

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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NONE OF THEIR BUSINESS

Daily Texan's investigative stories on business school rankings ignored problem

Despite accusations against A&M's Lowry Mays Business School by The Daily Texan, the student newspaper at The University of Texas, it has been uncovered that not only are the allegations unfounded, but UT's McCombs Business School had bigger problems at home.



SARA FOLEY

The battle between business school rankings began in April, when U.S. News and World Report issued its rankings for MBA programs based on the Class of 2003. Mays climbed 28 places from the previous year, which resulted in a tie for 23rd place with McCombs, which had dropped six spots.

According to U.S. News, the rankings are based on assessments by peers and recruiters, GMAT scores, average GPAs and data regarding how many graduates received jobs after graduation and what their salaries were. These statistics were printed in the April 12 edition of U.S. News.

UT ranked 49th out of the top 50 schools for post-graduate employment, with only 50.1 percent of graduates reporting employment at graduation and 67.3 percent three months afterward. Beginning with the June 16 article and continuing in a series of editorials and letters to the editor, The Daily Texan instigated an effort to insinuate that the statistics U.S. News printed were false and to discredit information reported by Mays Business School along the way.

On June 16, The Daily Texan ran a story attempting to investigate why A&M's rank had increased so dramatically. Had The Daily Texan stuck to this, quite a different story would have been printed that may have focused on the significant changes that Mays had implemented to improve its career positioning services and perhaps investigated the reasons behind UT's feeble numbers. Instead, the story focused on A&M business school administrators' refusal to turn over documents with the Class of 2003's names and employment placement data, implying that rising rankings combined with a lack of document turnover indicated lying on the part of A&M.

The article said A&M officials first refused to release the documents to The Daily Texan, then later told the reporter that the documents didn't exist. The miscommunication regarding which documents existed and which simply weren't released lies in the type of records that are kept at A&M versus the ones The Daily Texan requested. Post-graduate employment information is reported by the graduates, deposited in a database and verified, and then Mays administrators remove the personal identifiers from the database, said a

records request at UT yielded results to back up their rankings, had The Daily Texan requested the same type of information it requested from A&M the result would have been the same. Daniel Garza, assistant dean MBA at McCombs, told The Battalion that UT does not give out students' personal information.

"We keep internal records, where the graduate has gone on to work. We can give out certain aspects of that data (to the public) but cannot release certain information, such as salary amounts or contact information," Garza said.

The Daily Texan has overlooked the real problem: McCombs' failure to effectively place its graduates in positions three months after graduation.

McCombs' failure is traceable to the understaffing of a much larger group of MBAs. McCombs had 795 students in 2003 but only one faculty member assigned to assist all of the MBA students in finding jobs. A&M had 172 students in 2003 and three faculty members committed to doing just that. UT MBAs are paying \$6,000 more than A&M students for tuition alone, receive less service and are not finding jobs as a result. Why didn't The Daily Texan examine these statistics? Moreover, only 54 percent of McCombs MBAs reported their post-graduate employment

information, compared with 97 percent of Mays MBAs. If there is any fault in the record keeping, it is at McCombs.

The Daily Texan has acted as though it has unfolded the investigative report of the century by releasing dramatic editorials saying, "We stand by our story," when in reality, the reporter asked for information that no MBA with any concern for his privacy would want to be public information and that UT doesn't release either.

The Daily Texan has generated a buzz with its reporting, but failed to recognize the real story. Instead of investigating A&M's numbers, The Daily Texan should have examined internal problems at McCombs.

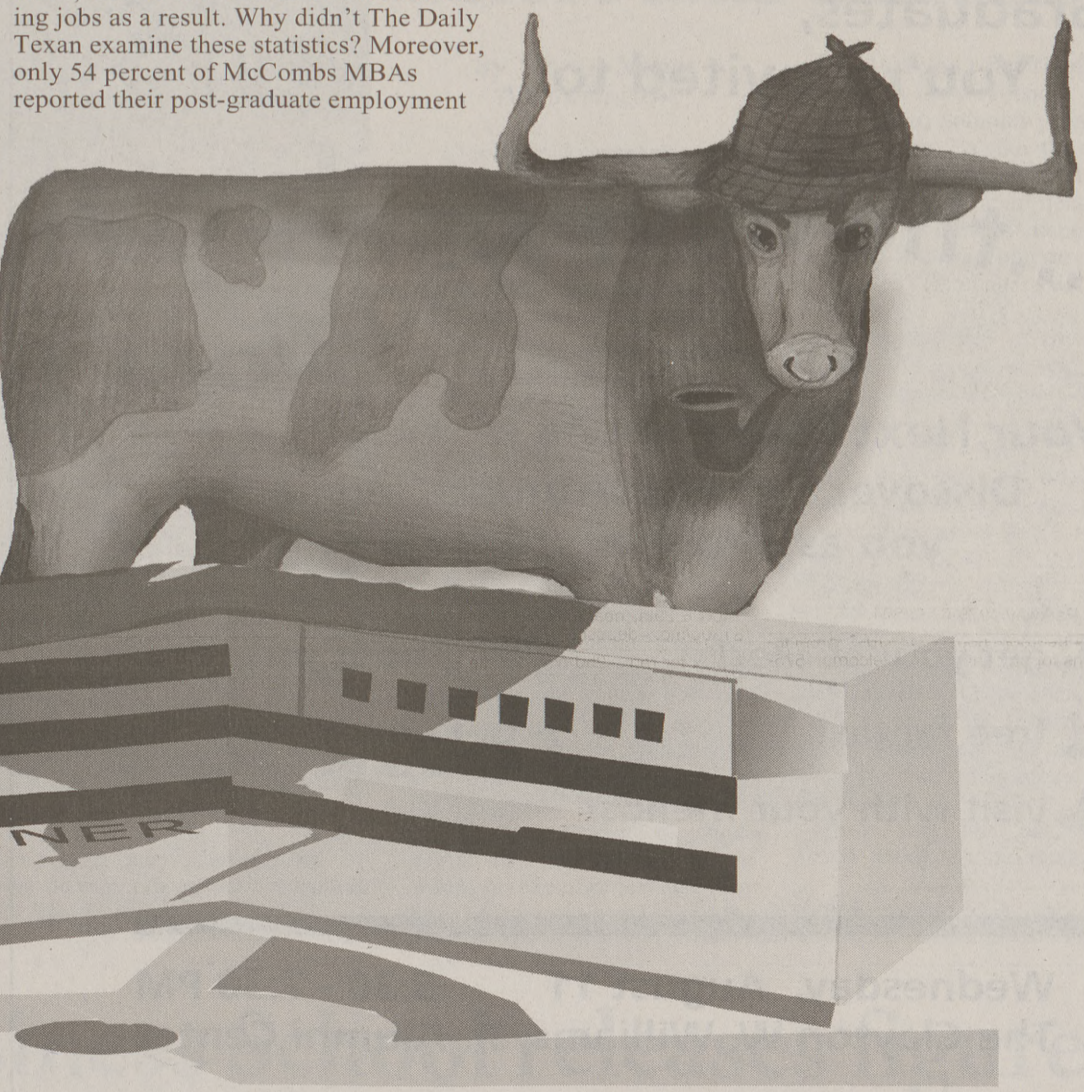
Sara Foley is a senior journalism major. Graphic by Rylie Deyou.

Kriel said she called "most of the schools in the top 10" and found that "they all said that they keep the records and that (they) would be available, but most of them had confirmed fact privacy, which is an understandable argument ... I didn't go through their open records department."

The fact that Kriel didn't request documents from other universities backing up the statistics or names of graduates for any other school besides A&M indicates that this wasn't responsible investigative reporting, but an effort to smear A&M. Other universities performed as well as A&M and rose in the rankings because of it, but were not asked for their data so reporters could contact their graduates and verify their employment.

"I really don't think it's fair to say that we have some kind of anti-A&M agenda. I think we are kind of above that here. I know we are above that here," said Daily Texan Editor in Chief Ben Heath.

In fact, although the article said an open



MAIL CALL

Stakes too high to vote Nader in November

In 2000, I wrote in to Mail Call urging students to look at third-party candidates and specifically consider Ralph Nader for president. I subsequently voted for Nader in that election and, unfortunately, he didn't break the 3 percent goal to get federal funding. Approximately four years later, I am proud to say that my opinion has flipped, and I am voting for George W. Bush.

Specifically, it is my informed opinion that we are safer as Americans in this post-Saddam world. I believe I've seen an abundance of evidence proving the Iraq-Al Qaeda connection. The report that Russia warned about the threat Iraq posed to the US only cements my convictions. While we still need to keep in mind the issue of the purported stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, I confidently believe Bush made the right decision with the information he had available.

I believe the stakes are too high to elect anybody but Bush, I encourage the president to feel strengthened in his resolve to fight against terrorism, and I am an Aggie betting on Bush.

Colin Gibson
Class of 2002

Students should support A&M's administration

In response to a Aug. 5 mail call:

In his letter to the administration, Mr. McCaig along with other students in my eyes have failed to act in a proper fashion. Where does any student in their right mind have the audacity to tell our University Officials and Administration how to do their respected job? Granted, we are students at this University, and we all have the right to voice our opinion, but incessantly badgering administration officials doesn't solve any problems. It doesn't matter if you are a member of any social club, community service organization or political organization. You are here for one purpose: to receive an education from one

of the greatest universities in the state. How can any student, including myself, have any experience or knowledge to tell the administration how to do their job? We students have been in college for 1, 2, 3 or 4 years now and I know for a fact that we don't know what it takes to run a major university like Texas A&M. Decisions are made for reasons that are in our best interest and are seen in a bigger picture. I believe that all students need to take one step back and focus on their primary reason for being here, which is to receive an education and let this University do what it needs to do.

I am a strong supporter of what President Gates and his colleagues are doing for our University and I hope one day that everyone will be on the same page as our president. I, among many other students, support the University in the direction it's going and feel that it is imperative that others jump aboard, sit back and relax.

Robert Wolf
Class of 2005

Bush campaign uses poor tactics

In response to Mike Walters' Aug. 3 column:

When I think of a president who tries to scare people into his re-election it make me sick to my stomach. If President Bush's "homeland security" is really working like he says it is, why is he trying to scare the American public into taking shelter. I want a president who is going to tell me everything is all right and it is under control. The war on terror has spread further thanks to Bush. No, we did not need to go to Iraq. It was not the last resort. Condeleeza Rice and Colin Powell stated in 2000 that Saddam had no capabilities of trying to take over another country, especially the U.S.

I did not like Saddam either, but it wasn't our country and it wasn't our place to try anything. If the Iraqi people are so happy we are there, why are they killing our troops?

Jordan Chambers
Class of 2003

Fashion in the classroom

By Romney Leader
THE DIAMONDBACK

(U-WIRE) COLLEGE PARK, Md. — What is one of the great things about being a college student? For a few glorious years, we are allowed to wear just about anything (even if it's dirty). In a typical class, no one bats an eye to see a student in a suit and tie sitting next to someone who looks like the survivor of a minor natural disaster. The notion of a dress code, even on an informal level, simply doesn't exist for the majority of students.

But we're college students -- real world mores don't apply. It's far more fascinating to examine the fashion of our professors.

The social reforms of the 1960s had an enormous effect on academia in the United States. As the students of this turbulent era become the tenured pillars of academic institutions, the subject matter we study today becomes increasingly diverse and multi-cultural. Back then, fashion played a major role in distinguishing between the buttoned-up conservative old guard and the hippie new generation. Over the years, the rebellion died down but the college campus remains a curious amalgamation of radically varying styles of dress as the older generation makes way for the new.

I had one professor who wore three-piece suits every day. I had another professor (from the same department) who wore the same gray slacks and green boiled-wool sweater to every class. One day he showed up in a blue sweater and we got excited, but it turned out he was just wearing it over the green sweater. It is interesting to see how each professor interprets the dress code of his or her position. Part of this interpretation is rooted in their status -- assistant professors, lecturers and instructors are much more likely to dress up because their future is not guaranteed and they must do what they can to improve their chances of tenure.

Studies consistently show that attire affects the way a person is perceived. In his book "Class: A Guide Through the American Status System," Paul Fussell hires a man to solicit bus fares from strang-

ers at a busy station first clothed in a suit, then while wearing tattered clothing. Unsurprisingly, he gets much more money when he is dressed nicely. Fussell concludes that people garner more respect when they dress up.

But what about tenured professors? With such a high level of job security and laid-back working environment, it's easy to see why they dress however they want. Some dress mainly with respect to personal taste, though it seems many choose their clothing as a reflection of their ideals or those of their discipline. I had an environmental science professor who lived in flannel shirts, dirty jeans and hiking boots as well as a Medieval literature professor who favored Gothic silver jewelry and clothing with simple, clean lines. When people have been studying a very specific subject for years, it is not surprising that they come to adopt some of that subject's aesthetic into their own lives.

Nevertheless, I also had many liberal arts professors who were run-of-the-mill casual, occasionally even verging on sloppiness. This self-conscious quasi-grunginess has an almost post-modern feel: Nothing you wear has any meaning, nothing is special and nothing is worth adorning yourself for.

"Take nothing seriously," I hear them shouting at me, "least of all what I am wearing!" While I can respect this perspective, I worry about the effect on young, apathetic minds. These professors are the ones who fought and lived passionately when they were our age, yet through their appearances they are encouraging quite the opposite in their students.

Perhaps it's simply the case that the fashionable way of dressing in academia is forever rooted in the scruffiness of the rebellious '60s. That argument aside, it is impossible to do away with our tendency to associate external and internal form -- we judge our professors by their appearance. Does that affect anyone? Does it even matter?

Romney Leader is a columnist at U. Maryland