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Working to make a change: Panhellenic committee tries to improve system

For over 12 months, a dedicated group of Panhellenic women have been working hard to make a change. And a big one, at that. The Panhellenic Recruitment Committee, which officially began meeting last September, has been researching the Greek recruitment process at SMU in hopes of moving the formal recruitment from deferred recruitment in January to Fall Break.

As many members know, the Greek system at SMU has been dwindling for some time now. With more rules and regulations than you can even remember, our system has provided more angst than “sisterhood” or “brotherhood.”

As with many problems, the desired solution is not unanimously liked. But sometimes, you must focus on the solution that will better our campus, not just an individual Greek chapter. Changing recruitment from January to Fall Break is a huge decision and an even bigger process since the Student Code of Conduct must be changed. So where to begin? That is exactly what the original 16 members of the Recruitment Committee asked last fall.

Made up of two girls from each of SMU’s National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities (Alpha Chi Omega, Chi Omega, Delta Gamma, Delta Delta Delta, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, and Pi Beta Phi), they began collecting various data in order to see if moving formal recruitment to fall was really the best idea. This included surveying active sorority members, potential sorority members, parents, Greek members and advisors at other universities, as well as gathering academic information from sororities, other SMU Greek councils, and interviewing several members of the SMU community. They have also presented the situation to the SMU Greek committees (Multicultural Greek Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, and Inter-Fraternity Council) as well as active NPC sorority women.

The hopeful change has spurred the formation of IFC’s own Recruitment Committee. Although each Greek council has its own opinion, it appears unanimous that NPC women are in full support of this change to Fall Break. With so many rules, it’s difficult to have fun during the fall semester and really get to know potential members. Additionally, many people are claiming that the fall semester gives students an adequate amount of time to adjust to campus and collegiate life. It was recommended that NPC women “reprimand” our members not to “dirty rush” instead of changing our recruitment process. Easier said than done.

Now don’t read this and start running to your chapter president demanding to know what final changes will be implemented, as those on the Recruitment Committee still have their fingers crossed as to the success of their efforts to move recruitment from January to Fall Break. This change won’t be implemented until the fall of 2006, at the earliest. And the only Greek councils that will ultimately be affected are IFC and NPC, as MGC and NPHC have rules on pledging requirements that prevent this from being a possibility.

No answer to this demanding question will ever please all members of the SMU community; however, Greek members need to remember that the overall effects of this change in formal recruitment are for the betterment of not only our campus environment, but also for greater respect for the Greeks and for increased energy among the Greek community.

Hill Fischer is a senior English major.
Adderall abuse is an issue of honor

by Kathleen Tarbox

In Craig Zieminski’s article regarding the rampant Adderall use on campus by students without prescriptions, he directly refers to the Honor Council, demanding that it make the illegal use of this prescription drug an Honor Code violation. Luckily for him, it already is.

Honor Code violations fall under the headings of academic sabotage, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and impeding Honor Council investigations. If I can refer you to page 64 of the SMU Student Handbook, which every student registered at SMU is responsible for having read, you will find the definition of cheating to read “intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.” The use of Adderall without a prescription would certainly fall under this category of an unauthorized study aid, in addition to being a felony and a code of conduct violation.

So what, then, can people like Craig who want to combat the illegal use of Adderall on campus do? The Honor Code is not only the responsibility of the faculty on campus. Your professors will not know if a student used Adderall without a prescription to study for the test. Faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility to uphold the Honor Code. If you want to send the message to students that the illegal use of Adderall is unacceptable, turn them into the Honor Council. It is up to you.

The Honor Council works to uphold the academic integrity of our university, and we welcome the input of the student body. If you have any concerns about the Honor Code or academic integrity, please come to the Honor Council office located in the Dean of Student Life office or call 8-4404. Additionally, every student should be familiar with the Honor Code, located in the Student Handbook or at www.smu.edu/honorcouncil. We are ready to deal with academic dishonesty. The question to you is this: are you ready to take the responsibility of upholding the SMU Honor Code by bringing cases of blatant academic dishonesty before the Honor Council?

Kathleen Tarbox is a junior political science and economics major. She is also president of the SMU Honor Council.

Academic ‘steroids’ just a study aid

by Phi Tran

In response to the “Academic Steroids” article, I find that Mr. Zieminski is closed-minded and one-sided. I do not take Adderall, but feel the need to defend those who do. I have friends that take it, and I was offended by your article. To call this cheating is unfair. I do not think that cheating, but merely a study aid. Why eat sweet foods loaded with sugar before an exam? So, you will have a better memory. Why do professors recommend studying in the classroom? Because studies have shown that students do better in a familiar situation. Why drink coffee? To have the energy to study. Why take Adderall? The reasons have just been mentioned.

Mr. Z, you need to loosen up a little. We only live a short life, and it is mind-straining to worry about issues like this. People take it because they want to—they choose to. What would your next submission be? How smoking weed and dropping E is bad? It’s just a choice some of us make. And it’s a choice you made to stay “academically steroid free.” You have a gift. You can study for 35 hours a week. Some people can’t because we have other things to do (i.e. work, organizations, having fun, chilling out). Years from now, will you remember what you studied or the parties you went to?

The point is that you’re not competing against anyone. Granted, my GPA isn’t that high, but I have always done everything to the best of my ability. I don’t care what the next person made on whatever test. The only person you’re competing against is yourself. I don’t have the time or effort to worry about what others are doing, and neither should you. Instead of spending that time writing your “academic steroids” article, you should have studied; at least 30 minutes would have been deducted from your 35 hour-study week.

In closing, I would like to say to all Adderall users: It might be illegal, but don’t let people like Mr. Zieminski sway you or put a damper on your self-image as a cheater. By calling you “abusers as carefree party animals who enjoy nonstop leisure until the night before an exam,” Mr. Z is jealous. I commend all you Adderall users and even non-users who live this lifestyle. You have what it takes to succeed. You are smart, only studying when you have to. And most importantly, you are living life and not studying your life away.

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
An A is an A is an A: Test curves help grades but hurt academic achievement
How can a student be prepared to continue study in any given field if her 30 out of 100 earns her an A? Grade inflation is out of hand.

by Desiree Brown

Back in my days as a freshman, I remember taking tests where I could pass on the basis that I knew what was going on in the class and could legitimately claim that I got an A or a B on an exam on my own accord. Now, in my junior year, it seems a bump in the road has become one of those nasty road humps that the car just seems to bottom out on. Curves are good; a little help on your grade here or there is great, especially on days when you woke up late, or your head is killing you, or you just drew a blank and the answer came to you just as you walked out of the classroom. However, a common trend I am finding in some of the more scientific areas of study at SMU is that the professors are curving test scores more than the Boulevard curves in front of the flagpole.

Curves are not bad in the sense that I would rather fail a test than pass. However, I think it gets more than a little out of hand when professors are curving scores more than fifty points just to get some students in the class to make the equivalent of an A. For example, I have never had a teacher in any class for my primary major curve a test or final score, and I know of very few professors in my major who do. This semester, however, one of my professors’ two sections’ three median test scores rarely got above a 65. Unfortunately for me, my individual test scores were not much better either, and I dropped the class, since I did not understand a thing and feared failing the final. To my surprise, though, a former classmate of mine disclosed (as well as the class website) that the professor implemented a curve that made an average score of 37 out of 100 points at the end of the semester a C-, essentially a 33-point curve from the traditional seventy average required for a C-. Another professor from a different scientific field of study allowed for a 44 out of 100 point test score to be approximately a B+, while students with approximately 55 out of 100 point scores received an A, nearly a fifty-point curve.

Are these curves really helping students out in these difficult, upper-level classes, especially those that are pre-requirements for other major-related classes? Once I found out that a low seventies average in my dropped class would have been curved to the point that it would equal a B to B+, I did kick myself momentarily for dropping. However, it soon occurred to me that, “Hey—I really didn’t learn anything, and when I took the next level class after ‘passing’ the pre-requisite, I would have really been confused.”

The professors that implement these outrageously misleading curves do nothing to better the students’ academic experience, but only to better their evaluations and their standing among their peers. Obviously, the professors’ teaching skills need to be re-evaluated when entire classes are regularly doing so poorly on quarterly exams. SMU may have some of the most outstanding faculty with the highest credentials under its roof, but does that really make them qualified to teach?

Desiree Brown is a junior math and political science major.

Too little too late: one last-minute trip to Fondren isn’t going to save the grade
by Gaines Greer

If you’re the church-going type, think about the last Easter Sunday service you went to: damn, who ever knew there were that many people committed to saving their souls?

If you’re the library-going type, think about studying for last spring’s finals in Fondren: damn, who ever knew there were that many people committed to saving their GPA’s?

See a connection? As a senior, and frequent visitor of the Fondren Library, I have a longstanding theory that the library during exam week is the SMU equivalent of church on Easter Sunday:

—They’re both overpopulated with people who desperately hope that a token appearance will save them from the damnation of hell/failing.

—Each is filled with people who want to show off that really cute outfit they just bought—after all, everyone knows how much easier it is to dedicate oneself to a worthy cause when dressed in designer clothing.

—And of course, we can’t forget the people who were unwillingly drug to the dread destination with the refrain of, “Come on...you really need to go. ‘T’ll be good for you.”

I won’t speak for the churchgoers out there, but I feel pretty confident in representing the disciples of the Central University Libraries (CUL) when I say the following two things to the reprobates that demean my sanctuary: 1) “too little, too late,” and 2) “get the hell out.”

This news may come as a shock to some students, but passing through the less than pearly gates of Fondren Library will not foster an instantaneous and in-depth knowledge of that behemoth of a book that you haven’t opened in months— if ever. Similarly, that group project you’re working on (you know, the one with the guy who reeks of Jack Daniels from the night before, and that girl who can’t detach herself from her cell phone) will experience no divine inspiration just because you relocated the “study session” from Yale Blvd. to Bishop Blvd.

As my fellow apostles of the academic shudder at the thought of the blasphemous masses profaning their sacred study carrels, I can offer them a few words of advice and comfort. The irreverence that plagues the hallowed floors of the library during exam week will, thankfully, be vanquished by January. And most importantly, just as you and I know who has and hasn’t been sacrificing themselves at the altar of scholarship, so too will those unfortunate prodigals’ professors see the truth. Amen.

Gaines Greer is a senior English & German major.
I have really enjoyed *Hilltopics* this year, and I'm glad that the school decided to fund another outlet for print media. I find it interesting to read articles that have an obvious slant to them, because they open up discussion, as this article did, which frustrated me because I think the author is focused on the wrong problem.

I, too, am not a fan of the flagrance of homosexuality, but it has less to do with homosexuality as an issue in and of itself, and more to do with the open display of sexuality. I think that should have been the issue upon which the author focused. Television shows are rampant with sexual liaisons and sexual connotations, very few of which refer only to homosexuality. Are those the value of our grandparents? I think that would be more disturbing to them, especially considering that shows such as Desperate Housewives and Sex in the City are the recipient of widespread popularity, and they obviously promote sex outside of marriage, even outside of a committed relationship.

These are the messages that children hear and that confuse them more than the issue of homosexuality. It is now generally considered to be true that homosexuality is not a choice, but having sex is — why are more people not worried about that issue? I think it’s because that part of the Christian morality is overlooked now because of the societal acceptance of sex. Television only shows what the public will watch, and it is a sign of our public's current morality that so many of these shows are popular. Perhaps we should focus more on changing societal values along with changing the television line-up.

It would be nice to return to the time of “The Cosby Show” or “Life Goes On” but those shows are no longer realistic of the time period that we live in. It would be more socially productive to have shows that deal with societal issues such as sex, homosexuality, drugs, etc. and teach a moral and responsible way to handle them. I think this is where Christianity runs into problems in their attempt to teach the world morality. No one likes to be told that their way is the wrong way — instead, live your values, show others how you can still enjoy life without debasing yourself and others.

Thank you all at *Hilltopics* for writing such interesting articles, and thank you to the author for being so willing to prominently display your views. This motivated me for the first time in a long time to take a stance on something and I found it to be a nice change. Keep up the good work!!

Lauren Smith is a sophomore French and finance major.

This article is a response to an article by Tabari K. Skillman published in last week’s *Hilltopics*. The article is currently available at www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics in the archives.