

# THE LIBERATOR

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THE STATE OF

EDUCATION

Photo by Madhu Singh

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# MAY 2014

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## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Love it? Hate it? Let us know! Letters to the editor reviewing articles from this issue will be printed in the next edition of *THE LIBERATOR*.

THE LIBERATOR is the official publication of The Liberal Arts Council. As a liberal arts-focused news magazine, we aim to keep students connected to the university through updates on legislation, campus affairs and student life. All questions, comments and concerns can be directed to THE LIBERATOR at:

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# THE LIBERATOR

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# TEACH FOR AMERICA & CHARTER SCHOOLS

## debating the ISSUES

### TEACH FOR AMERICA

#### PROS

##### *On its purpose:*

“The main point is about awareness of inequality in education and making sure that leaders in different fields know about education, see educational inequity as a problem and feel like they should be doing something about it. A lot of times leaders on college campuses don't really see education as a field they should enter. About 60% of people who have done Teach for America are still in Education. A lot of people who do not stick with education are getting their organizations involved in the educational community”

##### **Chrissy Thompson**

TFA Campus Campaign Coordinator (Recruitment Intern)  
2014 Corps Member  
South Dakota

##### *On the impact:*

“One thing that surprised me when I started preparing for TFA was that I had to learn about the community, its history and its schools first, even before learning the requirements to become a licensed teacher. TFA works closely with the school and community leaders in the region to make sure that the teachers understand and are sensitive to the unique circumstances that may affect their students. They know that the best way to improve outcomes is to align TFA's needs with those of the community.”

##### **Steven Macapagal**

2014 Corps Member  
Rio Grande Valley

I read somewhere that charter schools tend to have higher graduation rates, too. They seem to be more likely to have teachers who care about education. Sometimes you don't, but you get that variation in public schools, too. I had the opportunity to go to a [public] school that took measures to prepare me for college. Not every public school provides dual-enrollment [or AP] courses.”

##### **Madison Yandell**

##### *On the recruitment/selection process:*

“TFA looks to recruit students from prestigious, elite schools. They look for people who have stood out as leaders in their community. I think this is an important criterion, but the reality is that these students are going to be sent into impoverished, underprivileged schools and neighborhoods. I wonder how, realistically, students without proper training will handle this. TFA recruits receive training during one summer. This gives them no time to really immerse themselves in the classroom before they enter it; no time to observe techniques of successful, established teachers.”

##### **Adalyn May**

UTeach Program Member

##### *On the politics (and money):*

“TFA has major corporate donors, many of which have very questionable interests... Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation, the Walton's. The Walton's who give a majority of their education funding to two groups that support what are considered 'conservative' reforms, like charter schools and merit pay. So you can see based on who's donating, what the ideological direction is of TFA.”

##### **Lucy Murphy**

Archer  
Fellow

*On the benefits of charter schools:*  
“Hearing about mayor de Blasio in New York opposing charter schools got me into the topic. But I think a charter school favors allowing choice in children's educations. Also, they provide less of a one-size-fits all approach to teaching. I read in an interview the mayor of Chicago supports charter schools for the other opportunities they give.”

I read somewhere that charter schools tend to have higher graduation rates, too. They seem to be more likely to have teachers who care about education. Sometimes you don't, but you get that variation in public schools, too. I had the opportunity to go to a [public] school that took measures to prepare me for college. Not every public school provides dual-enrollment [or AP] courses.”

##### **Madison Yandell**

#### CONS

### CHARTER SCHOOLS

##### *On the non-standardized subject matter:*

“Issues with charter schools go beyond the scientific falsehood and one sided religion conflict, these courses hurts the humanities as well. The history lessons certain charter schools give are laced with historical inaccuracies and negative social implications.

These lessons don't have to be historically accurate. One school's teaching materials claimed that Samurais in Japan were the solution to a weak economy after WWI, which is odd considering the samurai were “effectively abolished after 1876” according to Rice Professor Rich Smith. These students will be at a disadvantage when they go to college because their school failed to teach them truth.”

##### **Madison Manoushagian**

##### *On the prioritization of public schools:*

“I have had an extremely rewarding experience with KIPP. I have seen that it makes an important impact for students and I know KIPP does increase students' familiarity with college much better than many public schools. But I've also read and researched into the systemic issues with charter schools.

Some charter schools are effective with what they do and many are not – too many are not. It is sad that charter schools are sometimes the only hope for students to escape a public school that is broken. I believe the focus needs to be on fixing traditional public schooling. It is important to focus on what caused the need for charter schools in the first place. I always felt that education was a cornerstone of democracy, and more of our resources should go into public school systems. [Public schools] should be based on an expansion and exploration of charter school models.”

##### **Shiv Rawal**

Archer Fellow

##### *On remembering the good with the bad:*

“I think it's important to focus on the charter schools doing a good job. Some have done reprehensible things. But if you took a dog home and it defecated all over the rug and bit the baby, you shouldn't suddenly hate dogs. It's good when it's good and it's bad when it's bad.

It's also important for schools like KIPP to work at dispelling the notion that what's happening in charter schools is antithetical to what's happening in public schools. Sometimes, charter schools fulfill their purpose of serving as a proving ground for different educational strategies. KIPP pays a lot of attention to teacher selection and professional development in its teachers [and] both KIPP and public school teachers are able to attend workshops offered.”

##### **Professor Grant Thomas**

Overseer of Plan II/KIPP Partnership

# SENIORS THAT ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

## THROUGH EDUCATION



DAVID LOEWENBERG  
GOVERNMENT

**What program are you doing?**  
Teach for America

**What bothers you about education today?**

What's most troublesome about education right now is the fact that many kids are walking into their first day of kindergarten already at a distinct disadvantage to their higher-income peers. If we're going to remedy some of the disparities we see in education today, we have to start as early as possible, before kindergarten and before preschool, even. There is nothing I can "fix" but there is a tremendous opportunity for our generation to work towards expanding access to high-quality early childhood education which means everything from

birth through age 5. We're seeing a great push on this front right now so it's a great time to get involved.

**What made you interested in education?**

When I began to truly recognize the tremendous disparities in our country when it comes to education, I became interested in learning more, understanding why, and figuring out how I could be part of the solution. I don't think there is a greater, more meaningful issue in our society today than that of public education and I see a tremendous opportunity for people our age to get involved and make a remarkable impact. Being a teacher is extremely challenging, unglamorous work,

but can also be unbelievably rewarding.

**How do you think your experience in education (both past and future) will impact future career decisions?**

I think my whole mindset about education and teaching will probably change dramatically when I actually enter the classroom and begin teaching. Right now, though, I'm passionate about public education and would like to continue to pursue a career in it past my two year teaching commitment with TFA. Whether that means staying in the classroom, pursuing an administrative role, or going into education policy, I'll have to wait and see.

**What made you interested in education?**

My own experience in school made me interested in education. I was able to enrich that interest through my experiences with Plan Tutoring, a Plan II Program that mentors students at Austin KIPP High School. Seeing firsthand the inequalities in education really pushed me towards Teach for America.

**How do you think your experience in education (both past and future) will impact future career decisions?**

I am hoping to do at least two years of teaching through Teach for America. After

that, I definitely plan to stay involved with education; maybe not as a profession, but at least as a volunteer. In particular, I've always seen myself being a Girl Scout troop leader later in life, and I would hope to mentor and inspire my scouts to their fullest potential. A good teacher teaches more than an academic subject--they teach lessons about life as well. As a Girl Scout troop leader, I would get to experience that side of education a little more.

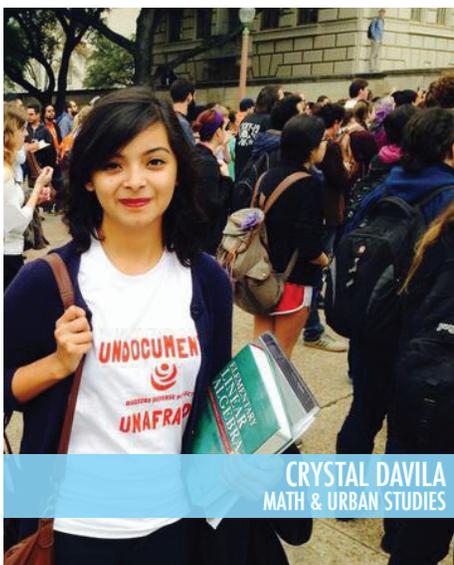
**What bothers you about education now?**

Inequality in education is something that really bothers me. Specifically, low-income

communities tend to have less resources in their schools and more challenges to student learning, and that's not fair. I don't think I can fix that by myself, but I do think that I can help remove barriers to student learning, and help my students succeed in life beyond my classroom. I think we as a generation really need to recognize that not all classrooms are the same, and that's not fair to students. We may not have created the problem, we can, and we should, be part of the solution.



ELLEN CAMERON  
PLAN II, BHP & SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT



CRYSTAL DAVILA  
MATH & URBAN STUDIES

**What program are you doing?**

I'm getting my teaching certificate through UTeach. I would also like to add that I am part of a new organization at UT called Students United for Public Education (SUPE ATX Chapter). SUPE is part of a national organization devoted to defending public education which constitutes working with students, parents, educators, and teachers.

**How will your experience in education will impact future career decisions?**

I know that I will be involved in education for as long as I can, which I'm going to start by being a teacher and hold on as long as I can. I want to be a math teacher, perhaps because I was so good at it or because I want students to see past the dry subject that math has become in public schools.

I remember classmates complaining and asking why they have to take math; they wanted to know how it was going to help them in the future and to some

extent, they are right. The math that is taught in schools is not going to necessarily help a future chef, a future athlete, etc.

I think there is a way in making math relevant to every student, maybe one suggestion is to make the math classes that are offered more fluid. What about a math course that integrates math and art? How about a budgeting class?

Math has become a subject in which the students who succeed are the students who are good in the "game" of memorization and following procedures. Since starting college, I have become closer to understanding the meaning of many mathematical concepts and theorems and have started seeing the beauty behind math.

That is not what we are giving younger students which is an injustice because we are essentially driving students away from any real growth and from learning. As of now, I am not entirely sure how I will make that happen but I know that a good first step is to actually step in the classroom.

**What bothers you about education now?**

There are many things that bother me about education and within education. First of all, there is less and less funding going into public education, we blame teachers and students when test scores aren't satisfactory (why would we use one standard test to measure every student's intelligence?), turning public schools into charter schools, taking the freedom from teaching, taking the freedom from pursuing your curiosities, and the list goes on. There are certain schools in which these injustices are more true than others, why is that the case? I can't fathom how these things have become acceptable to the extent that they are now the reality of public schools.

Perhaps we have to step back and ask ourselves what the role of education is and then follow up to find out if education is fulfilling that role. I believe that education is not fulfilling its role and I would like to say that other people believe the same.

# teaching abroad

STUDYING ABROAD IS COOL, BUT IMAGINE A LEVEL UP WHERE INSTEAD OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND FACEBOOK FUNDRAISING, THEY PAY YOU FOR IT. TEACHING IS YOUR ANSWER.

There are many reasons someone might want to teach abroad. You may be interested in other countries, cultures, and languages. Or, you may want to travel and explore the world at a time when there aren't other expectations or obligations. Teaching abroad is also a good way to gain work experience, enhance your language ability, and show that you are able to work in a diverse environment.

According to a global report by education firm Pearson, the United States ranked 17th in the developed world for education. Finland and South Korea are at the top of the list with the best education systems.

South Korea's education system is test-driven and rigid, with students logging almost as many hours in a day at a test preparation class as they do at school. Finland's education system is much more flexible and relaxed.

The rankings are calculated using international test scores, graduation rates, and the prevalence of higher education seekers, yet each country shows their own strengths and weaknesses.

There is no substitute for good teachers. In cultures like

Finland, teaching is a very well respected job, considering the path to become a teacher is extremely rigorous and only the people in the top of their graduating classes could be admitted to graduate school for education.

The higher-ranking countries tend to offer teachers higher status in society and have a culture that prides education. A lack of educated teachers is one barrier that many small or underprivileged cultures and countries often face. One way to combat this problem is to send motivated teachers abroad.

Jessica Sitler, a graduate student in Educational Administration, worked as an English and Geography teacher for 7th through 11th graders on the island of Roatán, off the coast of Honduras. She taught at a bilingual private school on the island, but she quickly learned that the teachers at the public schools were on strike a majority of the year.

Thus, her and a friend from the private school started a mentoring facility for street children on the island. Throughout the year, they would mentor street children after teaching at the private school each day, which proved to be successful as the program grew from 7 to 30 children.

These children don't have many financial resources, therefore they utilize the public school systems, which aren't really comparable. Sitler explained that they ended up teaching most of the public school children as well so they weren't just roaming around the island while the teachers were on strike. In addition, they wanted to help the students through their mentoring program because 60% of the people on the island only had a sixth grade education.

Some of the difficulties included adjusting to the various knowledge levels of English and Geography of the students. The island was a huge melting pot; there were students from Africa, native Hondurans, British Islanders, and Guatemalans. In addition, the curriculum the school had

was from the 1970s, so Sitler had to invent her own.

She explained, "It was really outdated, therefore I had a lot of authority and control over what I taught them and the administrators trusted me so I utilized a lot of what I learned in undergraduate and it was a very unique experience."

Another difference was that the knowledge of English and other skills varied throughout the students in the classroom. It was difficult to teach the varying skills because they don't have different levels such as intermediate, advanced, or AP for courses like the United States.

Sitler said, "it was challenging because those students would have to get tutored after school to help stay on track." Luckily, since she taught at a private bilingual school, most of the students who were behind would put in the extra work and get tutoring when they needed help because they had the financial resources and supportive parents.

There are similarities to the U.S. Education System, despite cultural or regional differences. The students are part of clubs such as Student Council, and participate in many extracurricular activities after school such as sports.

They have lots of Honduran pride and celebrate every holiday with parades and festivals. The students value community and culture, Sitler said, "They were respectful and knew that education is important."

Wanderlust is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as, "an eager or fondness for wandering or travelling." In 2011-2012 the University of Texas at Austin had 2,596 study abroad participants, a 10% increase from the previous year. Teaching abroad is a great way to explore other parts of the world while leaving a positive impact on a different community.

Sitler said, "it was a unique opportunity that not many people have." You never know where teaching abroad can take you or the impact you will have on others, so pack your bags and go.

■ MEGAN PALOMBO

## top 20 countries with the best education system

- |                |                |                |               |              |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Finland     | 5. Singapore   | 9. Switzerland | 13. Australia | 17. USA      |
| 2. South Korea | 6. UK          | 10. Canada     | 14. Poland    | 18. Hungary  |
| 3. Hong Kong   | 7. Netherlands | 11. Ireland    | 15. Germany   | 19. Slovakia |
| 4. Japan       | 8. New Zealand | 12. Denmark    | 16. Belgium   | 20. Russia   |



<< JESSICA SITLER, AN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION GRADUATE STUDENT, PICTURED WITH SOME OF HER 7TH GRADE STUDENTS IN ROATAN

# RESOLUTION REVOLUTION

THE BILL THAT COULD CHANGE THE FACE OF STUDENT DEBT

The B-On-Time loan, fondly referred to as BOT, gives students a zero interest with the possibility of full loan forgiveness. The forgiveness comes in when it transforms into a grant (read: free money), as long as you graduate in four years with a G.P.A. higher than 3.0 and complete no more than 150 course hours in total. If you receive the loan, and don't manage to uphold these requirements, you graduate

The state of Texas set aside 107.1 million dollars in the 2012-13 fiscal year earmarked for this program, and increased that number by 5% for 2014, yet not all of that money is being used.

with the loan still at a zero interest rate.

Courtney May, a Plan II Junior at UT, sums up the loan perfectly, "The B-On-Time Loan Program encourages students to succeed in their studies and graduate in a timely manner."

If this sounds too good to be true, it's not. The state of Texas set aside 107.1 million dollars in the 2012-13 fiscal year earmarked for this program, and increased that number by 5% for 2014, yet not all of that money is being used. Only 9,650 students claimed a loan from the BOT program in 2013, and public universities used only 64% of their allotment. These numbers are shocking, until the elephant in the room becomes apparent: this isn't a federal loan.

## BEST DEAL YOU NEVER HEARD OF

Non-federal loans are a gamble. Sometimes they are parasites in disguise, bringing students in with manipulative information and preying on people who don't do all their research before signing. Higher interest rates, co-signers and payments while still enrolled are just a few of the numerous pitfalls entwined with private loans. The federal government makes no distinction between non-federal loans championed by the state and private lenders,

considering their clear preference for federal loans.

"Due to an unintended consequence of the Higher Education Act (HEA), university financial aid offices are not permitted to let their students know about state aid options. This means that programs like B-On-Time will not show up in eligible student's aid packages from the university. Students must find out about programs like B-On-Time on their own," May urges.

Lawmakers, in an effort to protect students from particularly bad loans, managed to bar students from being educated about all loans not provided by the U.S. government. Within the HEA, there is a tiny clause that forces universities to have at least two "unaffiliated lenders" on the school's "preferred lender list." This translates to a whole lot of red tape for the university, in terms of who they can and can't spread the word about.

The B-On-Time loan is wasting away for this exact reason; there are millions of dollars of tax-payer revenue vanishing because college financial aid advisors and counselors have duct tape over their mouths.

Because leftover funding created the illusion that students were disinterested in the loan, May says, "The Texas government even considered doing away with the program at one point."

But thanks to a current piece of legislation sitting on a desk on Capitol Hill, that could all change.

## THE MONEY'S ON THIS BILL

House Resolution 3371, or the State Loan Access and Student Protection Act, specifically permits access to loans like these. Texas isn't the only state with this problem; ten others are unable to educate their students about options like the B-On-Time loan, due to the same gag restrictions placed by HEA. House Resolution 3371 provides a way out.

Kimia Dargahi, a senior IRG and Plan I Honors student, eloquently explains why H.R. 3371 is our beacon of hope. "By remedying an unintended legislative consequence, providing increased access to financial aid for students, addressing student indebtedness, and incentivizing timely graduation, H.R. 3371 represents a common sense piece of legislation that should generate consensus among lawmakers on both sides of the aisle."

Introduced to Congress in October of last year, the bill is currently sponsored by our very own Rubén Hinojosa, a representative for Texas's 15th

## In a world, where crippling student debt and tuition rates simultaneously skyrocket, one loan stands above the rest for the students of Texas...

congressional district. This district covers a thin vertical sliver that touches the South border of Texas, encompassing Edinburg, McAllen, Seguin, and some western sections of greater San Antonio. Seven other Texans are co-sponsoring the bill, along with a representative from Pennsylvania, but a general trend well known to Congress could prevent this bill from seeing the light of day.

Six of those seven Texans are Democrats, the Pennsylvania representative is a Democrat, and the sponsor, Rep. Hinojosa, is a Democrat. Partisanship in the House has always been a problem, but never to the extent it is currently. As one of the least effective Congresses ever, the 113th Congress passed a measly 73 bills that were enacted into law. That's out of 6,714 measures that were introduced in the first place. Considering this lack of compromise, it is understandable that H.R. 3371 could be in trouble.

### WHY IT'S IN TROUBLE

Both May and Dargahi, along with several other well known student leaders, attended U.T. in D. C., where UT students fly to the nation's capitol and discuss pertinent issues with lawmakers. One of the focuses on this year's agenda was H.R. 3371, and the dire need for students to know all their options.

"H.R. 3371 fixes the mistake in HEA," asserts May, "[It] allows financial aid offices to tell students about all of their financial aid options, both state and federal."

Philip Wiseman was one of those students at U.T. in D.C. He mentioned that every lawmaker thought this legislation was a good idea, but many were hesitant to jump on the student-loan bandwagon. Because the bill is backed by a strong Democratic effort, Republicans don't want to touch it, for fear of looking like they abandoned their party. This level of partisanship isn't surprising, but it's certainly worrisome considering that one-on-one the representatives unanimously supported the legislation, said Wiseman.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

There is hope still. Many of the legislators only ask their constituency to make this bill a priority. If representatives can amass enough outside support for the bill, they are willing to cross party lines and compromise. The ball then lands in the students' court. The voice of Texas university students needs to

be heard for this legislation to become a reality, and for students to benefit from the 33 million dollars.

"Contact [your] representatives and ask them to sponsor or, at the very least, vote for Representative Hinojosa's legislation," urges May. "It is not a politically contentious resolution but would have an immense impact on students."

H.R. 3371 could save students time, worry, and a whole lot of money. The legislation seems commonsense, considering that May says, "H.R. 3371 fixes the [problems of] HEA and significantly increases the amount of financial aid available to students without costing the federal government a dime." It seems like the perfect plan, and yet Congress is still at a standstill.

**"H.R. 3371 fixes the mistake in HEA, it allows financial aid offices to tell students about all of their financial aid options, both state and federal."**

**-Courtney May**

Education is an important topic of conversation because it affects the future. The amount of stress associated with funding your college experience could change drastically with this piece of legislation, yet many of us are too lazy to walk 5 blocks to the capitol, or call up our representative's office. In order to give future Longhorns, and maybe some Aggies if we're feeling generous, a chance to get an education without burdensome and restrictive debt, we as students need to make our voice heard. From our Capitol building, to those long-standing structures in Washington D.C., we need to make sure legislators realize the potential impact of H.R. 3371.

In a time where tuition is being raised another 2.6% and the University struggles to keep up with a growing disparity between government funding and costs, the Texas government cannot afford to throw away \$33 million. With \$7,020 student loan aid per year, it looks like students can't afford to waste either. Call your legislator. Who knows, maybe you can grab a piece of those millions.

■ PATTY SANGER

U.S. Average debt load upon graduation for the class of 2012 was **\$29,400**.

In 2011, the average debt load was \$26,600. That's an **increase of 6%**.

**Seven in 10 seniors** graduated with student loan debt, and a fifth of that debt was owed to private lenders, which often charge high interest rates.

Recently, **student loan debt** (870 billion) "**surpassed** the nation's outstanding balance on **auto loans** (\$730 billion) and **credit cards** (\$693 billion)

The total amount of loans in Texas was **\$239,888,227**

Students in Texas are slightly below national average debt, and **44% of graduates don't have debt** (in 2009-2010)

It is estimated that **20% of students default** on their student loans

The average first-year salary for a Liberal Arts student from UT is approximately **\$55,665**

# ON THE BALLOT



## DAVIS ON EDUCATION

A University of Texas/Texas Tribune poll in late February revealed that, when asked for the most effective changes in K-12 education improvement, Texans felt that increasing funding and reducing standardized testing were the most viable options. Texas has one of the largest economies in America, yet ranks 49th in public education spending per pupil. It is clear that Republican candidate for governor, Attorney General Greg Abbott, and Democratic candidate, State Senator Wendy Davis, will have to prioritize a plan for the future of students and teachers.

Similar to Abbott, during a discussion at the University of Texas at Arlington State Senator and Democratic hopeful, Wendy Davis said, “Education must be the Number One priority we address as a state. It is part of making sure that we keep a promise to Texans, that where they start should have nothing to do with where they go.” Back in 2011, Davis filibustered the Texas Senate during the proposal to cut billions in public education, and she still remains strong on the issue.

### Great Teachers

Great Texas includes six reforms that seek to recruit and retain more teachers in the state. One proposal allows high school juniors in the top 20% of their class to commit as teachers guaranteed early acceptance to college, and then job placement in a Texas classroom. Davis seeks to expand funding for the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Program to increase loan forgiveness, offer more certification, and reinstate the educational aide exemption, allowing teacher’s aides to get certified as full-time.

### Great Pathways

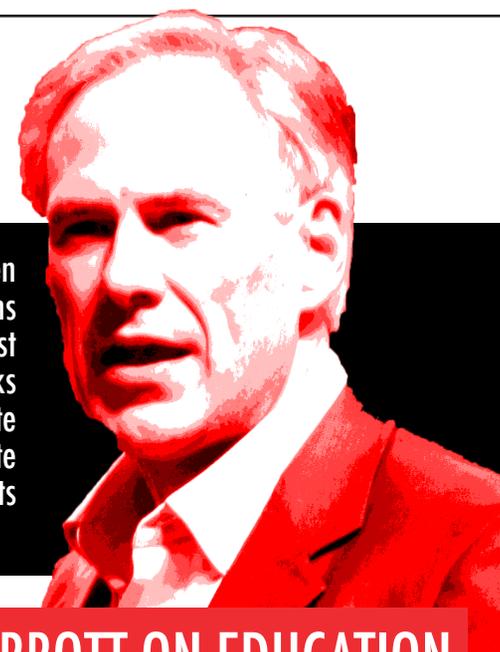
Great Texas is Davis’s second education policy rollout includes reforms to address expanding Texas pathways to education. For college students, these include doubling the number of both Early College High School Campuses in the state, and hours of college credit Texas high school students can earn each year. Additionally, Davis seeks to develop and implement a grant program through the TEA to address costs to students seeking early college options. Another proposal under this plan is aide for school districts developing partnerships with local institutions of higher learning.

### Great Start

Great Texas is the last platform piece announced by Davis in her education policy. This focuses on early childhood education at the Pre-K level. Aspects of this plan include increasing access to full-day Pre-Kindergarten in Texas, and seeking to promote early-childhood reading in hopes of attaining grade-level literacy by 3rd-grade.

Critics of Davis’s plans condemn the fact that she has not explained the costs or strategies associated with funding these reforms. She is on record saying, “I don’t know the exact number on each of these proposals. We’ll be developing that as we go forward. The primary goal is to place these, for the very first time in a long time, as priorities for the state of Texas.”

■ CASSIE MANEEN



## ABBOTT ON EDUCATION

The Attorney General cites his Education Roundtable Tour from earlier this year for his platform. Abbott traveled the state visiting schools to meet with educators for inspiration. He aims to make “next year’s Pre-K class graduate from high school in the top ranked school system in the country.”

### Accountable Education

Abbott’s Educating Texans Plan addresses Pre-K through third grade, and recommends increased literacy and numeracy professional development and increased focus on mathematics and number sense, for Texas teachers with Math Achievement and Literacy Achievement Academies. To increase reading levels for third-graders, he wants to establish Reading Excellence Teams for schools with low scores. Abbott said in a statement, “Reading is the most fundamental and important academic skill children can learn in their earliest, formative years. There are lasting consequences from third graders not reading at grade level.” Abbott also emphasizes technology and STEM education programs, whose students will hopefully bring more of these jobs to Texas.

### Early Education

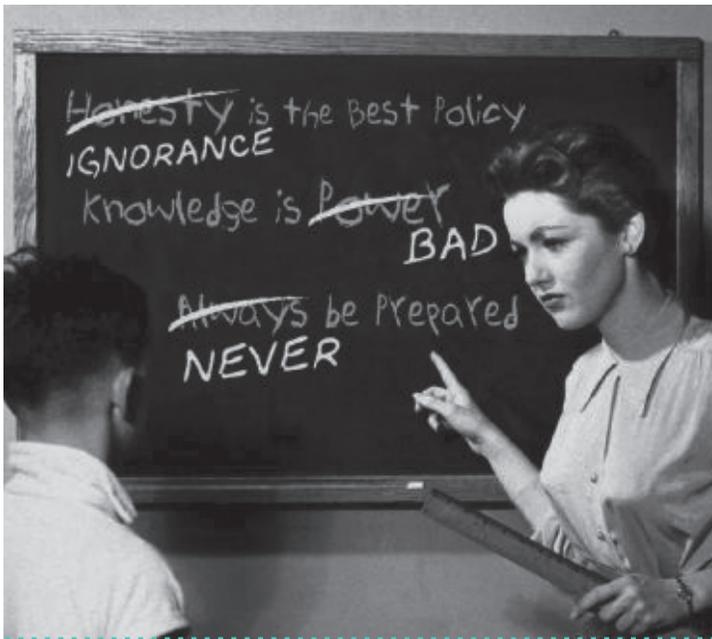
Educating Texans also focuses on making more effective Pre-K programs in the state. This includes a recommendation for an opt-in, gold standard program where schools following new guidelines aimed at improving prekindergarten will be eligible for additional state funding. Schools benefitting from this new funding would need to set benchmarks and report results to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The plan seeks to create more research-based professional development for pre-K teachers and encourage parents to enroll kids in state-based pre-K, instead of the Head Start program.

### Community Education

Greg Abbott favors community-based education, as opposed to broad curriculum standards like Common Core that seek to apply blanket standards to individual public schools. “I know that principals, teachers, parents here in the state of Texas know far more how to educate our students, than do these bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.” Abbott said.

Abbott’s biggest education critiques stem from his delay on announcing his platform. His unclear stance on vouchers, which could allow parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools, is another hotly contested topic.

He has been criticized for his defense in court as Attorney General of the Legislature’s \$5.4 billion cut to public schools in 2011. However, Abbott has refrained from commenting on the cuts politically, making this less a policy stance as much as his constitutionally mandated duty to represent the state in all litigation as Attorney General.



# THE SCHOLAR

## ABSTINENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER, SUPPOSEDLY

When I was in 7th grade, the teachers rounded up students in my grade and walked us to the band hall for a lecture on abstinence.

Not all students had to go. If your parents didn't want you to attend, they could sign a form giving you permission to miss the talk. I wish I had had my parents sign that form. An hour in front of a computer playing video games with other students excused from the lecture would have been a much better way to pass the time than listening to a sermon on the evils of pre-marital sex. It was a tense and uncomfortable hour to say the least, and I came away from the talk more frightened by sex than I had been before the lecture.

I don't remember the name of the speaker. I do, however, remember seeing him ridiculed by Joel McHale on *The Soup* five years after his talk at my middle school. The clip came from an episode of *Dr. Phil*, and in it, the nameless abstinence speaker used the same analogy he used on 13-year-old me.

### THE ANALOGY

The analogy is an effort to illustrate how preferable virgins are to sexually active persons when it comes to getting married. In his right hand, the speaker held up a toothbrush; its bristles were dirty and flattened. In his left hand, he held up another toothbrush. It was pristine and still in its package. "Now," he said, "Do you want to brush your teeth with this dirty and disgusting toothbrush, used and abused by everyone? Or do you want to brush with this untouched, still-in-the-box toothbrush?" We mumbled that we preferred the new one.

He then proceeded to unpack his analogy for the roomful of apathetic 7th graders: the

new toothbrush symbolized virginity, the old toothbrush symbolized promiscuity. His message went like this: one must be careful about the sexual history of the person we choose to form relationships with and who we eventually marry.

According to him, you don't want a person who has been everywhere with everyone. Chances are they have, or have had, a disease. If they don't, they're still morally corrupt from sleeping around. And you don't want your health and your morality to become jeopardized by falling to temptation, do you? Not the greatest analogy but it excellently reflects his narrow-minded, biblically based view on sex, which encourages shaming teenagers who dared to have had pre-martial sex.

### THE SAFEST SEX

Midway through the talk, it seemed like the speaker was done stripping down sexuality to its supposedly ethical dimensions and that we would finally learn something about sex. I was wrong.

"What is safe sex?" the speaker asked.

"A condom," yelled Andrew, the loudmouth of our grade.

"Okay. What is safer sex?" the speaker asked.

"Two condoms," said Andrew. After the laughter subsided, the speaker, who didn't

laugh at Andrew's joke, said that he was wrong. Safer sex, the speaker claimed, was no sex. How profound! The safest form of sex involves having no sex at all!

This didn't seem logical, even to a 7th grader. Does this only apply to teenagers and pre-martial adults? The religious undertones of his lecture seems to suggest that this was the audience for his message, though it surprised me how he refrained from explicitly mentioning the Bible during his entire talk. But what about married couples? If they want to be extra, extra careful and not get pregnant, should they just drop sex altogether?

After all, having no sex is the safest form of sex, according to my abstinence speaker. Undoubtedly, he wouldn't care what married couples did. They had already fulfilled the one requirement to begin a sexual relationship, i.e. marriage, which abstinence proponents and religious zealots endorse.

The entire talk was a ploy to provoke fear of sex and its consequences among my classmates. Although the speaker never showed us a slideshow filled with pictures of venereal diseases, he did give us enumerable anecdotes about how sex had ruined many teenagers' lives. And he never missed an opportunity to say that

that's where we were heading if we didn't control ourselves.

### THE MOMENT OF SHAME

Near the end of the talk, the speaker claimed that he could look into a teenager's eyes and tell that he or she had had sex before. After this bold reveal, he looked around at every student in the room, and his eyes landed right on mine. And they stayed on my eyes for what felt like half-an-hour. The ruse is up, I thought, and I began to panic. Wait, I haven't had sex yet! I'm not entirely sure what it even is, so why should I be panicking right now? I continued to feel guilty, despite the fact that I hadn't done anything to deserve it.

But that was the speaker's intention from the moment he started talking. He wanted me to feel that way. He wanted me to fear the consequences of having sex before marriage. He wanted me to be riddled with guilt before I did anything worthy of guilt. Fear and guilt are the bedrock upon which abstinence is based.

And yet it isn't an effective means to talk about sex, let alone prevent teenage pregnancy. It limits sexual education to issues of morality, and it fails to address real issues. Teenagers will continue to have sex, as they have done for centuries, so what's the better way to deal with this? By shaming teenagers? Or teaching teenagers about safe sex, and its many avenues.

Have an opinion on abstinence taught in the place of sex education in school?

Bring your thoughts to the Liberator panel:

Condoms Creationism Curriculum

4/22 at 7 PM

CLA Glickman Conference Room

# EDUCATION AT LARGE

## WHAT WORKS & WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT IN TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY

■ KELLIE STONE

there are certain characteristics higher functioning school systems have in common...

It is no secret that one of the most consistently controversial topics in the political realm is that of education policies. Our nation has seen countless politicians build their platforms around the ideas of changing, renewing, and redeveloping education, which comes as no surprise considering that this subject is close to the hearts of many.

The topic of education has many aspects, from testing to accountability to teacher certification. It seems as if everyone has a different opinion on each matter which provides a pragmatic environment for legislators to create well-supported and beneficial education legislation. It boils down to the basics of what makes students thrive the most and an informed trial-and-error system of discovery.

If we are defining what is the best way to create successful, thriving students, it seems reasonable to label the one type of school (public, private, or charter) with the most effective set-up that creates success. However, it is not always the case that the specific style of classroom is the main cause for the success of students. This means that while public schools, private schools, and charter schools operate in different ways, it is not their method of divvying up students and teachers in classrooms that necessarily creates dramatic differences in achievement.

Instead, it is their founding principles. Alton Frailey, Superintendent of Katy Independent School District, states that “there are certain characteristics higher functioning school systems have in common.”

### CLASSROOM CULTURE

Many of these factors fall under state jurisdiction, including accurate methods of measuring student success and offering the best learning experience possible. Frailey makes it clear, though, that a community setting is vital in fostering a sense of purpose, school-wide behavioral standards, and an atmosphere of safety, support, and belonging for all those involved.

Frailey also stresses the need that, above all, “the authority of the school is respected and accepted.” There is some difficulty in creating authority within a school; just ask any teacher who has had a class full of hyperactive fifth graders. Respect and authority are commonly earned through one-on-one interaction and repeated observations.

However, in the education world, it is impossible for each staff member to meet with each student and parent to create this relationship of respect. Instead, schools aim to instill it on a large scale. One method used by many schools is the enforcement of a dress code. While schools may argue that their enforcement of dress codes has roots in other causes, they all agree that the underlying basis for dress codes is respect, either for staff or for one’s body.

Unfortunately, this doesn’t always have the preferred consequences. As Kerry White, staff writer for Education Week, pointed out in her article “Do School Uniforms Fit?”, “research on the effects of school uniforms has been inconclusive or mixed.” It is hard to pinpoint what exact changes schools can implement to increase overall respect, so many of these tactics used by districts are ineffective.

While schools and districts use these approaches to gain respect from the mass amounts of students, teachers seek individual respect in the classroom. As Judith Pace and Annette Hemmings describe in their research, *Understanding Authority in Classrooms: A Review of Theory, Ideology, and Research*, teachers must walk a thin line between being disciplinary and being approachable and flexible to learning styles.

“Contradictions of authority are especially salient in the realm of formal education, in which teachers are expected to impose social controls on groups of students while liberating individual human potential,” they explain.

Overall, it is safe to say that creating a respected school environment is easier said than done. This respect is grown at a much larger scale than just person-to-person or person-to-district levels.



As Frailey put it, “quality communities have quality schools,” meaning that respect grows communities, which in turn grows schools. This is one of the ongoing labors school authorities must manage in order to maintain and improve school support.

## ACCOMODATING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

The creation of great schools is not entirely up to the district and teachers, but relies on education policy legislators. Effectively supporting students, while guaranteeing a quality education, has always been a struggle for U.S. education policy specialists. Quality education is different for each student.

Linsie Thurlow, an early childhood education major at UT and graduate from Texas public schools, explains that her least favorite part of her education was the “large gap in the levels between me [Linsie] and my peers even in Gifted and Talented classes, and I think public schools could do a better job catering to the individual as opposed to the masses.”

This initial struggle of teaching to each student becomes even greater when we look to immigrant students as well. Texas is no stranger to this demographic; 36.2% of the total population of Texas is Hispanic or Latino. Through state-based obligatory attendance and Federal laws requiring a free and quality education to all students, traditional public schools must accept any student.

This complicates the legislation process, giving legislators the predicament of trying to create standards appropriate for all students, from those who have begun schooling in preschool to those who recently moved to the US without prior education. In this instance, it may not necessarily be about education legislation, but rather about community and acceptance. Specifically, disadvantaged students may not get to the level of the other students at the exact same time, but they will most likely never get to that level if they are not accepted and supported. This community support comes in many forms, from the creation of ESL courses to available tutoring for struggling students.

## ARE TEACHERS THE ANSWER?

Support and acceptance does not only come from the surrounding community and fellow classmates, it also comes from the teacher. Teachers are crucial to the success of students; they must be supportive, understanding, and flexible to accommodate the ways individual students learn. Not everyone is suited to be a teacher; and along those lines, there may be certain schools or school districts that require better teachers, skilled in teaching a broader range of students.

The challenge is finding these teachers and convincing them to teach in these usually underprivileged, inner-city districts. As Frailey put it, “better funding and highly qualified teachers will make a difference.”

Many individuals focus only on this aspect of teacher quality, believing that if all teachers were a certain way, every student would succeed. Yet, this is not the end-all solution.

Education has yet to find one method which positively affects every student the same.

Frailey comments, “I’ve been in this business for 31 years and I have found that there is no one or two things in isolation that can create and sustain increased student performance.”

This is the struggle with education legislation: the answer to academic issues are often multifold and complicated, so it is hard to pass multi-faceted legislation and then specify which parts of the legislation are creating or diminishing success. Public opinion tends to focus on only one of these aspects, such as teacher pay, and develop opinions on this one part without taking into consideration all the other components. So while some argue that increasing teacher pay will generate an increase in student success, this may not be the sole answer, although it may be one of many steps that needs to be taken.

So far, the term “student success” or “student achievement” has been thrown around as if it is a specific, fundamental basic. If you were to ask students what they believe success is, many would describe grades and GPA. But in recent years, more are including extracurricular involvement, service dedication, and personal achievements in their description.

## THE PROBLEM WITH HIGH-STAKES TESTING

As the world increasingly becomes intertwined, the job market and college admissions are becoming less focused on one’s GPA and more on one’s internships and experiences. While the world innovates its definition of success, so too should our education legislation. This was one of the widespread complaints with No Child Left Behind.

Congress’ reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires states to create their own standards and have their students be tested annually against these standards. The state then disperses rewards and consequences for the schools, based on their student success on these tests. Many claimed that NCLB put the majority of its focus on assessing student achievement through standardized testing. This creates a warped view of a student and a school, as well as forces many teachers to only ‘teach to the test.’

Frailey comments that his major concern with NCLB and other similar Texas reforms is the “overwhelming dependence on a single high stakes test.” If basing student success off of standardized testing does not encompass what it truly means to be successful, then it is up to those we put in charge of education legislation to find a more efficient way.

As our state becomes one of the fastest growing places in the nation and as Austin becomes the Silicon Valley of the South, it is clear that the direction of education should progress as well. Whether this means supporting all students equally, creating more flexible and accessible teachers, or judging student success off of more than just a test-score is up to supported legislation.

With the upcoming mid-term elections, Texas teachers and students alike may want to start thinking about what education means to them, and what they want it to look like in this state. Texas is ranked 50th in the nation for high school graduation rates and 49th for public school spending, so it seems it is time for Texas to do some innovating.

“Contradictions of authority are especially salient in the realm of formal education, in which teachers are expected to impose social controls on groups of students while liberating individual human potential”

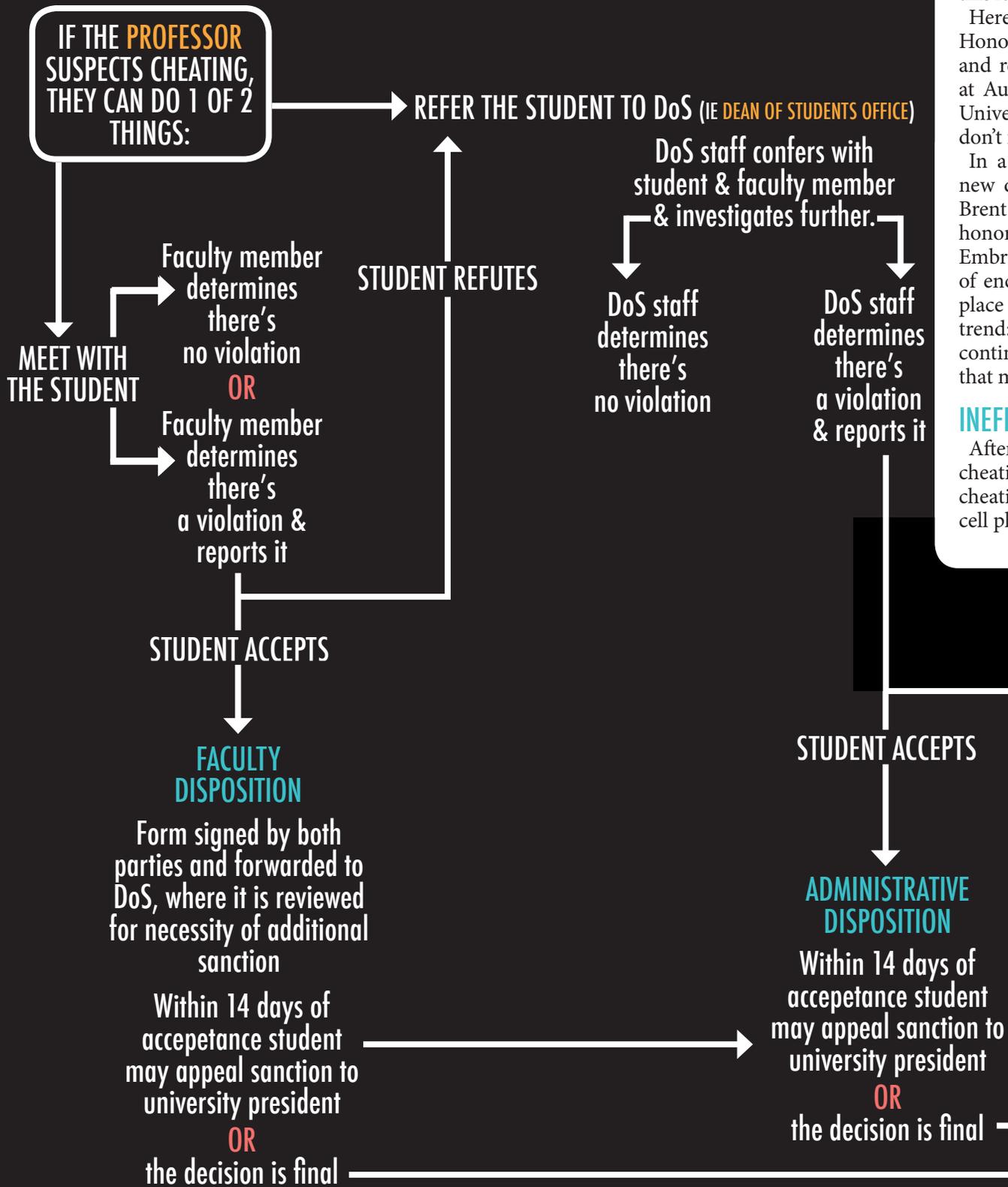
-Understanding Authority in Classrooms by Judith Pace and Annette Hemmings



Photos by Madhu Singh

# CHEATING THE SYSTEM

WONDER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STUDENTS ARE CAUGHT CHEATING AT UT? WE GOT OUR HANDS ON THAT PROCESS FOR YOU:



## ■ KEELY WITHEROW

"I would prefer even to fail with honor than to win by cheating," declared Sophocles. However, rampant cheating within universities today has proven that this idea is as ancient as the Greek playwright himself.

Here at the University of Texas, the new Student Honor Code is stamped on every class syllabus and reads: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." But many don't feel students are taking this vow seriously.

In a short film urging students not to cheat, the new dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies, Brent Iverson, hopes that students will "take the new honor code as seriously as anything you believe in. Embrace the honor code. It's yours." These words of encouragement, while offered to students from a place of good intentions, do not change the prevailing trend: that students have always cheated and will continue to do so, especially with new technologies that make it easier than ever before.

## INEFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

After professors present a plea to abstain from cheating at the start of term, measures to prevent cheating are quite lax in the classroom. For example, cell phone use is not uniformly discouraged during

# A SERIOUS LOOK AT THE PREVALENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN THE UNIVERSITY TODAY

tests or quizzes. While professors occasionally instruct students to shut off their electric devices, they rarely monitor whether students have actually securely stored these items.

Tom Palaima, a Classics professor here at the university, feels that “policing is ineffective because my lecture hall cannot accommodate spaces between students during tests and quizzes.” The remedy for testing in overly packed lecture halls is to distribute two different test forms, but not all professors choose this method.

While students are armed with cellphones and laptops to aid in cheating and plagiarism, it gives university faculty more trouble pinpointing it. One measure in place is called SafeAssign, which runs through the Blackboard webpage and “cross-references submitted materials with an archived database of journals, essay, newspaper articles, books, and other published work.” While this is a useful tool, most professors do not take advantage of it.

## WHY CHEAT?

It is important to find out how students cheat, but maybe a better question to investigate is why students cheat. Perhaps students simply don't think cheating is wrong. This could be a result of the proliferation of

the Internet and the sea of unattributed knowledge that is available to students. Another explanation is that many students haven't been properly taught how and when to cite a source.

Professor Palaima provides another reason behind cheating; namely, that everyone has reason to cheat:

“High achievers cheat because they believe they have to attain perfection or better than perfection to attain their ultimate high goals. Low achievers cheat because they feel, sometimes not unjustifiably, that the system is rigged against them, so any means to succeed in an unfair game is not unfair.”

Even when cheating knowingly occurs, professors may be discouraged from reporting it because of the lengthy measures to prosecute cheating. In a flow chart provided by the Student Judicial Services, the discipline process for violators of academic integrity illustrates a complicated system of sanctions, hearings, involvement of the Dean of Students, and appeals to the University President. When faced with this complicated system, it may be easier for professors to turn a blind eye to cheating.

## THE FREELOADER PROBLEM

While tests and essays are common forums for individual cheating, group projects are also a tricky

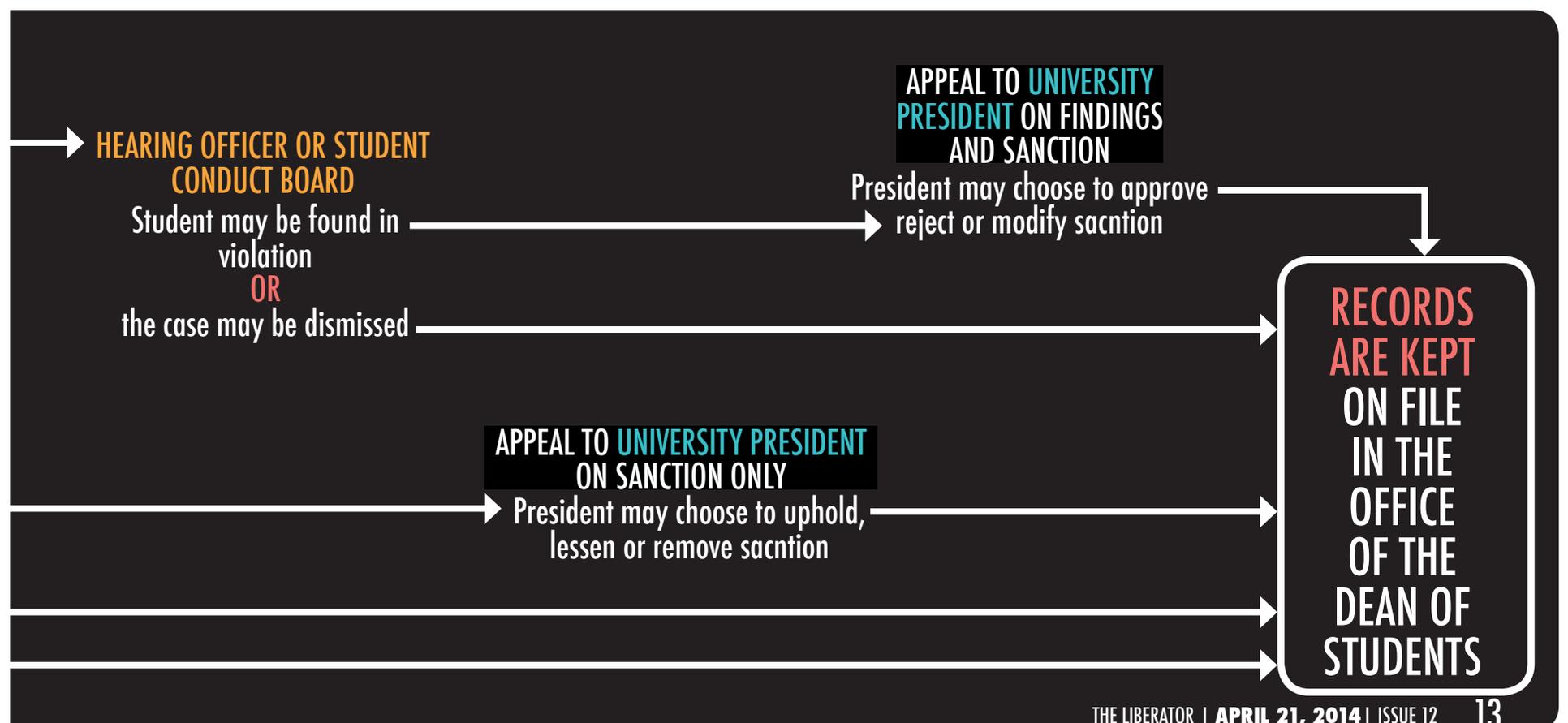
situation to maneuver. Gary Kocurek, a Professor in the Department of Geosciences here at UT, says that relying on the honor code is enough:

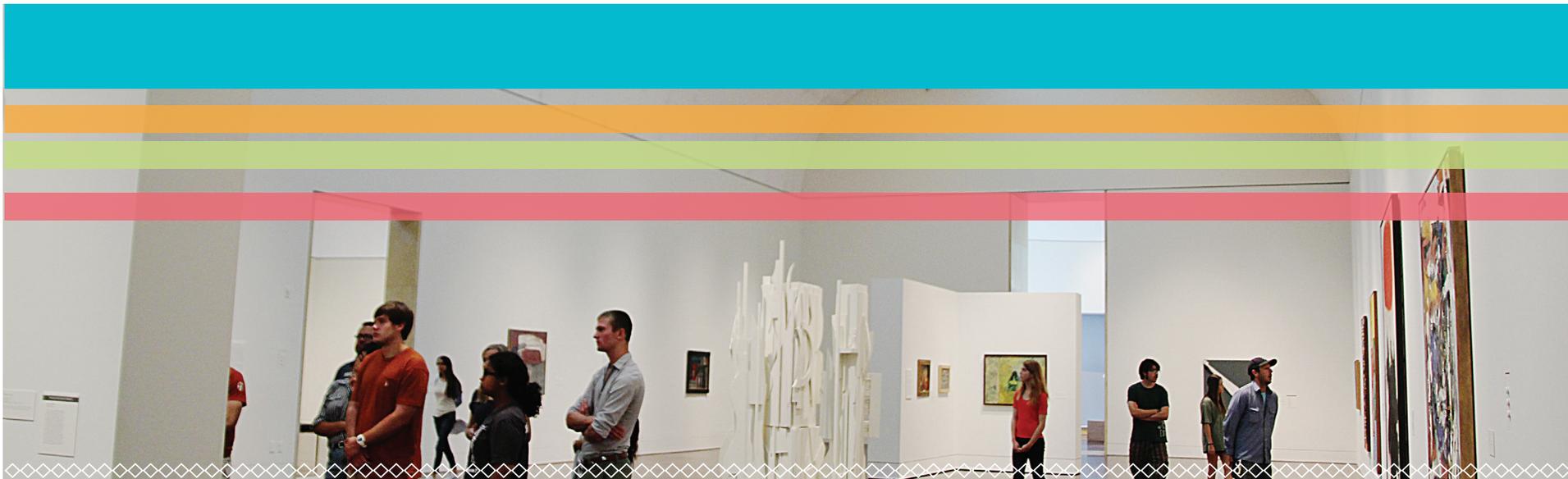
“The university's honor code provides pretty practical guidance here. There are times for group effort and collaboration. If it is not specifically a group effort, any use of someone else's ideas, data or work is cheating. This seems clear to me.”

Here, the hope is that students will adhere to the honor code despite the temptation to be free riders by taking advantage of other group members.

Clearly, the prevention and identification of cheating on college campuses is a historical flaw in the university system that has yet to be stamped out. Today, students have access to tools that make cheating easier, such as an expansive array of information on the Internet and the convenience of smart phones. Professors and university faculty, despite their good intentions, are not doing enough to prevent cheating.

Many actions could be taken such as educating students from an early age about what constitutes plagiarism and cheating and amplifying plagiarism-detection technologies. However, students are smart and driven, and if they want to cheat, far more will need to be done to prevent it.





reassessing  
the  
value  
of the

# FINE ARTS

PHOTO BY MADHU SINGH

## WHY IT MATTERS (STUDIES HAVE SHOWN...)



...development of **literacy skills** among pre-kindergarteners was fostered when the children were allowed to act out their favorite stories. **Dramatic play** also helped motivate them to learn



...high schoolers who studied **dance** scored higher than nondancers on measures of **creative thinking**, especially in the categories of fluency, originality and abstract thought



...seventh grade boys in special education's use of the **visual arts** helped them become more sophisticated, **less reluctant readers**. After a nine-week course of "visualization training," they also took a more active role in reading and began to **interpret the text** rather than passively reading it



information from:  
[http://www.nasaa-arts.org/  
Publications/critical-evidence.pdf](http://www.nasaa-arts.org/Publications/critical-evidence.pdf)

Since the recession, more than 95 percent of children are attending schools that have cut funding. Fine Arts programs are often the first to go and are continually being cut in schools, in favor of income-earning programs. However, there are many sacrifices to the effectiveness of education when these programs are cut.

People seem to forget that math is taught at the same time as learning to read music, analytical thinking is taught when a student examine art, and English is taught in the theater by learning a script.

Numerous studies demonstrate the dramatically positive effects on those who engage in fine arts. One such study was conducted by College Board showed that those who took arts and music classes for all four years of high school scored 91 points higher on the SAT than those who took one semester or less.

### The Missing Link

Frequently, at-risk students are affected most by cutting fine arts. A study by the National Endowment found that 'low-income high school students who earned few or no arts credits were five times more likely not to graduate from high school than low-income students who earned many arts credits.'

While the research shows that arts benefit grades and test scores, this does not account for the motivational

engagement the fine arts entails.

Plan II and Government senior, Joshua Wallace was involved in theatre throughout high school, "In addition to being a creative outlet, participating

A study by College Board showed that those who took arts and music classes for all four years of high school scored **91 points higher** on the SAT than those who took one semester or less.

in One Act in high school exposed me to an unconventional competitive environment, which in part prepared me for the hard work involved in succeeding in college."

### Making Strong Connections

Luckily, there are special education programs that are choosing not to forgo the arts, as a part of a well-rounded education.

Waldorf Schools strive to "transform education into an art that educates the whole child." In these schools, the arts are just as important as math and science. As they see it, they are essential

to preparing a child for life and the real world. Further still, the arts are not solely taught in a creative manner or form of personal expression. While younger students are taught how to relate art to their lives and the world, older students are taught to look at art objectively and critically.

The City School of Los Angeles, which utilizes the Waldorf education, implemented a series of natural art projects into their elementary and middle-schools, including a beeswax lantern, as well as a twig lantern. The school prides itself in simple, beautiful crafts that are gratifying for their students in order to engage and embolden their students.

High schoolers, on the other hand, would be expected to experience and analyze a work of art, like a play or a painting. Art can be paramount in engaging students' critical thinking skills.

### Making Strong Connections

As public schools continue to jettison the arts, it's important to remember its multitude of positive effects. Not only is it vital in engaging students analytically, but it is a hugely motivational outlet for less privileged students. As playwright and co-founder of the London School of Economics, George Bernard Shaw, once said, "Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable."

■ ALEYA NOOR

# COLLEGE COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT

[THE DRUGS THAT SURPASS COFFEE]

There seems to be a drug for everything. Some drugs ease headaches. Some prevent pregnancy. Other drugs take you to the moon. Lately, I have heard more and more about drugs that make you smarter.

I am talking about “cognitive enhancing” drugs, or nootropic drugs, as they are officially called. Among these drugs are Adderall and Ritalin, which are used for treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## WHY IT'S AROUND

There are many conversations surrounding the ethics of nootropic drug use, and each of them approach controversial ideas. Some say they are going to level the playing field for students with learning difficulties. Others argue that its only another way for the privileged to keep prevailing. Students often think it will make you smarter, at least while the high lasts. Let's start from the source; a highly debated topic: What is Adderall even for?

The thing about ADHD is, not everyone believes it exists. Researchers such as Dr. Richard Saul, writing for Time Magazine, say there are dozens of conditions that can lead

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**Adderall will not make one smarter. One does not take Adderall and suddenly solve unheard-of equations. They have a clear-cut purpose: helping one focus on the task at hand, usually until it is complete**  
~~~~~

to symptoms of ADHD, oftentimes requiring unique approaches to treat.

The National Institute of Mental Health's website includes several possible symptoms of ADHD. Some that stand out to me are “difficulty focusing attention on organizing and completing a task,” becoming bored, daydreaming, and not listening when spoken to.

This makes me think of friends who cannot listen to the entirety of my stories, yet are definitely considered

intelligent. They daydream, get very bored, and, unfortunately for me, can't give me much attention.

I do not mean to say no one should take nootropic drugs. It is a sensitive issue and may sometimes be a student's only hope for coping with an extreme inability to focus or with an unfortunate brain injury. My issue is with my peers next-door, not concerned about tomorrow because the drug is always just a text away. All their success they trust in a pill, ignoring any sort of normal planning that goes into writing that last minute paper.

Adderall will not make one smarter. One does not take Adderall and suddenly solve unheard-of equations. They have a clear-cut purpose: helping one focus on the task at hand, usually until it is complete.

## USED AND ABUSED

When applied to the lives of high-achieving college students, Adderall is just another means of remaining organized, while living the life of procrastination.

We college students have a plethora of tasks at hand. With classwork, part-time jobs, physical exercise, relationships, spirit groups or fraternities, or all of the above, Adderall can help you. But like happiness, organization and focus can be achieved by other means.

In The New Yorker report titled “Brain Gain,” Margaret Talbot interviewed “Alex,” an anonymous user of Adderall. I have crossed paths with people like “Alex,” who described a Harvard culture of anxiety over competition. The usage of Adderall oftentimes seemed unneeded, even to Alex.

“Everyone is aware of the fact that if you were up at 3 a.m. writing this paper it isn't going to be as good as it could have been,” said Alex. “The fact that you were partying all weekend, or spent the last week being high, watching ‘Lost’—that's going to take a toll.”

This carries over to what friends have told me about the drug. They tend to feel uneasy about the quality of their work. However, even though they earned a B+ or so, they got the job done. Certainly, their achievement is something I would not have been able

to do under such time constraint and without the drug.

## ANOTHER APPROACH

Instead, students should just schedule rigorously for the tasks at hand. As an academic coach, I help students optimize efficiency and for the most part I practice what I preach. It's just my way of making sure there is

~~~~~  
**It seems as though Adderall is not a valid means of leveling the playing field after all. It is merely a way for the unorganized to get stuff done, instead of getting their life organized.**  
~~~~~

time for everything. I get sidetracked often, but it keeps me from Adderall. My lifestyle keeps me from needing Adderall.

Lifestyle is really the name of the game when it comes to the usage of nootropic drugs, it seems. In some cases, as with students diagnosed with ADHD, it may be the only option. Parents do not have time to send their children to camp counselors and students do not have the concentration to hop from activity to activity weeks in advance.

A student recently stressed the fact that while she is against taking medications, she understands that for certain lifestyles the drug may be attractive. Just like the various methods available for feeling happy, there are various methods for maintaining focus.

It seems as though Adderall is not a valid means of leveling the playing field after all. It is merely a way for the unorganized to get stuff done, instead of getting their life organized. Those expecting to be the next Carl Sagan with Adderall may be painfully mistaken. Eventually, it may seem like everyone is on the drug, but this does not suggest competition will dampen, or we will suddenly magically have our lives together. It may only suggest we have too many distractions.

■ OMAR GAMBOA

## SO WHAT EXACTLY IS ADDERALL?

### Type:

Amphetamine, Stimulant

### Uses:

Treatment of ADHD and narcolepsy

### Effects:

- Increased concentration ability
  - Less distractibility
  - Less impulsiveness
- Decrease abnormalities in brain structure for ADHD patients
- Increased physical ability and energy
  - Decrease in hyperactivity

### Side Effects:

- Increased aggressiveness
- Irregular/increased heart rate
  - Hyper/Hypotension
  - Erectile dysfunction/Uncontrollable erections
  - Difficulty urinating
    - Anxiety
    - Insomnia
  - Mood changes
  - Decreased sex drive
    - Paranoia
- Gastrointestinal problems

### Facts:

- Nearly 14 million monthly prescriptions were written in 2011 for Americans ages 20 to 39
- Apx. 70% of those using these stimulants see improvements in ADHD symptoms
- Amphetamines improve short-term ADHD symptoms, but have higher discontinuation rates than non-stimulant medications due to adverse effects
  - Sometimes used off-label for symptoms of depression or obesity
  - Modern ideas of ADHD point to a functional impairment in the brain's neurotransmitter system, particularly concerning dopamine and norepinephrine
- High amphetamine doses (above the therapeutic range) can interfere with working memory and cognitive control

# LEGISLATION RECAP

## SR. 1311

In Support Additional Funding  
for the EUREKA! Database

**PASSED**

## SR. 1312

In Support of a Revised  
Final Exam Policy

**PASSED**

## SR. 1313

Honoring  
Mr. Kevin Hegarty

**PASSED**

## SR. 1314

Honoring  
Ms. Nancy Brazzil

**PASSED**

## SR. 1315

Honoring  
Dean Brent Iverson

**PASSED**

## SR. 1316

Honoring Dean Lilly

**PASSED**

## SR. 1317

Honoring Cheryl Pyle

**PASSED**

# CAMPUS UPDATES

## LEGISLATION UPDATE

Senate of College Councils recently passed S.R. 1312, a piece of legislation that addresses the issue of multiple, same-day final exams. Currently there is nothing written in the Registrar's Examination Policy that explains what a student can do if they have more than three finals in one day, regardless of timing.

The proposed resolution suggests amending the policy in the Registrar's Catalog. Because of the way that final exams are scheduled, there is a chance that a student can be scheduled for three exams in one testing day. Since there is no written procedure, it is up to the student to fix the problem. Help is not

guaranteed, which is not in the best interest of the student's welfare, as it places an "undue amount of stress upon [the student]," according to the policy brief.

As of now, several comparison schools have a set process written into their final exam policies in regards to this issue. If you want to share your thoughts on this, or any other legislation passing through the University by student leadership, please write The Liberator or let your College Representatives know.

send comments to  
[theliberator.lac@gmail.com](mailto:theliberator.lac@gmail.com)

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

# MAY 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SUMMER SESSION 1: JUNE 6 - JULY 13  
SUMMER SESSION 2: JULY 15 - AUGUST 19

## LOOKING AHEAD

FALL 2013 ADD/DROP: AUGUST 25  
FALL 2013 CLASSES BEGIN: AUGUST 27

### MAY 2

LAST DAY OF CLASS

### MAY 5-6, 11

NO CLASS DAYS

### MAY 7-10, 12-13

SPRING SEMESTER  
FINAL EXAMINATIONS

### MAY 14

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE HALLS  
CLOSE AT 9:00 A.M.

### MAY 15

TUITION PAYMENT DEADLINE IS  
5:00 P.M. FOR UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENTS FOR THE SUMMER SESSION

### MAY 16-17

GRADUATION CEREMONIES IN THE  
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

# THE OUTLET

CAMPUS LIFE, POP CULTURE, MINUTIAE.  
MUNDANE OR INSPIRING, THE LIBERATOR SHARES ITS  
THOUGHTS ON... WELL... EVERYTHING.

## REGISTRATION UPDATE

You know registration is upon us when you can't see your advisor for the next three weeks, and all you hear are people either complaining or celebrating their registration battle stories. As far as the mouse can scroll, all you will see are screenshots upon screenshots of schedules. Fear no more, for the University has made changes to the registration process.

Starting this semester, your time slot to register will be assigned based upon your progress toward degree completion so that it will be easier for you to get the classes you need so that you can graduate on time. If you are a double major, registration times will be assigned depending on your degree closest to completion. Remember, always check with your advisor well before registration if you have any questions - realizing you have a weird medical bar five minutes before your registration period is never a good place to be.

Registration for the summer session and fall 2014 is from April 14-25th. If you don't know how to find your advisors or to set up an appointment, you can find the directory by major on the CoLA website.

## LIBERATOR EDUCATION PANEL

Condoms. Curriculum. Creationism. is an interactive panel event that brings together academics, professionals and experts on the issues involving what should be taught in the classroom today. It will allow for students to participate in the discussion of sex education, science, and other controversial topics.

CONDOMS.  
CURRICULUM.  
CREATIONISM.

FREE  
FOOD,  
CONDOMS,  
+MIND  
BLOWING  
DEBATE

JOIN THE CONVERSATION W/  
**THE LIBERATOR + DEPT. AMBASSADORS**  
TUES. APRIL 22, 7:00  
GLICKMAN ROOM OF THE CLA



### IF YOU COULD BE PART OF A HIGH SCHOOL CLIQUE WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Definitely the "dance team girls" - every clique is hated by other cliques, so I might as well develop a skill & exercise midst all the drama.  
-Madhu Singh

Burnouts. I like to think could do really well later on and have an awesome underdog story.  
-Patty Sanger

Hipsters.  
-Alex D'Jamoos

Lacrosse girls - feared by everyone cuz that sport is intense man.  
-Kellie Stone

Theatre Kids - no there's no black turtlenecks or barets, but...yeah, most everything else you've heard is true.  
-Cassie Maneen

Danceholics: because...because...I just wanted to dance at the ballet. And that's my story.  
-Madeleine Kenney

The Greasers. I have always regretted not being a street tough. Why not join the toughest of the tough?  
-Jacob Troublefield

The Jacob Troublefields.  
-Omar Gamboa

I just want to be included in the clique that Ferris Bueller sneaks out of school... whatever stereotype that would be.  
-Kelly de Moya

The environmentalists...Because my school's mascot was a globe.  
-Keely Witherow

The art kids.  
-Natalia Naranjo

# CHARTING ROUGH WATERS

## YOUR GUIDE TO THE PITFALLS OF CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEMS

In an 1818 letter to Joseph C. Cabell, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

*Now let us see what the present primary schools cost us, on the supposition that all the children of 10, 11, & 12, years old are, as they ought to be, at school: and, if they are not, so much the work is the system; for they will be untaught, and their ignorance & vices will, in future life cost us much dearer in their consequences, than it would have done, in their correction, by a good education.*

America's political culture is undoubtedly dependent upon enlightenment in the form of a public education. Recent international polls on comparative educational attainment, however, have shocked many Americans, creating a fear of the nation's inability to compete with other economic powers.

The widely discussed results of the international exams conducted by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have indicated that, unlike many of America's economic competitors, the US has not fared any better than in previous years. Analysts have argued that America's educational performance needs urgent reform.

### THE WHAT AND THE WHY

Charter schools have exemplified one of the leading solutions to the issues faced by American schools. Charter schools are public semi-autonomous institutions in which the learning environment is personalized to the needs of students. Although these schools must meet state mandated standards, they offer an opportunity to experiment with curriculums and pedagogical methods.

Such schools are not obliged to follow certain regulations, but are expected to present better academic performance. Each school has a unique set of standards and a code of conduct, which must be followed by all enrolled students.

Since 1991, when the first charter school was opened in Minnesota, the number of public charter schools in the US has surpassed 6,400, with 2.5 million students enrolled in 42 states and the District of Columbia. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools reports that 280

public charter schools currently operate in Texas, on 689 campuses. The amount of Texas students enrolled in public charter schools has grown 16.6% in the past year and the number seems only to increase.

### PROCEED WITH CAUTION

The benefits of such institutions have been supported by claims that semi-autonomous schools are more able to experiment with various educational approaches, thus allowing for more competition between schools. However, the results of these efforts are mixed, drawing a wave of criticism from education reformers.

**The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools reports that 280 public charter schools currently operate in Texas, on 689 campuses. The amount of Texas students enrolled in public charter schools has grown 16.6% in the past year and the number seems only to increase.**

Julian Vasquez Heilig, an Associate Professor of Educational Policy and Planning at UT-Austin, urges a more cautious analysis of charter schools' performance. He claims that "one could think of the charters in Texas as three types— Corporate, Community and Inter-Governmental. What is interesting is that data shows that community-based charters outperform the corporate charters across the state."

Professor Vasquez Heilig claims that he is not against charter schools, though he believes, "charters should be focused on access and equity, and providing better opportunities for students than they already have." Professor Vasquez Heilig passionately affirms that "the reality of the data shows that on average charters do not outperform our traditional public schools."

The charters schools with boards whose members are unelected are frequently accused of acting as for-profit institutions. Professor Vasquez Heilig claims that "in many

ways they are public schools that act like private schools."

The boards of such schools are appointed and selected by the charter school, "so that's where the democratic conversation comes in, which is that charter schools are beholden to no one, whereas our school districts are beholden to the voters."

Diane Ravitch, a prominent education historian and the author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, highlights similar weaknesses of charter schools. In a recent editorial, Ravitch criticized charter schools that are not managed by local communities, claiming that such institutions lack local oversight and perpetuate divisions in communities. Professor Vasquez Heilig further supports such sentiments, claiming that a recent study of charter schools in Houston shows that charters are more segregated than traditional public schools in their vicinity.

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Given the criticism that charters receive from many prominent education reformers, we must ask whether it is actually possible to reform these institutions in order to ameliorate their negative impact on traditional public schools and communities at large.

Professor Vasquez Heilig lists class size reduction, Pre-K, guarantee of certified teachers for every child and desegregation of schools as policies that have shown to be effective. Furthermore, the views and measures proposed by education reformers ought not to be influenced by their political ambitions.

In her recent speech to the students at the University of Texas at Austin, Condoleezza Rice, a former Secretary of State, claimed that the number one national security issue faced by Americans today is the decline in quality of education. For students of all majors it is important to participate in the national discussion about improvement of learning in schools.

Professor Vasquez Heilig urges students to participate in various organizations, such as Students United for Public Education, which is going to start a chapter at UT-Austin. Most importantly though, we must free ourselves from the fear of having a vigorous debate – in the classrooms and about the classrooms.

■ ALEX D'JAMOOS

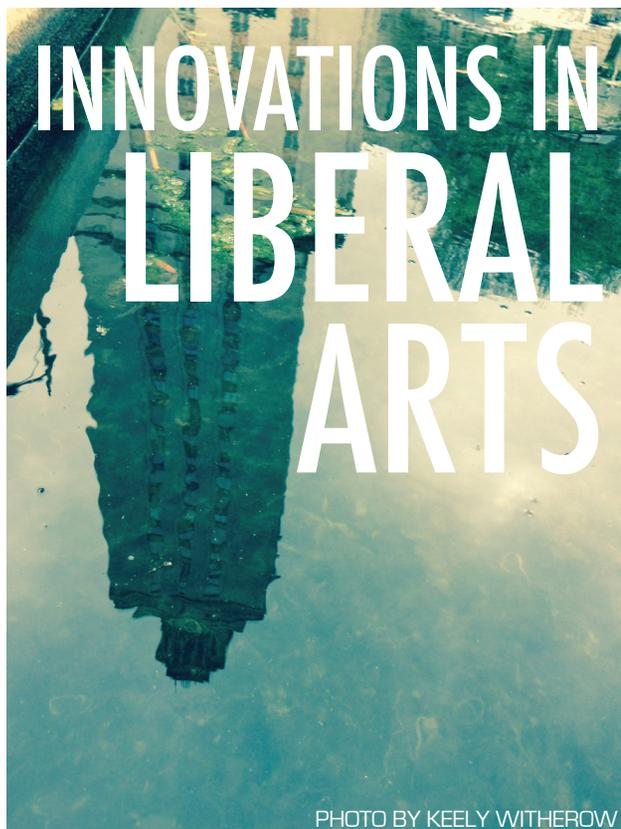


PHOTO BY KEELY WITHEROW

**The liberal arts are like vegetables,** ignored despite their importance in maintaining a long and healthy life. Similarly, a good helping of liberal arts is necessary for a well-rounded and wholesome education. Today, there are school systems that actively support students who show an avid interest in these subjects with new hands-on high school courses, curriculums that are breaking boundaries and professors that are experimenting with teaching methods. This long overdue recognition and innovation for the liberal arts will create new teaching methods and new curriculum options for students of future generations.

## LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES ACADEMY IN AUSTIN

>> STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE SIGNATURE COURSES EACH YEAR THAT HELP THEM ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP, TEAM BUILDING AND PROJECT DESIGN SKILLS

The Liberal Arts and Science Academy is a magnet school that opened in 1987 to promote an advanced, innovative, and comprehensive education for high school students in the Austin area. LASA ranked number 33 in Newsweek's America's Best High School for 2012-2013 and has repeatedly earned the Exemplary status for Texas high schools.

However, rank, status, and test grades do not make up the entire picture. LASA's unique curriculum encourages curiosity which is why the school created mandatory Signature Courses designed to help students establish leadership, team building, and project design skills. For example, students in their freshman year chose between participating in the Electronic Magazine

or the Science and Technology signature course. In Electronic Magazine, students are tasked with creating regularly printed issues of their magazine with relevant content with help from professionals. These are interactive hands-on courses that give students the opportunity to discover what does or does not appeal to them. This is something often overlooked in education.

Rarely are students simply given time to discover who they are as individuals and what they would like to pursue once they graduate high school. LACS Signature Courses are wonderful tools to help students in high school to have that immediate hands-on experience that will give them an idea, a goal, a potential field of interest for the future.

## POLYMATHIC SCHOLARS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Ever felt limited by your major? Maybe your interests lie on opposite sides of the spectrum and you cannot figure out how to bring them together? The Polymathic Scholars Program was specifically designed for students such as these.

By choosing one of the three tracks offered, BS, BA, or BSA, Polymathic scholars gain the freedom to create degree plans that are specifically tailored to each program participant. Now, instead of cramming all of your interests into the box called 'major,' you can change the box itself so that it compliments, not constrains.

Since 2007, students in the Polymathic

program have created over 200 one-of-a-kind majors that have opened doors not just for themselves, but for others who will come after them.

For example, students in the Polymathic Scholars program created fields of study such as Medical Illustration, Psychology of Politics, Human-Computer Interaction, Ethnobotany, and the Culture of Beauty.

This honors program provides a unique approach to college curriculums that just might be the answer for those who feel limited by an already established major. It is a way for students to break boundaries and change the world.

INSTEAD OF << CRAMMING ALL OF YOUR INTERESTS INTO THE BOX CALLED 'MAJOR,' YOU CAN CHANGE THE BOX TO COMPLIMENT INSTEAD OF CONSTRAIN

## LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS TAKE HEART

The majority of employers agree that having **both field-specific knowledge and skills** and a **broad range of skills and knowledge** is most important for recent college graduates to achieve long-term career success. Few think that having field-specific knowledge and skills alone is what is most needed for individuals' career success.

**95% of employers** say they give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that will enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace.

Older humanities and social-science majors tend to outearn professional majors, especially because a high number (40 percent) also hold a **graduate degree**

## INTRO TO PSYCHOLOGY DUAL LECTURE

>> INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOKS, THE PROFESSORS HAVE CAREFULLY SELECTED RELEVANT MATERIAL FROM YOUTUBE, ESSAYS, RESEARCH, WIKIPEDIA, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL WEBSITES

Now, as someone who has been homeschooled, the classroom experience has always been alternative. Online high schools with students tuning in from all over the world to learn and chat in a virtual classroom was not innovative or new, it simply was the most efficient way to teach. However, this 'alternative' teaching style has expanded the world of homeschooling and caught the attention of colleges and universities.

UT Professors Pennebaker and Gosling have re-designed their college level Introduction to Psychology class. They began this partnership in 2006 but did not completely interconnect their lectures until 2011. This merger included discarding traditional textbooks, abandoning traditional testing methods, sharing lecture time, and transitioning to an online setting. The official title for their new classroom is called a SMOC or Synchronous Massive Online Class. This allows thousands of students to participate in this Intro to Psychology when they wouldn't otherwise.

Instead of traditional textbooks, the professors have carefully selected

relevant material from YouTube, essays, research, Wikipedia, demonstrations, and international websites. To replace midterms and a final, Pennebaker and Gosling use benchmark quizzes to determine overall grades for their class.

These changes in the conventional college classroom have, according to the professor's research, improved student's ability to learn material not just in the psychology class but in all of the student's classes. It is interesting, coming from a background where the feedback on this type of teaching method was considered mysterious and skeptical, to suddenly see the same method being described as an experimental success. Perhaps it is the setting which changes the viewpoint. In any case, this new class designed by Professors Pennebaker and Gosling shows a positive shift in the educational world.

This experimentation with the classroom has changed how Liberal Arts subjects are taught in college and paves the way for future acceptance to other eccentric teaching methods that might be different but as effective as the rest.

■ MADELEINE KENNEY

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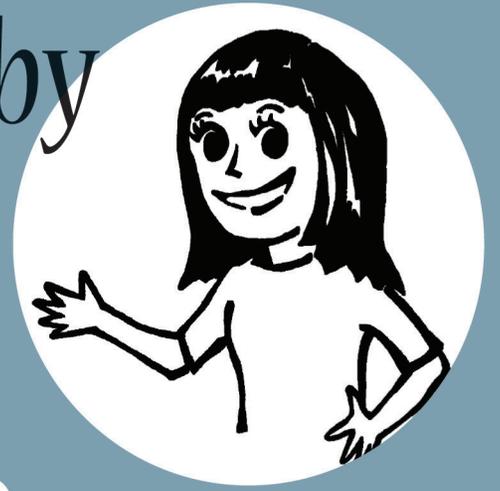


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FALL HIGHLIGHTS

**COLLEGE TO CAREER COURSES:** Register for a course to help you connect what you're learning now with potential jobs, and to explore career options.  
<http://bit.ly/lacscourses>

**@LACS:** Are you using social media in your job or internship search? You should be. Learn how to do it, and how we can help.  
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