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## Hilltopics: Volume 5, Issue 8

Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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volume five, issue eight  
week of february 24, 2009

## HFCS: Is it Really Worth It?

by Jareth Embrey

Everyone has heard at least once that sugar (a carbohydrate) wreaks havoc on our bodies. It erodes our teeth, heightens risk of obesity, and even triggers the gout. So what do those searching for a healthier, cheaply homegrown carbohydrate do? They come up with a shortcut: high-fructose corn syrup. They think that hopefully HFCS will be safer and won't put a heavy toll on our bodies.

At least that's what the media and the government establishment want you to think. When's the last time you've thought the government has looked out for you, especially when it comes to food? Don't expect it here. The government actually commits two dirty tricks, one economic and another pure propaganda.

Economically, sugar comes from emerging economies such as Brazil, Mexico, and even China.

The government, being selfish (as if we can expect anything else), thinks, "How can we outsmart these countries?" They decide to impose a tariff on all that sugar and subsidize any homegrown. High prices pressure manufacturers to scrap for alternatives.

HFCS is the alternative. Remember that sugar and high-fructose corn syrup are both carbohydrates. The catch is that American businesses manipulate the sugar molecule.

Traditional sugar has a high content of sucrose (sucrose-heavy), but with complex methods, businesses transform the molecule from a sucrose-heavy to a fructose-heavy sugar. This sounds completely ludicrous at first: wouldn't that make sugar ideally uneconomical? Normally, yes. However, all the tariffs and subsidies allow high-fructose corn syrup predominance over the national market.

(Un) Ironically, HFCS poses so many more health risks. The secret? Fructose content. Studies done show that mice fed fructose-heavy carbs experience the same effects as mice fed the sucrose, such as obesity and diabetes, with one major addition: liver damage. Sucrose-heavy carbs can be absorbed by most cells in the body, but fructose-heavy carbs must be metabolized by the liver, which puts so much more

pressure on the body. Liver problems are a gateway to a host of other effects such as mineral deficiencies, accelerated aging, kidney stones, and diminished effects of "the pill."

One other issue that has arisen in the past month has been that HFCS contains mercury. Yes, the same mercury that one can get from eating too much of the wrong fish, causing lower IQs, heart disease, apathy, and possibly au-

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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](mailto: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.

## SMU Engineering to Create Leaders, not Nerds

by Josh Wood

When people think about SMU, traditionally their thoughts amble toward frat parties, expensive cars, and maybe the Cox School of Business...and maybe that little "NCAA death penalty" incident. However, the latest developments in the engineering school might be turning that trend toward a positive direction.

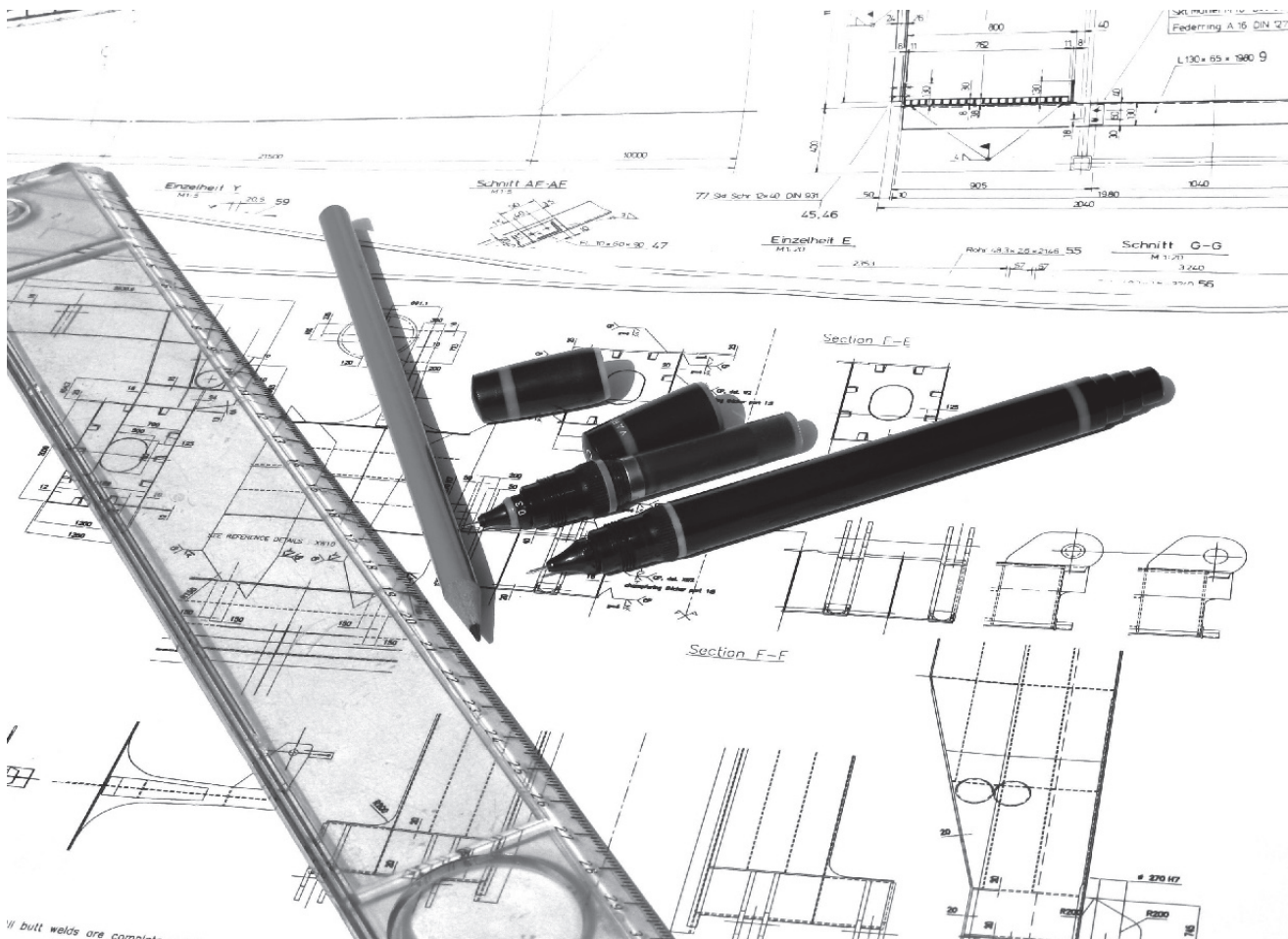
For starters, we can now associate a name and face to the SMU engineering program; Bobby B. Lyle, an SMU grad and Dallas area entrepreneur, has played a crucial role in the prominence of both the engineering school and the business school here at SMU. With the new engineering school name (the Bobby B. Lyle School of Engineering for those of you who don't know) comes a new focus--its students will enter the work force armed not only with the traditional technical capabilities, but also with the skills to lead.

A recent statistic reveals that many engineers exiting college will have others working under them within five years; in the past, even the most proficient fluid dynamics expert would be clueless as to how to manage and lead large projects, and the most brilliant circuit designer certainly wouldn't know how to deal with that one guy in the lab who only talks in Klingon and always carries an inordinate amount of pens in the breast pocket of his shirt sans pocket protector

(don't worry fellow engineers, I am not stereotyping—but if you've worked in industry, then you TOTALLY know the guy I'm talking about). An engineering student graduating from SMU, on the other hand, will be able to design the next big technological development and have the ability to manage the people and projects that will fall under them. Clearly, this is an important skill to have.

Another fairly recent development is both a result of and catalyst for this new focus of churning out more well-rounded engineering students. The new SMU Center for Engineering Leadership has many resources to guide engineering students on their path to technical and managerial prowess. A partnership between several facets of engineering, from faculty and staff, to industry leaders and the students, provides a welcoming environment for the advancement of this new take on an old school subject.

Besides new resources within SMU engineering and a shiny new name, other goings-on at the Bobby B. Lyle School of Engineering are starting to put SMU on the map for reasons other than a good Greek scene. Last semester, a \$10.1 million gift from the W.W. Caruth Jr. Foundation at Communities Foundations of Texas spurred the announcement of the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education; this project



if butt welds are complete --

not only includes a brand new Caruth Hall (currently a rather large pit and equally large pile of dirt adjacent to it smack in the middle of the engineering quad), but also new programs for reaching students of all ages; SMU will be reaching the community developing innovative science, math and engineering education programs for students grades K-12, as well as those in college. The most recent engineering announcement may be the most exciting, however (Warning: several government projects and entities are listed below—if you have a problem with all caps abbreviations, you might want to skip this bit). SMU's Lyle School of Engineering was chosen as the first research collaborator in the Systems Engineering Research Center (SERC), a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) funded by the Department of Defense (DoD). This cooperative effort will result in important research regarding the complex defense systems and services in the United States.

I know that the important announcements in recent months regarding SMU engineering might provide some hype now, but the substantial and truly tremendous impact of these new programs and facilities will certainly reveal itself soon.

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## HFCS

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tism. Sounds like a large part of our country. If anyone bothers to look up how HFCS is made, one will find that mercury-cell technology plays a key role. Basically, a product called caustic soda, which is made with mercury, helps make HFCS, and the mercury that can leak into the caustic soda can also leak into the HFCS. If somebody ships a huge vat of HFCS in the back of a truck and even a small part of that HFCS has mercury, wouldn't ALL the HFCS have mercury? Absolutely. Thus, wouldn't most of our food have mercury in it? Even worse. Case closed.

Perhaps the worst part of all this is that the EPA has known for years about this. The government allows HFCS commercials by the Corn Refiners Association, which I'll go on to call a lobbyist group, headed by big businesses such as ADM. Not only has Wall Street taken over Washington, but big businesses now dominate what laws are made and in which areas each governmental organization, such as the USDA, can really be effective. I could link businesses with the government all day long, but you will succeed in this country now only as long as your plan brings more tax dollars to the government and to the elite, no matter how harmful or unethical your plan really is. That's a plutocracy, primarily engineered by fascism. This is the despicable state our country has become.

HFCS indeed proves that all the things we think as convenient in this life have a huge price. Cherish your life, and watch what you eat. Various sources cited include the Washington Post, USA Today, and other mainstream newspapers via HealthDay, and search for "Double Danger of HFCS" for more information.

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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](mailto:hilltopics@gmail.com)**

## Taxing on Free Money

by Adrienne Yim

When I first applied to colleges, my primary concern was whether or not I could afford to go to a high-quality university, given my family's financial circumstances. Education seems to be costing a lot these days, and SMU is no exception. Though I proved that I had the smarts to attend a good college with my test scores, transcript, and resume, the only problem was whether or not I could actually attend a good college that was also affordable. Thanks to a few SMU-related scholarships and a couple of outside ones, I was able to follow through with my choice to attend SMU. At the time, I believed that scholarships not only meant a lessening of a financial burden for my family, but also a chance for me to go to college when otherwise I couldn't. That's why I was shocked when a couple of my friends came back from Christmas break and told me that they were



getting taxed on their scholarships. Researching it a little more, I discovered that only certain scholarships fall under the tax bracket, and I resolved to figure out why. It turns out that because my friends are paying over a certain amount of money for their education, they are not eligible for the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, which allows people paying for higher education to claim exemptions. At \$2400, the amount is ridiculously low. Anyone paying over that just for tuition – not including books, room and board, and extracurricular activities, if any – is not eligible to claim the Hope or Lifetime Learning Tax Credit. Considering that we go to SMU, a rather expensive private university, this automatically disqualifies any student from claiming these tax credits, regardless of the

student's financial situation. According to the official site that deals with this subject, <http://www.1098-t.com/tcrs.asp>, the tax credits come from the passing of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, which states that “the Hope Scholarship Credit

and the Lifetime Learning Credit allow taxpayers to claim a non-refundable credit against their federal income taxes for certain post-secondary educational expenses.” While this sounds rather benevolent of the IRS and the U.S. government, this benefit on the money one spends on higher education only applies to a small pool of people. Another question remains, however. Who decided to pass such an amendment to the Internal Revenue Code with such a low amount for eligibility for the tax credit? If one focuses solely on the part of the Taxpayer Relief Act that deals with relief for payments for higher education, one can thank President Bill Clinton

for signing this act into law. I am sure the intention behind relieving people from some of the burden for paying for college was good, but many middle income families cannot qualify for those benefits and are penalized if they choose to enroll their child in a good private university. The tax incentive does not extend to the general public as the law was originally intended, and I think that there needs to be some serious revision of this law in the near future.

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## The Blind Leading the Blinder

I do my best to keep up with the news, but lately it's become so depressing that I almost want to quit. The United States is in a lot of trouble at the moment, and, unfortunately, it is most likely going to get worse. The problem? Our politicians refuse to listen to simple economic facts. The average American may not have the most impressive knowledge of economics, but lately, it seems like politicians (at least the ones in charge) know even less.

President Obama and Congress are passing a stimulus package valued at \$789 billion. This plan includes \$282 billion in tax relief, and the rest meant for spending programs. The National Debt is already well over \$10 trillion – and since every single dollar of this “stimulus” is borrowed, that number will only increase. The reason we're in this mess in the first place is that too many Americans were living beyond their means, spending money they did not have, and taking

out outrageous loans that they could never hope to pay back. Now, policymakers have decided to do the exact same thing. It's fighting fire with fire, and it is doomed to failure.

Even the Congressional Budget Office, which is nonpartisan, is reporting that the stimulus will do more long-term damage than if we did nothing at all. Undoubtedly, there are no simple solutions for this crisis, and we cannot expect overnight improvements. On the other hand, how can we expect the situation to improve, ever, if we keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again?

Putting aside the economic faults of the bill, we cannot ignore the shady circumstances under which it passed. The Democrats behaved in a way that I can only describe as disturbing. They tried their hardest to completely shut the Republicans out of the decision-making by holding exclusive midnight meetings. At one such meeting, only two Republican Senators, and no House Republicans, were present. No matter what you may think of the GOP, I'm sure we can all agree that it's not good when one party gains too much control.

On top of this, the bill is over a thousand pages long, there were only five hard copies available to the House of Representatives, and it was only made available well after midnight the night before voting. I recommend that you go on YouTube and find a video of Minority Leader John Boehner passionately addressing the House. As he clutches a printed copy of the bill, you can hear the anger and disappointment in his voice as he proclaims, “Not one member has read this. What happened to the promise that we're going to let the American people see what's in this bill for 48 hours? But nope--” He tosses the bill to the floor. “We don't have time to do that.”

The Democrats promised change and hope. Now they are condoning policies of secrecy, breaking their promises of transparency, and leading the country down the wrong path – a path that will inevitably cause much pain and hardship for all Americans. Don't believe me? Just stick around and watch it happen.

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## Defining our Bike Community

by Thomas Dunlap



I can still remember when I first learned how to ride a bike. I would imagine that most people can. When I say most people I don't just mean most people that ride bikes. I mean most people. Period. More than anything else I've found that this is one skill virtually everyone I know shares in common. I think I have maybe two friends with absolutely no exposure to biking and I maintain that this is because their parents didn't love them. I remember it for a couple of personal and nostalgic reasons that I won't bore you with. I'd rather talk about the effects. As a kid, learning how to ride your bike opens up your environment to an unprecedented degree. I initially began taking mini tours of the city with my father and as I grew more competent I could rove the city with friends in a way that was never quite duplicated when we got cars. I've been thinking about this a good deal recently because I've rekindled my long dormant relationship with bicycles and I'm noticing quite a few aspects of being a cyclist that I missed the first time around.

You should be aware that I have not had a car in Dallas in three years. I brought my faithful Altima out with me for one semester freshman year and drove it exactly twice. I was lost all the time and found Dallas' dependence on freeways stressful and irksome. Since I picked up cycling again I've had that wonderful sense of a city completely opening up again. In a short period of time my sense of where things are and how the city works has increased by leaps and bounds.

Certainly far faster than the last three and a half years combined. For one thing, cycling creates a pace that allows one to really examine their surroundings and check and double check their location which makes learning easier. For another, it changes your relationship with the terrain. In a car you might have a vague notion that the shop you're looking for is on a hill or maybe a vaguely hilly area. When you're on a bike you know that that shop is on a hill. There's a sense that you conquered that route. When someone mentions a place to me now I can say, "Oh, I know what you're talking about. It's got that new silky smooth pavement next to it. I'm flying when I go by it." or what have you. A related result of this is that biking seems to make for better locals. Speaking from a perspective where I have my car, I found myself actively trying to frequent places in my area because I like the feeling of getting out in my own personal area. My new traveling range is perfect for establishing a good sized personally identifiable stomping grounds.

So if biking makes people better locals, why do other Dallasites seem so opposed to increased cycling levels? Many of the people I've talked to since deciding to bike here have expressed outright annoyance and outright anger at the prospect of another biker on the roads, viewing cyclists as usurpers of their god/nation given right to the road, which struck me as odd because I've also heard people say that Dallas is one of the more bike friendly cities in the country.

I can't say for sure but what I think they'd have to be referring to is the number of bike facilities (trails, lanes etc) that the Dallas area has. There are some great trails here to be sure, but that got me thinking about the strange place in cycling that trails and bike lanes hold. "Hardcore" or more avid cyclists tend to focus on the safety hazards associated with bike lanes and extended sidewalk cycling as they account for about 95% of all bike-motor vehicle collisions. When you think about it, this statistic makes a lot of sense. Bike lanes place cyclists immediately to the right of traffic and therefore between them and whatever side street they eventually want to be on. A cyclist has a low profile and can move at a faster speed than a pedestrian so if off to the side or on the sidewalk (especially on a sidewalk) a driver would have a hard time seeing their approach. Due to these kinds of statistics and the fact that bicycles are legally afforded all of the same rights and held to the same restrictions as the rest of the traffic on the road certain biking organizations consider a bike friendly city to be one with the fewest number of bike facilities where cyclists are successfully incorporated into the natural flow of traffic. Portland's bike coordinator has taken a considerably different view on the topic, distinguishing between "safety" and "comfort" and attributing the creation of these bike with encouraging people to experiment with biking and figure out how cycling can fit into their lives and their relationship with their city. The other argument on behalf of bike infrastructure is that with these increased levels of cycling participation, awareness of cyclists and appropriate behavior rises, which in turn lessens the likelihood of accidents. The question of what type of cycling environment Dallas wants to create is relevant at the moment as the city will be updating it's "Dallas Bike Plan" starting in May and is supposed to rely heavily on community input. You can find a copy of the letter explaining the program and the upgrades at <http://cycledallas.blogspot.com/2008/12/memorandum.html>

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**Men's Basketball  
SMU v. Tulsa  
Saturday, February 28, 2009  
8:00 PM  
Moody Coliseum**



### Thumbs up:

- Midnight Jimmy John's delivery
- The demise of Juicy Campus
- 70 degree weather in February
- Each new issue of Hilltopics means we're two more weeks closer to summer vacation



### Thumbs down:

- Urban Outfitter's new semi-pornographic catalogues
- Legislators who are supposedly cracking down on economic fiends also accepted millions from these companies during the election... way to be democratic

### Upcoming Events:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February 26 | Democracy Matters<br>8:30 PM, HT Portico E                                    |
|             | Lethal Injustice screening<br>7:00 PM, HT Forum                               |
| March 2     | Rachel's Challenge<br>8:00 PM, Dallas Hall<br>McCord Auditorium               |
| March 17    | St. Patty's Day the<br>Democratic Way<br>10:00 AM - 4:00 PM<br>HT West Bridge |

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### SMU Totally Fictitious Fact:

The little carts that SMU's parking enforcers drive around in are fueled by the tears of orphans and the blood of kittens.

