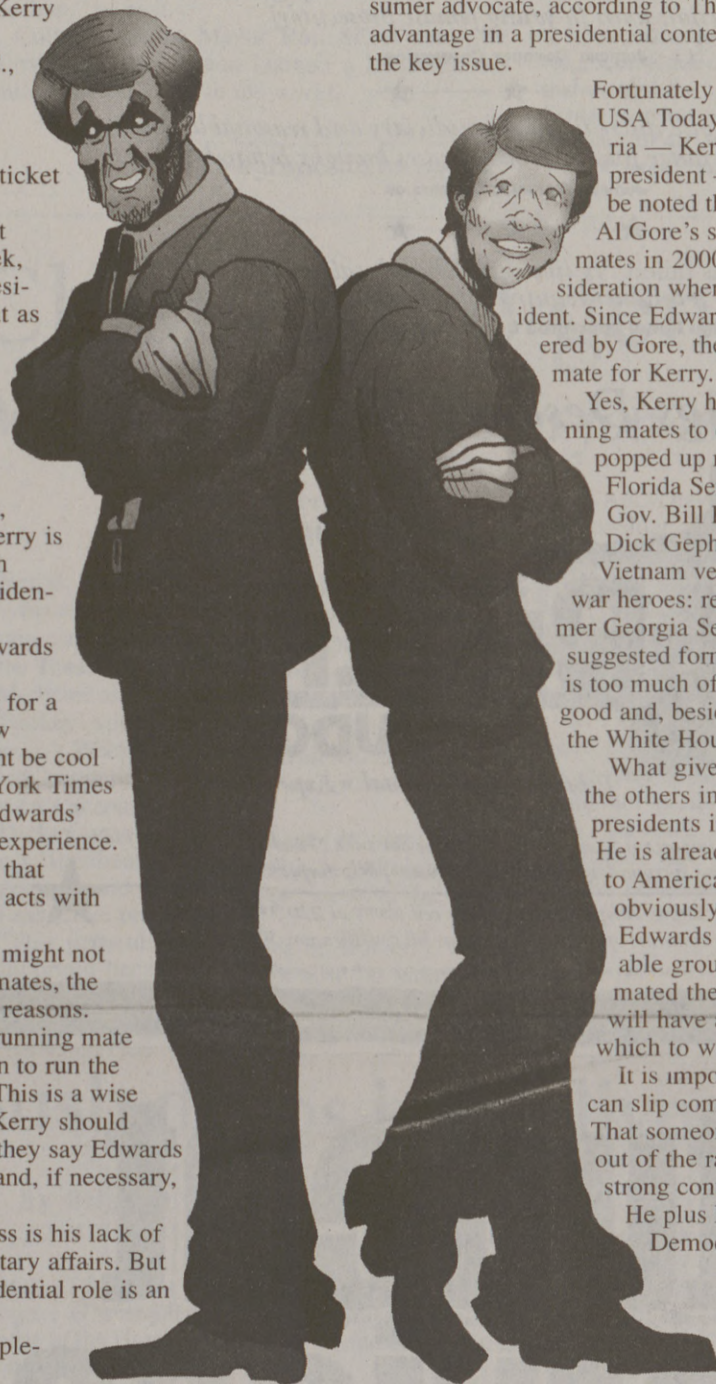
Fortunately for Democrats, Kerry aides told USA Today the second-most important criteria — Kerry's comfort level with the vice president — is met by Edwards. It should be noted that Kerry and Edwards were on Al Gore's short list for possible running mates in 2000. Kerry should take this into consideration when selecting his potential vice president. Since Edwards was good enough to be considered by Gore, then he should be a suitable running mate for Kerry.

Yes, Kerry has a wide array of potential running mates to choose from. Names that have popped up repeatedly in the media include Florida Sen. Bob Graham, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt. Kerry, a brave and proud Vietnam veteran may also consider two other war heroes: retired Gen. Wesley Clark and former Georgia Sen. Max Cleland. Some have even suggested former President Bill Clinton. But he is too much of a divisive figure to do much good and, besides, he has already had his turn in the White House.

What gives Edwards the advantage over all the others in this fine list of potential vice presidents is his campaign 2004 experience. He is already a familiar and welcome face to American voters. And while Kerry is obviously the Democrats' favorite, Edwards was able to build a commendable group of followers. Plus, it is estimated the Bush-Cheney re-election effort will have a \$200 million war chest with which to wage its campaign.

It is important Kerry picks someone who can slip comfortably into campaign mode. That someone is Edwards who only dropped out of the race last week. While Kerry is a strong contender alone, the formula is clear: He plus Edwards equals a return to a Democratic White House.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.
Graphic by Chris Griffin



SGA doing inadequate job addressing student interests

Tuition increases. Bonfire. Diversity. Poultry science and Journalism. Hotard Hall.

At least one, if not all, of these issues stirs up a well of emotions in most of the students on campus, and all students will eventually feel the blow of the decisions made regarding these issues in some way.

Unfortunately, the thoughts and feelings of most students on campus will never reach the Texas A&M administration's ears. Enter the Student Government Association, an entire sect of students on campus whose purpose is to effectively communicate student interests through representation to the administration. How effectively they do this, however, is questionable, and the SGA must do more to foster two-way communication with students.

While it has to be mentioned that SGA has made efforts to gain student input through various methods such as suggestion boxes, outreach days and mass e-mails to freshmen, the tangible results of that input is unconfirmed.

One such attempt to gain student input is through Aggie Input boxes, where students can submit suggestions or concerns that are brought before the executive council of SGA on a weekly basis. Andy Herreth, executive vice president of communications for SGA, said no suggestions from the Aggie Input boxes have been implemented, a statistic that is discouraging at best.

Through other methods such as continued involvement in other activities outside of SGA, those on the Executive Council of SGA attempt to stay in touch with the student body. However, they are only getting feedback from those with like minds and those involved in typical leadership organizations. Other students, who don't pursue an active role in staying informed on campus issues, will most likely never know more than large-scale events unless they are within the protective bubble of Student Government or the Memorial Student Center programs. While they may not voice their complaints because of their disconnection from many campus events, their opinions matter as much as anyone else's.

If student opinion isn't readily available for SGA, it must be sought proactively. SGA must be committed to actively promoting and defending student interests. Large-scale student opposition to any administrative decision needs to be openly and publicly backed by SGA.

Much of SGA's work remains "behind the scenes" and "nothing that would make the front page of The Battalion," Student



SARA FOLEY

Body President Matt Josefy said. While it is undoubtedly beneficial to have those who sacrifice their time to do the work undetected, it is imperative to have a strong and vehement voice speaking for the students.

However, in past issues, grassroots activism has provided the requisite decision-maker to ultimately make decisions, with SGA support existent but unnoticeable.

The establishment and continuation of an off-campus Bonfire in response to the discontinuation of the on-campus Bonfire occurred without the public support of SGA; rather, it was fueled by unorganized organizations. The closure of the poultry science program and the journalism department was protested by students, while SGA only confirmed student opinion on the issue to the administration. The closure of Hotard Hall was fought against by residents and former residents of the dorm. SGA voiced student discontent over the issue to Texas A&M University President Robert M. Gates, but allowed residents to be the ones to organize, fight and discuss plans for it.

When Gates announced plans to increase tuition by 21 percent, the Tuition Policy Advisory Board, composed of various campus leaders, including Josefy, was formed to influence future tuition decisions. However, Josefy said increasing tuition is unavoidable when looking at the rising cost of tuition across the country, but other factors about tuition increases could be controlled. While there is certainly truth to his argument, the lack of a firm, proactive opinion toward the administration essentially gives in to administrator's tuition demands before a fight. There are no students who want to pay more for their tuition. But without unified student opposition coming from all forces, including the single most influential student, the student body president, the likelihood of the full increase is all the more certain.

Overall, SGA affirms these student opinions, but because of their high-ranking positions on campus, they have the responsibility and the power to mobilize students instead of affirming student belief after the fact.

Students need to believe that SGA is on their side, fighting for their rights instead of appeasing administrators. If students are outspokenly against an issue on campus, SGA should be just as publicly united against it as it is privately working for it.

Sara Foley is a junior journalism major.