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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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INSIDE this issue

Campus: The buzz surrounding elections has begun, and SMU is no exception. With Student Senate Elections around the corner, Todd Baty discusses students' opinions of SMU Student Senate.

Health: Eating disorders are a serious problem. Monica Chavez looks at things from a different perspective and discusses another health concern plaguing our nation, page 2.

Family Planning: An article submission sheds some light on infertility issues facing college-aged women, page 3.

Be Heard: *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

Recent survey unveils student apathy and disinterest: like you care!

by Todd Baty

Today marks the beginning of open campaign season for Student Senate and Student Body Officer elections. In total, there will be about sixty people running for a variety of offices, and undoubtedly the basis of each candidate's platform is rooted in the belief that he or she can improve this university through the influence and faculty of Student Senate. However, a recent report released by Student Issues Committee Chair Cheyenne Rogers at the January 30, 2007 Student Senate meeting questions the ability of Student Senators to do just that—to “make a difference” at SMU.

The statistics released by the Student Issues Committee were, in the words of Chair Rogers, “disappointing to say the least.” The results (which are provided in full below) show that out of over three hundred students surveyed, barely half knew the function of Student Senate. However, this surprising figure pales in comparison to the eighty percent that did not know how to get their issues heard through Senate; less than a third of

students surveyed knew who their Senators were. Obviously, there is a growing disconnect between the electorate and the elected.

In a statement issued by Chair Rogers, she points to “student apathy” as the main reason for the growing gap. Chair Rogers states that her committee has been working hard all semester to generate student interest and support for Senate, but to no avail. She was dis-

appointed to realize that “some people on campus are not concerned with the goings-on within Senate; rather, they are not concerned until a very reactive and false piece is published about us in the *Daily Campus*.” Chair Rogers feels the students should take more interest in the experience they receive while at SMU, and that by definition Student Senate is a way to get in-

involved on campus and to directly impact their education. “I think it is quite obvious what organization has the interests of the student body at heart,” says Chair Rogers.

However, Student Senate is not the only organization on campus to encounter the unwieldy inertia of student disinterest. As a

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Next week, Hilltopics will publish an extended issue completely devoted to the upcoming Student Senate Elections on February 21st and 22nd. Our hope is to inform the students of SMU through a variety of articles and perspectives so that they can make informed, reasoned decisions in voting. Look for this special February 19th issue, complete with platform positions from Student Body Officer candidates, Hilltopics Editorial Board endorsements, and other articles concerning Student Senate. This is one issue you don't want to miss!

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300–600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

A weighty issue : widespread obesity at the root of eating disorders

by Monica Chavez

Last week the DC ran an AP story bemoaning a by-now familiar trend: the increasing number of people falling victim to anorexia. I can't count the number of newspaper articles, magazine stories, and news show headlines that I've seen in the past few years dealing with the disease, and frankly I think the attention paid to it is nothing short of astonishing.

Because in this country (and, increasingly, in many other developed nations), obesity is the predominating health concern. Even at SMU, allegedly a school where many a sorority girl has succumbed to an eating disorder, I would still say the number of overweight and obese students far outweighs those who are too skinny. This is a far more pressing problem than the minority of fashion models, celebrities, and their ilk who can't seem to eat enough despite growing up in an environment where people regularly throw away food rather than eat it. Ironically, both eating disorders and obesity are products of a society that encourages a sit-down lifestyle as well as a multi-portion meal size.

I feel like I might be stating the obvious, but at the same time I think people fail to see the connection between a fat populace and its intentionally underfed minority. As you probably know, back in the day, a slightly chubby figure was desirable because it showed you had the wealth to feed yourself more than enough when everyone else around you was working hard to keep food on the table. (This beauty ideal is still present in some countries, such as Mauritania, where, indeed, many people still aren't getting enough to eat.) Turn the tables, and you've got a country like the United States, with food so plentiful that even many poor people are overweight. As a result, with excess body fat no longer the sole privilege of the rich, it's now sexy to be skinny as a stick.



If we want to effect a long-term plan for eradicating eating disorders and the catwalk standards that inspire them, then oddly enough, we have to get people to lose weight. This of course does not entail fad diets or fat pills, and trips to the gym can only be a temporary solution. In the long term, Americans will have to get out of their cars and walk, taking public transportation where possible; on a larger scale, this means city planners will have to redevelop suburbs and cit-

ies to make such a lifestyle a viable option. 'Cause let's face it, how sad is it that you have to intentionally work off energy on a treadmill to keep yourself in reasonable shape? Your day-to-day actions should balance the amount of food you eat, or does no one pay attention to metabolism anymore?

More importantly, it's a travesty that Americans should have to go to the gym to stave off the effects of their gluttony when millions around the world are starving. It's sick that

the media pays so much attention to the Nicole Richies and Mary-Kate Olsens of the world when there are massive numbers of people even skinnier than they are who can't do a thing about it. Yes, eating disorders are real diseases that need treatment, but they are relegated to a minority of people and as such do not deserve the widespread coverage they receive. Anorexia and bulimia are reserved to a wealthy minority of countries in this world, and I think it would serve us well instead to address obesity as the root of the problem. Then, perhaps we could shift our attention to helping those who can't afford the luxury of disgorging their every meal.

Monica Chavez is a junior political science and foreign languages major.

Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else ?

we're listening at hilltopics@hotmail.com

Not just a problem for your mom: Infertility is a problem many college women must consider

by Calie Carrick

SMU senior Clare Taylor has given little thought to starting a family. As she prepares for graduation, she worries more about establishing herself in the workforce than with baking buns in the oven.

"I don't even have a set plan for what I am doing after graduation," she said, "let alone thought of having kids. I can't imagine that until I am at least 30."

Ms. Taylor represents a growing trend among young women.

Twenty percent of women in the US now have their first child after the age of 35, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. But they may not want to wait much longer than that. By age 40, a woman's chances of natural pregnancy are reduced to only 15 percent.

Many women may have to delay bearing children for various reasons, from medical concerns to waiting for the love of their lives to come along. Whatever the explanation, there are options for those who wait.

As women age, so do their eggs. The U.S. Center for Disease Prevention reports that 90 percent of a woman's eggs are abnormal by the age of 42. Older women have a higher risk of giving birth to children with chromosomal abnormalities. The ability of women's ovaries to release eggs ready for fertilization also declines with age.

Women who hit their late 30s don't necessarily ovulate every month. They may bleed, but don't produce an egg, according to Dr. Nancy Merrill, co-medical director of the SMU Health Center.

There is also a significant increase in general health concerns for women in pregnancy as they age. According to Dr. Merrill, as women get older, they have higher chances of miscarriage, hypertension and blood clots.

Fertility drugs and assisted reproductive technology help women who are having difficulty conceiving.

SMU Art History Professor Pamela Patton relied on science to have her first child in her late 30s. She still faced complications due to aging with the first pregnancy, but now she has two children.

Aging is not the only risk factor.

Many times fertility drugs cause a multiple pregnancy, so one or two of the fetuses have to be terminated, according to Dr. Merrill. Multiple fetuses run the risk of being born prematurely. Premature babies have a higher chance of health and developmental problems.

If couples don't want to use fertility medication, or if it doesn't help, they may also choose assisted reproductive technology.

There are several methods of ART that can help infertile couples. According to a 2003 report by the CDC, the success rate for ART in women ages 35 to 37 is 30.2 percent, while only 11 percent for women over 40.

Almost all forms of ART involve removing eggs from a woman's body, mixing them with sperm in a laboratory to achieve fertilization and placing the resulting embryos in a woman's body. When a couple decides to use ART, they can use their own sperm and egg or those provided by donors. The woman doesn't even have to carry the fetus. Another woman can be the surrogate.

"In a way it is good that there are so many options available to those who are having difficulty conceiving," said Associate Professor of Law Thomas Mayo, an expert on the ethics of fertility treatments. "People need to go into fertility treatments with their eyes wide open and choose what best fits their religious and personal convictions."

Dr. Josephine Caldwell-Ryan, lecturer of women's studies, is concerned that women are unaware of the cost of ART and think insurance will cover it.

Even if a woman does have the estimated \$10,000 to \$18,000 to spend, "any woman who assumes fertility treatments will be an effective back-up plan is taking a dangerous risk if biological motherhood is important to her... I wouldn't consider a technique with a 30 percent success rate at best something to depend upon."

SMU senior Sterling Morris agrees. Even though she plans to study art history in graduate school in the hopes of one day establishing herself in the art world, she wants to have all her children before turning 30.

For Dr. Merrill, however, it was easier to complete medical school first.

"I was also more mature, emotionally and economically," she said.

SMU History Professor Melissa Dowling also waited, and believes it was the right choice. She and her husband were in a place where they were financially stable and able to plan for the arrival of one more in their household.

That doesn't mean there aren't concerns. They are faced with caring for their aging parents while also raising their



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Senate elections fail to interest students

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member of the *Hilltopics* Editorial Board, I can testify firsthand to the difficulty of getting anyone to submit their thoughts for publication and discussion. While we at *Hilltopics* are students ourselves and understand the burdens of going to class, doing homework, and trying to have a social life on the weekends, we are also constantly surprised at the (at times) utter inactivity of student intellectual discourse. We too have felt disappointed and lonely—are we truly the only ones that care about SMU, about our education?

As bleak as it may seem, I choose to remain optimistic. Perhaps I am naïve (and the numbers below prove me so), but I like to think that regardless of involvement, each student at SMU is genuinely interested in his or her education. He or she knows that life is not all fun and games—eventually it will be necessary to work in order to pay for that bar tab; eventually the politics of Washington and Baghdad will directly affect their lives. I am confident that each student is aware of the significance of this time in their lives, and wants to make the most of it. The challenge is to get people to take that interest and put it to action, whether it is voting in the Student Senate elections later this month or writing an article about their thoughts and feelings about a particular issue.

How does one mobilize a historically dormant student population? I wish I knew the answer, but for now I continue to encourage those that are listening to take ownership of this experience. College is a period of personal growth, one of trial and error and discovery. Integrate yourselves within this edifying culture and share your life-lessons and life-experiences with your peers; ultimately, that is why we are here. Indeed, I am encouraged by the meager fact that if you have read this far, you are well on your way to achieving just that.

Todd Baty is a junior music and history major

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Pound the Pavement Survey Results

Student Senate:

Do you know what Student Senate does? Yes 54%, No 46%
Do you know who your Student Senators are? Yes 29%, No 71%
Do you know how to get your issue heard through Senate? Yes 20%, No 80%
Did you vote in the student elections last year/do you plan on voting in the spring? Yes 59%, No 41%

Real Food on Campus:

Are you satisfied with the quality of food offered in the RFoC locations?

Yes 42% No 58%

Do you anticipate using all of your pre-purchased meals this semester?

Yes 23% No 77%

Would you like to see more meal plan options?

Yes 77% No 23%

Academics:

Are you currently taking a course in which you find it difficult to understand/hear your professors/TAs?

Yes 54% No 46%

47% of students are satisfied with class offerings

1% of students would like to see classes offered during Winter Break or in May but are otherwise satisfied

15% of students would like to see more classes during the summer

6% of students would like to see more classes offered during summer and in May or Winter Break

11% of students would like to see more classes offered at night
2% would like to see more classes offered during the summer and at night

School Calendar:

79% would prefer Fall Break and Thanksgiving Break as it was in 2006

15% would prefer a weeklong Thanksgiving Break and no Fall Break (as it will be in 2007)

6% would prefer an extended Winter Break with no Fall Break

Miscellaneous/Other:

Do you feel that SMU is a safe campus?

Yes 53% No 47%

Students wrestle with tough fertility issues

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child, not to mention they are ten to fifteen years older than the other homeroom parents.

"It sucks having old parents," said SMU sophomore Josh Wood.

He does admit that while they may be older than his friends' parents, they are wiser, and "a great asset when it comes to helping with homework."

Dr. Caldwell-Ryan waited until she was 38 to have her last child. "If I had waited even one more year, she probably wouldn't have been born. I feel I missed the speeding bullet."

Ms. Taylor understands the issues surrounding the fertility debate, but knows personally it is the right decision to wait.

"I want to take care of myself for a while before I decide to care for someone else," she said.

Calie Carrick is a senior journalism major.