Corporate Cutthroat Competition: Is it present even in Higher Education?

Todd Baty

Even though it seems incredibly distant now, I can still remember the college selection process I went through my senior year of high school. Although oblivious to what a college experience should be or look like, I tried the best I could to do my homework and research institutions that seemed to suit my interests. In all, I applied to twelve schools, ranging from small Grinnell College in Iowa to enormous University of Texas in Austin. But despite all of the campus visits, online browsing, phone conversations with admissions counselors, and tri-color mailings, the overpowering impression I got from my college selection process was one of shock at how competitive the whole experience was.

Not only was I competing to be admitted into a top tier school, those same schools were competing over me. It was sometimes amazing the lengths to which schools would go in order to ensure I was going to apply (whether or not they were actually interested in me ever matriculating is a different story, however). For example, one school sent me a “pre-completed” application. All I had to do was sign my name and return the form in the mail—no essay, no letters of recommendation, no transcript: nothing. I like to think that I was a desirable “catch” in the college selection process, but I’m definitely not smart enough for any school, no matter how desperate, to substitute a signature for an application (Perhaps the school was studying the correlation between penmanship and intelligence. If so, I’d hate to see how that turned out in its freshman class).

Furthermore, I can remember how overwhelming it was to receive all of the information schools threw at me. Every campus I visited was prepared with a folder of paper hand-outs. Lists of student organizations, glossy photos, athletics statistics, and academic awards—in short, just as I submitted a resume to twelve different universities, those same institutions (and many others) reciprocated the action and sent me theirs. In these materials, I continued on page 2

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@gmail.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.
schools loved to boast about how high their rock climbing walls were or how much their dorms resembled apartments. And of course sprinkled throughout the otherwise dry numbers were personal stories from current college students touting their “amazing” and often “life changing” experiences at their respective institutions.

One might think all of this competition is a good thing. After all, the more schools are interested in attracting a student, the better his or her chances are of getting scholarships and a meaningful college experience. But as a senior that now knows a thing or two about college and what it should and shouldn’t be, I am amazed at how much little emphasis was placed on the things that matter—faculty strength, research opportunities, intellectual life outside of the classroom, residential learning, general education, library resources.

In my own life, at least, the hard sell put on me by colleges was not about the mind-broadening experience they had (or didn’t have) to offer. Instead, these institutions stressed everything that colleges should be wise enough to prioritize as secondary: a rampant (or as the pamphlets put it, “vibrant”) social atmosphere, a commuter (rather than residential) living experience, and a campus life dominated by extracurricular activities (rather than academic work in the classroom).

I wish I could tell you I was smart enough to quickly realize the institution best suited for me was one where undergraduate education was central—but I wasn’t. It was only after two rough years here at SMU that I finally figured out what I wanted out of my college experience. As a senior in high school, campus beauty projects and student center venues were important factors to me; I was truly oblivious to the educational elements that mattered.

Does that mean SMU was the wrong choice for me?—I sometimes wonder that. Yet, even my brief experience at other schools suggests SMU is not very different from the norm in higher education today. The intense competition over students has reached unhealthy levels I’m afraid, and in the resulting fray the most fundamental elements of colleges and universities have been lost, or worse completely forgotten, in the minds of many entering freshmen.

What will it take for schools to shed their increasingly corporate goals and return their focus to educating the people they have, rather than aggressively recruiting the next incoming class?—I wish I knew, but that question is the challenge presented to our provost, administration, and faculty. Hopefully, with a commitment to honest dialogue and an innovative spirit, SMU can lead in a new direction: one less concerned with the greenness of its grass and more focused on the quality of the instruction in the classroom.

Todd is a senior majoring in history and music. He can be reached at tbaty@smu.edu.
Turn on your TV for entertainment purposes, not for political accuracy.

For those of you planning on voting in this year's presidential election (which should apply to ALL of you readers ages 18 and up), you may find that deciding on a candidate to vote for can be a rather grueling task. How do each candidate's platforms differ? What are their personal values? Where do I see my needs going in the next four years? There are literally hundreds of variables that go into picking a candidate, so this decision will take time. However, I urge you to follow my advice when it comes to obtaining the reference materials for choosing a candidate: turn off your television!

This doesn't apply to ALL programming on TV, so don't fret. You can still watch your favorite reality shows. You can still get your fix of NCAA hoops action or other sports broadcasts. But whenever you feel the desire to absorb some political knowledge, don't reach for that remote. The only things you'll find on CNN Headline News or Fox News are scandalous sound bites from candidate interviews and "expert opinions" regarding the hot political topics of the day. Will this information honestly help mold your decision in the right direction based on your personal values? I didn't think so.

Why do I hold such a harsh grudge against 24-hour news networks? These channels, like any show on any network, are based on ratings. The more viewers you have, the more money you get. The problem with this equation is the fact that news can sometimes be quite uninteresting; thus, sensationalism infects the otherwise useful political content. Did Hillary slip up during her response to a debate question? Prepare to watch the clip a hundred times during the next week, along with thousands of different and horribly biased opinions from campaign experts. Obama's pastor made a few scandalous remarks in a half dozen of literally thousands of sermons over his lengthy career? Watch as Fox and CNN meticulously dissect each comment (out of context, mind you) and personally link them to Obama's campaign, crippling Obama's relationship with his pastor and attacking his character simultaneously. Does this exaggeration benefit anyone other than the ratings-mongers at these news stations? Do the world a favor and deny them the pleasure by turning your TV off.

Do not let the latest sound bites from Headline News or The O'Reilly Factor sway your already established personal beliefs and values. Do not let the "campaign experts" use their 60 seconds of fame to assault you with their own views of a candidate's personal life. Instead of watching your 24-hour news network of choice, open a paper to get the most relevant details. Hold a political discussion group to provoke some interesting ideas. Instead of having a network news anchor/preacher/parent tell you who to vote for and why, listen to yourself and your own needs. After all, it is you who will be representing America in November.

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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@gmail.com
March Madness is a magical time of year. Millions of people across America will watch 65 basketball teams ranging from powerhouses to nobodies play 64 games over three weeks. With those millions of viewers comes money that enriches television stations, coaches, universities and the NCAA. The only people who don't see any of the money that the tournament makes are the people who are the focus of the tournament. The basketball players, just like every other college athlete, are never (legally) paid for their play on the court. With everyone else profiting from their work, why can't we pay college athletes?

Theoretically, college athletes are compensated through their scholarships. The NCAA endlessly runs commercials touting the achievements of their “student-athletes” who are successful chemists and play water polo on the side. College sports certainly do give some athletes a chance to get an education that they otherwise would not receive. However for the big money sports of football and basketball, college athletics is merely a temporary stopping point on the way to a professional career. Players use the stage of college athletics to gain experience and attention from professional scouts. However, the overwhelming majority of these athletes won’t be drafted by a professional team. While they are playing for the mere chance of playing in the pro leagues, a whole host of others profit at their expense.

The March Madness tournament provides a good example of this. CBS holds the broadcast rights for the tourney and has paid the NCAA billions because of the lucrative advertising revenue that they earn for broadcasting the games. None of this money will find its way to the students. Instead universities, coaches, conferences, and the NCAA will pocket it. Take a look at the amount of money going to just the conferences. The Big XII was paid $15.8 million dollars of basketball related funds by the NCAA from 2002–2007. Conference USA, the home of SMU athletics and which is less successful than the Big XII in basketball, earned $8.3 million during the same period. The NCAA itself is flush with cash. Its budget for 2006–2007 was $564 million with 90% of that coming from the media rights for the sports it regulates. Additionally the NCAA and the athletics conferences that play under its mantle are tax exempt. The NCAA and its conferences are serious businesses that negotiate hugely profitable media deals, yet none of the money is taxed or goes directly to the players.

While the players sweat for free, the coaches who drill them earn millions as well. Rick Barnes, the coach of Texas, and Thad Matta, the coach of Ohio State, have both played for a national championship and both earn $1.8 million a year. Roy Williams, the coach of UNC, earns $1.4 million a year. All three of these men have become very wealthy as coaches of young men who only have a slim shot at making any money as professional players.

Because of increasing television revenue and the willingness of fans to spend money on their alma mater, college athletics has become amazingly profitable. However, that money has managed to enrich everyone except for the players who make the sports possible. Considering that most of them are only compensated in the form of an education and a slim chance of professional career, aren’t the players entitled to a larger slice of the NCAA pie? We should pay the players and stop pretending that college athletics isn’t a business.

After all, paying the players seemed to work for SMU in the past.

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Don’t Join a “Free Tibet” Facebook Group: Consider the History of China, Tibet, and the West

by Matthew Haley and Ben Wells

For those of you who somehow were able to miss the “coverage” on the situation in Tibet, you have missed an example of seeing the supposedly neutral Western media in action. By neutral, we mean often shoddy or one sided reporting that lacks any historical or cultural consistency, and instead includes prepackaged sound bites from the likes of governmental leaders, Chinese officials, and even Richard Gere. The ethnic violence against Han Chinese and Hui Muslim minorities in Lhasa, Tibet has been woefully under reported in the media, while claims from Tibetan-in-exile groups state soaring numbers of dead protestors despite any lack of real evidence. Much scrutiny has been placed on China, as many automatically play the China blame game and don’t dig deeper into the complex and complicated situation of Tibet, China, and their mutual history. While we do not seek to be apologists for the many true problems that do exist in China (from environmental degradation to human rights abuses), these problems are no worse than America’s own massive consumption or CIA run torture centers.

Rather than listen to knee jerk reactions from the Hollywood crowd or Tibetans-in-exile, it is important to read and learn about Tibetan and Chinese history in order to get a well-rounded picture before you join a “Free Tibet” Facebook group. Tibet was officially incorporated into China in 1951 where a CIA backed war raged on until it was crushed in 1959 and forced the Dalai Lama and his supporters to flee China. What has happened to Tibet since the CIA’s rebellion failed and the Dalai Lama left? Before 1951 and even up until 1951 many Tibetans lived in a state of feudal slavery, serving their monk–masters. Fast forward past the troubles of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and we arrive at a modern Tibet, a province with a GDP thirty times higher than Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and we arrive at a

monk-masters. Fast forward past the troubles of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and we arrive at a

forty five years in 1950 to 67 in 2000. However, Tibet is not without its problems, it is facing a cultural collapse from an influx of Han Chinese pouring into the region from a new, high tech train connecting Eastern China to Tibet. This is not a unique Chinese phenomenon and is an unfortunate symptom of worldwide modernity for all previously isolated cultural groups.

So we can all agree that Tibetan culture needs to be protected, but at the same time not even the Dalai Lama calls for a “Free Tibet,” he instead calls for an autonomous Tibet–something not impossible to consider under the current PRC system. Analyzing this, one may wonder why China has reacted to the onslaught of often uninformed Western criticism with a deaf ear. Once again the answer lies in a complex thread of historical interaction. China faced colonization and pillaging from a host of Western powers – America, Brittan, France, etc., all of who forced China (struggling to adapt to modernity in its own way) into impossible treaties and unfair trading conditions. Now that these same powers criticize China on the world stage, China reacts in an understandably sensitive way to criticisms from countries like America, a nation that unfortunately has its fair share of human rights abuses to contend with.

We do not mean to claim that Tibet should or should not be part of China; it is not our place to determine that either way. Instead we would like to point out that China bashing (something all Westerners find easy to do thanks to the unfortunate lack of knowledge on China) is detrimental not only to China, but to Western nations who now rely on China for their banking systems, production, newly emerging science and technology, and even the food we eat. So called reputable news sources frequently single out acts in China that happen all over the world stage. Furthermore these often one sided attacks don’t take into account the history and politics that surround China and East Asia. It is irresponsible for these news organizations to feign ignorance or outright disdain towards a country that is (along with India) going to be one of the largest super powers in the world in our generation. Australia and its Mandarin speaking Prime Minister Kevin Rudd realize this – China is an inescapable ally. It is an ally we should encourage to respect human rights and cooperate with rather than point fingers at and attempt to bully around from a moralist standpoint that our own nation has corroded with the slow destruction of American civil liberties and freedoms.

Can it be ignorance that leads this global media bias, or is there a growing fear from Western nations that their once all powerful influence now slips unseen past a quarter of the world’s population? It is dangerous to glorify Tibet as a picturesque agrarian society left untouched by time. Tibet, like other Asian cultures and societies, has a long history of dependence with “The Middle Kingdom” for its protection, guidance, and growth. During Manchu rule under the Qing Dynasty (which lasted well into the 20th century), the Chinese Emperor regularly sent troops from Beijing to protect the Tibetan territory. As late as 1884, Qing army units were used to expel British and Russian military personnel, allowing over 100 years of Tibetan isolation from the colonizing Europeans.

Now that China has once again reached the level of power and influence that it has enjoyed throughout history, we can all expect to see the “old guard” of world affairs fan any flames available to help knock it back down.

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Second Annual
Hilltopics Campus Essay Contest
2008

This spring semester, Hilltopics is hosting its second annual campus-wide essay contest, and you are invited to participate! Contestants will write one essay according to the prompt and guidelines below for a chance at $800.00 in prizes: one grand prize, $500; two honorable mentions, $150 each. In addition, the top three essays will be published in a special issue of Hilltopics.

Prompt: Increasingly, institutions of higher education seem to be adopting a more corporate function, choosing to invest in revenue and/or image boosting ventures like athletics departments, campus building and beautification projects, or aggressive undergraduate recruitment programs. As the PBS documentary Declining by Degrees addresses, this shift in priorities has substantially hindered traditional educational structures, such as undergraduate teaching and residential learning. Many are deeply concerned by this trend in higher education. Do you agree? If so, why? If not, why not?

Submission Requirements
Contestants should follow the instructions below carefully or else risk disqualification:
• Essays should be between 600 and 750 words.
• All essays must be emailed to hilltopics@gmail.com by 5 p.m. on April 4, 2008. IN ADDITION, each contestant must turn in THREE hard copies to Clements 109 by the same date and time.
• All essays must have a cover page with the following information: contestant’s name, email address, telephone number, major(s), classification (year graduating), and student ID number. Nothing but this personal information should be on the cover page.
• The contestant’s name should NOT appear on any page OTHER THAN the cover page. All other pages should include the contestant’s student ID number in the upper right-hand corner.
• All essay titles should appear on the first page of text, not the cover page.
• All pages should be double spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman.
• If resources are used or quoted, students should create footnotes following MLA style.
• All pages should be numbered, not including the cover page.

Adjudicating Criteria
Essays will be judged according to the following elements:
• clarity of thought, argument, and idea
• syntax, spelling, word choice, and grammar
• use of specific examples, information, and details to support assertions
• essay addressed the prompt fully and creatively
• essay adhered to the submission requirements listed above

Questions? contact Todd Baty at tbaty@smu.edu
Hilltopics 2008-2009 Editor Application
Please return by 30 April to hilltopics@gmail.com or any Hilltopics distributor.

Name:__________________________________________________ Email___________________________________
Phone Number: ___________________________________________ Year: _________________________________
Major(s) and Minor(s): ____________________________________________________________________________

Preference of Position: (please rank 1-6, 1 being your first choice; note that actual positions filled may vary from those on application)

____ Editor-in-Chief (conducts weekly meetings of editorial staff, directs overall management of publication)

____ Business Manager (spokesperson for Hilltopics to the SMU community, facilitates the logistics of keeping Hilltopics
   in good standing with the University)

____ Copy Editor (responsible for editing articles for length, grammar, and content)

____ Distribution Manager (designs and implements the Hilltopics distributions strategy)

____ Graphics Editor (designs each edition of Hilltopics and advertisements, as needed; responsible for generating and
   submitting PDF to printer each week; requires experience with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe InDesign)

____ Managing Editor (directs the content of each issue and, in the case of controversy, has the final say as to what articles
   are or are not included)

Please note that every editor, regardless of their particular position, will be responsible for distributing Hilltopics each week, and
will also write articles as needed.

Application Questions:
Please briefly answer each of the following questions on a separate sheet and submit your responses with your application.

1. Why are you applying to be a Hilltopics editor?

2. What do you think are the biggest strengths and biggest weaknesses of Hilltopics?

3. What is a political, social, or cultural issue about which you care deeply? That is, what kinds of topics would you be most
   interested in writing about for Hilltopics? Why is this issue important to you?

4. Do you have any journalism/writing/design experience (lack of experience in no way disqualifies any applicant from
   consideration)?
**Hilltopics**

**SMU v. SMU**
Red and Blue Scrimmage
Saturday, April 5, 2008
1:00 PM
Gerald Ford Stadium

**Headline of the week:** “Deer urine in school AC unit is unfunny prank”

**Thumbs up:**
- The weather is finally warming up!
- The Final Four is this weekend
- Hilltopics Essay Contest deadline is Friday

**Thumbs down:**
- The great exodus from the soon-to-be torn down Binkley Apartments.
- To the red and blue tennis courts.
- To Aramark and their inedible food on campus.

**Upcoming Events:**

SMU Catholic Campus Ministry Celebrates it’s 75th Anniversary
A special anniversary Mass will be held
Thursday, April 3
7:00 PM
Perkins Chapel

**Sing Song**
Friday, April 4
7:00 PM
McFarlin Auditorium

**Meadows Spring Dance Concert**
April 3 – 6
Bob Hope Theater

**SMU Fact:**

SMU’s Fall 2006 Entering Class Statistics:

- Applied: 7,648
- Admitted: 4,106
- Enrolled: 1,371

Acceptance Rate: 53.7%

Do you still feel special?