

A working plan

Jonathan Smith says Gates' Vision 2020 is achieving its goals



JONATHAN SMITH

Over the summer, Texas A&M students received an early Christmas present. The marketability of A&M degrees increased as the school's U.S. News and World Report ranking rose five spots from the previous year. A&M climbed to 62nd place among the nation's 248 research universities.

Aggies will experience an increase in opportunities as the school gains an increase in prestige. This rise in the rankings was the product of A&M, President Robert M. Gates' new plans for A&M and the results show that his proposals are positive and effective. Since these changes have affected the University's ranking in such a short time after being implemented, students should trust Vision 2020 as a step in the right direction and give Gates a chance.

Much of the increase has been the result of Gates' blueprint to add 447 new faculty positions. This ranking gain was produced with only 130 of these positions having been filled so far.

The addition of these positions does much more than improve A&M's national ranking. These new faculty members increase the educational opportunities for all future and current students. Gates promises "more small classes, a better student-faculty ratio, more course choices, more tenured and tenure-track faculty in freshman and sophomore classes."

A&M also rose five positions to 22nd place among public universities. Such a large improvement seemed almost impossible when the plan was first announced, but now A&M is charging toward that goal.

A&M's current ranking demonstrates the value of A&M's tuition. More expensive Texas schools — such as Baylor, Southern Methodist University and Texas Christian University — all received lower rankings. As Gates' plans continue to improve perceptions about A&M, the ranking will increase and tuition will become an even better value.

Though some Aggies believe that outside perceptions of A&M don't matter, in reality this ranking might help determine the value of an A&M degree for someone with little or no experience with the school. In the long run, Aggies who deny the importance of the external grade might get a job based on where A&M ranks nationally.

Gates does more to improve the school's image than just improving rankings, however. He has also announced that he is looking to create a new high-level administrator position that will be responsible for coordinating communication and marketing efforts at A&M.

"We have not done a good job of selling ourselves and the good things we do here," special adviser R.C. Slocum told *The Eagle*.

Whoever is hired to this position will help A&M put forth a consistent, positive message to the outside community. A more controlled marketing plan will improve the perception of all Aggies.

There has been much controversy over Gates' plans that worked toward improving the University's ranking. Yet, challengers to Gates' actions have been shown why he was trusted



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with a job much more important than running A&M: He produces results. "We have only just started down the road to improve the quality of education at Texas A&M," Gates said during the academic convocation ceremony Saturday. Now that we have

proof that Gates' plans are effective, let us not waste time following his lead into a new era of excellence.

Jonathan Smith is a junior history major.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

John David Blakley reasons Wohlgemuth isn't ready

At a recent fundraiser in Waco, Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Waco, posed this question to an audience of nearly 800 supporters: "Arlene Wohlgemuth has pledged to do for the nation what she has done for the state of Texas. Is that a promise or a threat?" A careful look at Wohlgemuth's record in the State House reveals that her pledge may very well be the latter, as she has proven to be a lawmaker aloof to concerns of college students and working families, and is uninterested in the ideas of compassion and personal responsibility.

Take a look at the controversial House Bill 2292, a bill authored by Wohlgemuth, which she now proudly flaunts in appearances throughout District 17. Last week, the Waco Tribune editorial page called portions of the legislation "the costliest budget gimmick in Texas history." The most expensive consequence of the legislation, a consequence Wohlgemuth always fails to mention on the campaign trail, is nothing short of an assault on low-income working families for the purpose of saving a buck. Approximately 147,000 children of working families are now without health insurance due to H.B. 2292.

Wohlgemuth not only authored legislation considered blatantly immoral (in fact, Texas Impact, a religious advocacy network, has been pushing Gov. Rick Perry to restore the budget cuts to CHIP, along with the Texas Medical Association and United Way) in the name of saving money, but it is projected to be unsound economics for Texas. As Wohlgemuth praises her actions as cost-saving, not only are thousands of children without means for healthcare, but Texas will end up footing larger bills due to lost federal dollars. For example, the federal government gives states \$2.59 for every dollar it spends on CHIP. Also, the expensive and inevitable trips to the emergency room for illnesses that could have been treated at the doctor's office add to the state's costs.

Perhaps the worst aspect of H.B. 2292 is the dilemma faced by low-income parents. They must deal with a gut-wrenching choice. Parents could continue to work and set a good example for their children, but worry about whether their children will get sick. On the other hand, they could also leave their job and fall into a lower income bracket and re-

ceive government assistance to assure decent health care for their children.

Wohlgemuth recently joined Gov. Perry in calling for the delay of about 20,000 children from being thrown off CHIP. This backtracking is too little too late and does not absolve her original cuts.

College students beware: Wohlgemuth voted for tuition deregulation. For those who do not know, tuition deregulation was the removal of the 2 percent cap the state was allowed to increase tuition by and a measure that was opposed by a staggering majority of students, ranging from the Aggie Democrats to the Young Conservatives of Texas here at A&M.

It is easy to see why deregulation is so unpopular among students — just look at your latest fee statement.

At A&M, tuition has increased 21 percent since deregulation, largely due to the Legislature's failure to adequately fund higher education. A self-proclaimed conservative voting for a back-door tax increase on college students and then asking them for their vote is not only ironic, it is degrading to students. Such disrespect for students and education itself may explain why Wohlgemuth was quoted in the *Texas Observer* as saying that although she had not read "To Kill a Mockingbird," she would like to see it banned in schools. More importantly, however, it may explain why she cannot fully wrap her mind around the difficulty and, in many cases, penny-pinching, endured by college students trying to complete a college education.

It is a big step for a politician to move from the state stage to the national stage. It is a promotion that should be earned.

Take a good look at Wohlgemuth and what she has done for Texas. Placing undue burdens on young people who are attempting to make a good life for themselves by attending college does not deserve praise. Someone who increases hardships for families and puts them in a situation where the path of personal responsibility and work may hinder the health of their children does not deserve promotion.

John David Blakley is a junior political science major.

MAILCALL

A challenge is proposed to TS decision-makers

I hereby challenge the decision-makers to subject themselves to the same circumstances many of us persons are forced to endure. The ground rules: 1. If you do this experiment on any day but a Monday or Wednesday, it will not be valid (for reasons of class schedules); 2. You must not obviously appear as a decisionmaker (we wouldn't want any special treatment).

Leave the O&M building at 2:42 (to allow for leaving classroom, elevators, etc.) Walk, do not sprint, to the closest Ross Street bus stop and wait for the next bus going to Wehner.

While you are here, you can remind yourself that you need these two consecutive classes this semester to graduate. They are not offered but for one section for the year.

Oh, look, there is a bus! Never mind, it is a sardine can. No, you cannot stand in the back stairwell. A bus you can actually get on will be here eventually. Forward to getting off of the bus at the Wehner stop. Now, take a good look at your watch, or ask the nearest friendly Aggie for the time. Forty-five minutes from O&M to Wehner. Your class started 25 minutes ago. You wonder how many test questions were covered for the first half of the class.

I expect many will soon be walking this sort of trip, but what about those for whom walking is not possible or practical? What about the fees? In this society, a service that becomes useless usually results in a change of service or a refund.

The students will be anxiously awaiting the results of your experiment in next week's *Battalion*.

*Ben Jelley
Class of 2004*

Jack did the right thing, Greeks aren't special

In response to Chelsea Sledge's Sept. 1 article:

Jack Hildebrand made the right decision when he denied the Greek block. I'm glad to see we have a SBP who finally does what the majority of the student body wants.

The Corps is the only group that should be allowed a block because of tradition. I'm sorry to have

to be the one to break this to the Greek community, but they are Aggies just like us. Just like us, they deserve nothing special for football games. Go and be exclusive somewhere else.

*Willem Strittmatter
Class of 2002*

Frats contribute to A&M as much as the Corps

Although they have not existed at A&M since the inception of the University, fraternities and sororities are values-based organizations that contribute greatly to Texas A&M and the surrounding communities.

It's time to accept the fact that 10 percent of A&M's student population is Greek, which is more than twice the size of the Corps. Times are changing, and the way things were is not always better for the University and its students.

Prior to August of 1925, there was no woman who earned a degree from A&M, but I think we can all agree that the tradition of an all-male school is one we are all happy to do without.

If the metric to determine if an organization is worthy of a seating block at a football game is the age of the organization, then the Greeks are certainly out of luck. But if the metric is something more meaningful; something dealing with community involvement, leadership development, and values that carry into life after college, the Greek community is fully deserving of a seating block at the Aggie football games.

I would much rather watch Aggie football on television than be associated with an organization that values so poorly the good work done by Greeks at A&M, as well as the work that has yet to be done.

*Jon Boben
Class of 2006*

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