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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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Time for a Role Model Redefine

by Ashley Howe

From the second I heard about it, something seemed so wrong about the recent heat Michael Phelps has been taking for smoking pot. I don't support smoking pot, but more than that, I don't support looking to celebrities as a model for perfect behavior.

The logic usually goes, 'Celebrities are famous and successful, so people who want to be successful should naturally look up to them. BUT- celebrities aren't [truly] successful for how they behave. They may be famous for how they behave, but that is not why they are successful. Michael Phelps is successful for what he does in the pool, not out. Amy Winehouse may be talented, but personally, she is a complete train wreck. Ali Lohan may be a good actress, but her pregnancy is less than ideal. Clearly it is absurd to make every extremely talented person have to be a role model.

Another (obvious) example is Britney Spears. Sure she is a great artist and sure she is pretty (with hair), but what about being pretty or having musical ability screams 'look to me for your moral guidance?' There is a complete and total disconnect between the two ideas. Before her major fallout, Britney Spears did always say she wanted to be a good role model for girls. For a while, she was. Every Disney channel star is expected to be that way too. But any celebrity

with an "all-American girl next door" image tries to go that route. Their publicists tell them- 'moms will love you!' And that may work for a while, but eventually the artist gets established and knows that they can do as they please because they have a sustainable fan base that will look the other way if they do something stupid.

Some people think that celebrities make good role models because everyone knows about what celebrities are doing and defines acceptable behavior by this. Most celebrities live in a completely different world than the rest of us. They deal with so much stress, pressure, and temptation, that it is only a matter of time before any one of them will destroy their life or career. I'm not making excuses for them, but in reality, the "consequences" they deal with are on a totally different plateau than anything normal people encounter. We should not think that just because Paris Hilton, Nicole Richie, Lindsay Lohan, Shia LeBoeuf, and every other immature celebrity out there with poor judgment gets a DUI, that it is in any way acceptable for the rest of us. I find it more than a little ironic that most celebrities cite

the undue pressure on them to be perfect as the number one reason they became messed up in the first place.

The group I hate most in this phenomenon is the parents. So many parents were "heartbreakingly betrayed" by Michael

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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 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.

The Threatened Giant

by James Justinic

For most of the digital age, Microsoft has dominated the computer industry. Today, their original goal of “a computer on every desk and in every home, running Microsoft software” isn’t too far from reality. There were a couple anti-trust investigations as a result of the tenacity with which Microsoft approached that goal. While it’s not realistic to expect to reach that goal literally, they’ve certainly reached it in spirit. The opportunity to access a device with Microsoft software is available to a wide range of people.

This drive has escalated Microsoft’s revenues to astounding levels. All companies are likely to experience some decline in the current economic situation; however, Microsoft should have been in a much better position to weather the storm.

Throughout its existence, Microsoft has maintained relatively consistent growth in revenues while also increasing the size of their workforce, but all of that is changing now. In February 2009, Microsoft had to lay off around 1400 workers, and it did so less than elegantly. Due to an accounting error, some laid-off employees received too much or too little money for their severance packages. Microsoft sent out letters asking for the overpayments to be returned, but when

a copy of the letter became public, the company retracted the request. Microsoft also expects to lay off another 3600 in the near future. One primary reason for this is lower-than-expected Windows Vista sales.

Windows Vista sales are low for several reasons. First, the operating system took a long time to complete, and experienced several delays. Therefore, expectations were naturally higher than they otherwise would have been. Second, the hardware requirements to run Vista well are much higher than Windows XP, leaving older computers much better off without the upgrade. The popularity of netbooks, a low-power class of laptop designed specifically for accessing the Internet, has also eaten into Vista sales. Last, Windows Vista was reengineered to the point that many users experienced compatibility problems. Many users did not want to purchase a new computer with Windows Vista on it, so some manufacturers started offering the option to order a new computer with Windows XP instead of Vista. Each XP license brought in less revenue for Microsoft.

I also question whether Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is really the best person to be running the company. He is well-known for the crazy things he does at public events,



and it seems like his comments are no more logical than his behavior. Recently, he remarked that the iPhone and Blackberry were just popular with the consumers, but that the real market momentum was with Windows Mobile and Google Android. Hey Steve, last time I checked, the 'real' market is where the consumer enthusiasm is. Let's see where that philosophy gets you.

Only time will tell. Microsoft has recently released a public beta of the next version of Windows, Windows 7. It seems that some major improvements have been made since Vista, but the pressure is on for Microsoft to deliver a satisfactory product. If Windows 7 becomes a repeat of Vista, customer confidence will reach an all-time low.

James is a junior technology major and can be reached at jjustini@smu.edu

Role Models

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Phelps for what he did. News flash– It's his life and he will deal with the consequences. If you think your kids are going to go smoke pot just because Michael Phelps did, then maybe you think twice about your effectiveness as a parent. The same thing goes for A-Rod/ Marion Jones and steroids. Just because they did it, doesn't mean every little kid in T-Ball is going to think that they should too. These individuals will deal with massive consequences both personally and professionally. They chose to take that risk in their life, but they never chose to be your kid's role model.

Celebrities should of course, be admired for their talent. But most importantly, they should show that what goes around comes around. They should NOT be crucified as bad role models. I wouldn't have had any problem if all the news coverage about Michael Phelps was about the professional fallout, but every story I saw ended with how he is such a total letdown as a role model. I don't care if you win 200 gold medals and break every record ever, your life is still your life. Do all the illegal things you want to, but just be ready to deal with what comes as a result.

So if not most famous people, who can we look to? Um, people who aren't famous. The world is filled with responsible people that take their lives seriously and honestly try to make the right choices every day. Why do we not hear about them? Well, probably because they are not accidentally running over a paparazzo while they try and back out of a night club parking lot. Don't get me wrong. Eligibility does not rest on being famous or not. But you should know a person reasonably well before making them your role model. Also, people who aren't famous have more to lose when they mess up, so they will be way more reliable than someone who will be just another shocking picture in a tabloid. Think about that man next door who is so kind to everyone, or one of your professors, or even your parents. These are real people who are probably not going to let their lives go down the drain for a crazy night out. Who will your role model be?

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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

Asuntos de la Colina: Hilltopics en español. ¡Pasa la bola!(1)

by Gabriel Guillén

Vi el primer partido del Real Madrid contra el Liverpool en Trinity Hall, que no es un edificio de SMU, todavía, sino el bar irlandés de Mockingbird Station. Me aburrí como una ostra(2) tanto por el resultado como por el juego. En mi opinión, el fútbol perdió interés el mismo día en el que Zidane colgó las botas(3), tras darle un cabezazo a Materazzi.

Sin embargo, se puede sacar agua hasta de las piedras(4). De hecho, el fútbol es una excusa estupenda para todo tipo de asociaciones, como nos han recordado Albert Camus o, más recientemente, Victoria Beckham.

Pensemos en nuestro mundo. La universidad. Un partido aburrido es como un curso soporífero(5), sólo que en clase no puedes o no deberías mandar mensajes de móvil. Ahora bien, ¿es la función del profesor entretener a su audiencia o garantizar un buen resultado? Me inclino por lo segundo. Nos lo podemos pasar muy bien con los regates de Ronaldinho

pero, si finalmente nuestro equipo pierde, nos vamos a casa con la cara más larga que la línea de Java City en hora punta(6). En términos académicos, nuestro equipo pierde cuando el estudiante aprende poco y mal. Podemos discutir durante días quién es el responsable del fracaso académico pero, en cualquier caso, la función del profesor no es entretener sino facilitar aprendizaje.

No obstante, el entretenimiento puede repercutir en buenos resultados. Un profesor que conoce su materia como nadie y sabe transmitirla como pocos es muy parecido a mi admirado Zidane: podría ser un showman del balón pero no lo era o era algo más. El placer de ver a Zidou sobre el campo nacía de su "elocuencia" al controlar el balón, de la verticalidad de sus regates y de la precisión milimétrica(7) de sus pases. Son, sin duda, virtudes efectivas.

De todas ellas me interesa especialmente su habilidad para pasar el balón. Zidane creaba juego de la misma manera que un profesor puede generar conocimiento o deseo de

conocimiento en sus alumnos. Un pase del jugador argelino-francés era tan bello como uno de sus regates y mucho más productivo. Un ejercicio práctico es tanto o más efectivo que una conferencia(8) pero no consiste simplemente en dejar producir al alumno. Hay que poner el balón en el lugar adecuado.

Hacerlo es todo un arte y un antídoto contra el aburrimiento. Sólo me parezco a Zidane en la pérdida de cabello(9) pero, con este artículo, pretendo pasarles la pelota. ¿Les apetece

escribir en español para Asuntos de la colina(10)? A cambio les garantizamos edición y feedback sobre su español. Elijan un tema de su interés, escriban un artículo de 200 palabras y mándenlo a Hilltopics. Aprendan de forma activa. ¡Disfruten!

1 – Spread the word. 2–I got bored like an oyster: I got bored to death. 3–Hang up his boots.

4–Stones. 5–Soporific. 6–Rush hour. 7–Very precise. 8–Lecture. 9–Hair. 10–Hilltopics.

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Gabriel has written and worked for various newspapers, magazines, internet businesses, and educational institutions. He worked for Middlebury College in Spain from 2005 to 2008. During this time, Gabriel Guillen founded the academic magazine Gaceta hispánica de Madrid, in collaboration with New York University. Gabriel is currently working for SMU under a Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs fellowship. You can reach him at gguillen@smu.edu



Stimulus Package Breakdown

by Sanaz Talaifar

With Democrats in control of Congress and Obama's current level of political capital, the stimulus plan has passed both the House and the Senate. This estimated \$789 billion plan, officially called the "American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009," is intended to reverse, or at least slow, the nation's economic woes. Predictably, Democrats and Republicans fought bitterly over how to produce the desired results: Democrats tend to support increasing spending and government programs while Republicans traditionally advocate reducing spending and increasing taxes.

Unfortunately, much of this ideological debate detracted attention from the actual details of the bill and focused attention on the more dramatic partisanship and infighting that are the hallmark of the American political process today. But now that the stimulus plan is official "public law," it is time to set aside these differences; history will decide in the end which side was right. Instead, we should examine the plan's content and how it will affect society.

The plan consists of \$275 billion in tax cuts and \$550 billion in government spending. The following is a sample of some of the specifications of the truly vast package:

Government Spending:

- \$4.7 billion for Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
- \$650 million for Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Program',
- \$225 million for Violence Against Women Prevention and Prosecution Programs, for grants to combat violence against women
- \$1 billion for NASA
- \$3 billion for the National Science Foundation
- \$3.7 billion for Armed Forces Operation and Maintenance
- 2 billion for Armed Forces Military and Family Housing Construction
- \$300 million Armed Forces Research, Development, Test and Evaluation
- \$1 billion for medical services for veterans (not including \$150 million for construction of state extended care facilities)
 - \$1 billion for aviation security
 - \$50 million for National Endowment for the Arts
 - Children and Families Services Programs', \$3,150,000,000 (including \$2 billion for expansion and operation of Head Start programs)
 - \$13 billion for education for the disadvantaged
 - \$1.5 billion for the homelessness prevention fund
 - \$2.25 billion for housing programs
 - \$12.2 billion for Special Education for individuals with disabilities

Tax Cuts:

- \$400 tax credit per individual
- \$14 billion tax credit expansion for renewable energy facility
- \$3.2 billion tax break for General Motors
- \$231 million to offer tax credits to small businesses hiring disadvantaged workers (e.g. unemployed veterans)
- \$41 million to allow more small business tax deductions
 - Computer equipment and technology to qualify as higher education expense for section 529 accounts in 2009 and 2010
 - First-time homebuyer tax credit extension of and increase
 - Suspension of tax on portion of unemployment compensation
 - Additional deduction on the purchase of certain motor vehicles for State sales tax and excise tax
 - Certain plug-in electric vehicles tax credit
 - Certain property bought in 2009 can qualify for a special allowance

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Organization Creation Contains Painful Obligations

by Cody Meador



What makes a good student organization? Who decides what is good and bad, or just not good enough? These are questions I have always considered (since this is my third year running a student group), but this semester such questions were more pressing than ever because my group came before SMU Student Senate for a full charter. This meant that the Student Organizations Committee reviewed the group and evaluated whether we met certain requirements for the charter. Now, this wasn't the first time that we had met with the Organizations Committee. Oh no, we have a long history together: about three semesters to be exact.

Allow me to briefly explain the chartership process at this school. First, you file for a probationary charter for the group you wish to start. My group is about politics and at the Senate meeting I recently attended, a hip hop club was starting; it can be almost anything (within reason), as long as you can prove that a preexisting group doesn't fit the purposes of the new group. Then, the new organization must hold the probationary charter for eight months until it comes up

for a temporary charter, which must be held for eight more months. And, as always, certain criteria must be met for each advancement. Full charter is the final goal, the highest status. For comparison's sake, I would like to also describe the process of starting a club at the school I transferred from, the University of San Francisco. Step one: fill out a form. Step two: wait for the form to get filed with the University. And boom, you have the foundations of a fantastic student group! In total, maybe a one month process to get officially registered with the school.

Returning to SMU and the organization I am involved in, we entered this semester aware that we would be reviewed for full charter and that we needed to meet the requirements, which we did. Or so we thought. Turns out that a specific part of one of the rules caught us in a bind; not only did we need to have twelve active members, but twelve members needed to attend each meeting. We readily admitted that we do not always have twelve people at our meetings, that we were not really aware that this detail could delay our charter,

possibly for eight more months. up to long story short: we organized a presentation of members and supporters (professors, faculty, student leaders) for Senate and ultimately, because we did not officially violate the twelve-member rule, we were granted a full charter. So in that sense I am pleased with the process, and I am grateful to the senators who defended our group based on all the achievements we made over these past three semesters. However, I've considered this seriously and I have no doubt that our group would have done the same events and be the same size if we had just signed a form three semesters ago.

It is important that I make two clarifications in my critique of this whole process. First, I am not trying to criticize individual student senators. It is certainly appropriate for senators to take the rules and responsibilities seriously. Second, I wholeheartedly commend Senate (or whoever made it happen) for extending many of the privileges of chartered groups to probationary and temporary groups, as well. This is definitely a major improvement that, to my knowledge, just came into effect for the 2008-2009 school year. It allows groups to use more resources to grow and it reduces the severity of the levels of club status.

group is supposed to look like. The truth is that different groups serve different purposes and have different methods of achieving goals. According to the SMU SAMSA website, there are currently 150 to 160 recognized clubs at SMU; everything from Medieval Club to Retail Club. Arguably, all of the groups center on a common interest or characteristic (love of the medieval or love of retail). Several groups listed seem to serve as community support networks, especially the religious organizations. Some publish invigorating newsletters every other week. However, from my observations, very few seem to serve the purpose of political activism. Not just education, not just community support, but actively pursuing change in government policy and practice. I recall that Dr. David Doyle, when speaking on behalf of our group to Student Senate, noted that several political actions which might usually occur naturally on a university campus, or on an ad hoc basis, occur through Democracy Matters instead.

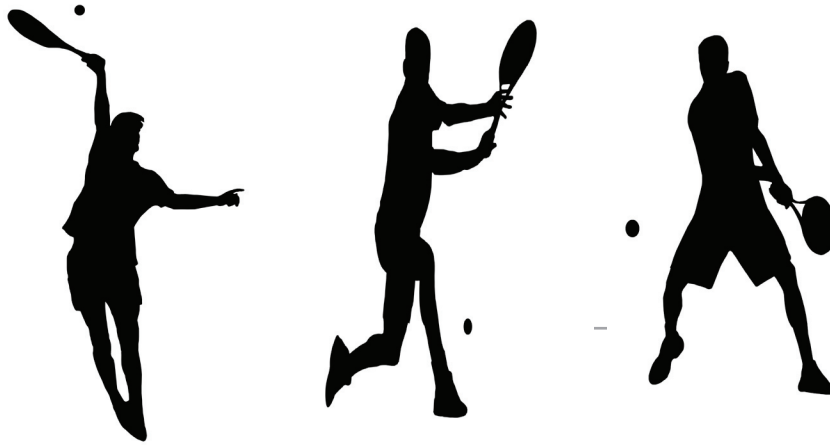
This statement really got me thinking. What if a group of students become motivated and wanted to organize around a specific, time sensitive issue, such as support or opposition to President Obama's stimulus package. They want to hold a rally at the flagpole, table to collect petition signatures, distribute flyers to the dorms and get their voices, and the voices of other students, heard. They have no need for long term members or elections because the issue is temporary and the power is decentralized. How do these students work within the SMU system? They don't. They would probably hit so many bureaucratic obstacles that they would give up. Although not such an extreme situation, this actually happened to a major event we were planning once. One too many bureaucratic requirements managed to completely render months of planning for a major event useless. If the example I made up could use the one-form system, they could achieve their goals of activism. However, under the system at SMU, they would just have to wait for another stimulus package to protest.

Cody Meador is a junior political science major and can be reached at CodyLM@gmail.com

**This article was not written specifically with either organization represented in the above images in mind.*



Where I really take issue here is the idea that there can be such strict definitions of what a successful student



**Men's/Women's Tennis
SMU v. Columbia/TCU
Wednesday, March 18, 2009
12:00 PM/6:00 PM
Turpin Tennis Stadium**



Thumbs up:

- The return of spring weather
- March Madness is upon us!
- LOLcats are still brightening people's lives
- "Springing forward" to longer days



Thumbs down:

- The return of midterm exams
- Being at school while everyone else is enjoying THEIR spring break
- Online shopping addictions
- The new Facebook (again)

Upcoming Events:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| March 17 | St. Patrick's Day
All Day, Everywhere |
| March 24 | Gartner Lecture-
African Literature
8:00 PM, Promenade AB |
| May 2 | Honors Spring Dance
8:00 PM, HT Ballroom |

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SMU Totally Fictitious Fact:

"The Falls" at SMU's Dedman Center is actually a hydroelectric power station, providing enough power to keep Ford Stadium lit up for approximately 5.2 seconds.

