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Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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## For love or money: A student-turned-businessman's venture tries to figure out Valentine's day

by Ben Goerz

Valentine's Day is fast approaching. People everywhere are scrambling to make preparations for their special someone. Not me. Last week, I had 4,109 special someones.

I am the co-founder of FindFreeLovePoem.com, and I am devoted to bringing love to the masses. So naturally, Valentine's Day has me keyed up. People the world over are looking to me to help them find the right words for the moment, but I'm not worried. It's my job.

In September, my friend Mark Wood and I founded Pubular Ventures, which owns several Web sites. We were just two SMU students, broke after studying abroad. We managed to start with just \$150.

Today, our original investment is multiplying. This is my favorite part of online business. One dollar per day turns into \$365 in one year and \$1,095 in three. I sleep, it earns. I sit in class, it earns. The idea is simple: create numerous stable sources of profit, and retire before 30.

For now, we are actively developing Web sites. Underpinning all of this are business fundamentals osmosed from years of class. Marketing leads us to the right products.

Psychology helps us satisfy people. Economics contributes profit maximization. Finance adds knowledge of valuing money over time. Countless subjects infuse the knowledge that drives our results, which are already fast outpacing the competition. Apparently, degrees are more than expensive pieces of paper.

The biggest problem with knowledge is the need to know more. I check the numbers first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and a half-dozen times in between. We invented a slew of new formulas, graphs, and metrics. We know that Mac users are disproportionately greater poetry fans. We can predict the most effective time of day to advertise.

But the one thing we don't know is this: just how big will we be on Valentine's Day? Maybe 10 times normal. Maybe 1,000 times. Most nights, I am hunched over my desk at 2 a.m. working on the answer. I do have a guess, but I'm not telling. You'll just have to visit and see first-hand.

*Ben Goerz is a senior marketing and psychology major.*

## Calling all job-seekers: skip the career fairs and do your own employment homework

by Kasi DeLaPorte

Spring semester is here, and that means it's time for SMU's best and brightest to don their suits, polish their résumés, and embark upon the journey toward jobs. Many employment-eager students probably began their search at last week's career fair in Hughes-Trigg, where companies from around the Metroplex set up a one-stop shop of work wonderment.

I hate career fairs.

While I appreciate many of the Career Center's efforts, like MustangTrak listings, e-mail newsletters, on-campus interviews, consultations, etc., I find little value in the concept and format of career fairs and am not convinced they help students find jobs. Sure, it sounds good in theory – bring all the companies to all the students – but in practice, “cattle call” and “meat market” are terms that come to mind.

Student A shuffles through a maze of tabletop displays

and branded giveaways. He awkwardly schmoozes with the rep from Company XYZ, attempting to be instantly memorable while adding his résumé to a growing stack, only to rewind and repeat his trite schpiel for Company 123. Meanwhile, Student B tries to appear interested in her flyers and brochures while she eavesdrops behind him. And so it goes for four hours and myriad applicants.

I snuck into this year's fair before it started so I could visit a woman with whom I worked during my internship last semester while she was setting up the company's booth. (I'll note that I got that job after attending an on-campus recruiting presentation, paying attention to e-mail updates, and applying for an on-campus interview.) I shared with her my distaste for the whole thing, and she, an insightful SMU Greek alumna, likened the career fair to rush. I'm sure it's

see CAREER on page 4

## INSIDE this issue

**Campus:** Too many drunk drivers? Another reason for a campus pub, page 2.

**Nation:** How should the U.S. respond to the dangers illegal aliens face? Page 3

**Life:** Tired of feeling too hot in class and too cold outside? Or was it the other way around? Groundhog day means six more weeks of this crap, page 4.

**Be Heard:** Got an opinion? *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions and interesting feedback. Email your thoughts to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).

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](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com) by Wednesday at 8:00 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.

## Cheers to learning! *Hilltopics* editor calls for the University to build a bar for students

At the University of Leeds in England, they have the Refectory, a bar that's seen performances by The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and The Strokes. At the Eagle and Child Pub in St. Giles' at Oxford, there's an area in the back called the Rabbit Room where C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien would

meet Tuesday mornings for drinks. Stateside, Harvard has a once-a-month pub night in Loker Commons, serving up cheap drinks and providing an on-campus social outlet for students and faculty. Brown has its pub in the Faunce House, Yale and Princeton have pubs in the basements of their graduate colleges, and Duke instated an Irish pub called Twinnie's in their new engineering building. Here in Texas, Rice University has Willy's Pub, and on their website you can see Rice University President Norman Hackerman drawing the first pitcher from the beer tap back in 1975. You know those picturesque snapshots of campus life on the SMU website? Imagine President Turner grinning with a pitcher of beer in hand.

At each of these top-tier schools, whether Ivy League or British elite, there are Friday night havens on campus where students and faculty can retreat from the office and the classroom to wash down a week's worth of learning with a cold draught. Cheap beer on tap, wooden booths, and a jukebox provide a setting for students to toss around ideas about religion, politics, music, life. Meanwhile, professors chime in, occasionally offering an inebriated solution, but mostly



handing over the intellectual body-slam to an unsuspecting undergraduate with a poorly formed argument. The point is, people gather, grab a pint, and then they talk. Sure, they argue and debate, hoot, holler, maybe even whoop occasionally, but they also exchange ideas and learn to see each other and their professors as people.

There's a growing concern among the university faculty and administration that SMU has a culture of anti-intellectuality, that students disappear from campus after first year, and that undergraduates aren't actively seeking a 'life of the mind.' How can we get students to communicate better with their professors, or become more comfortable and interested in being intellectuals? How do we encourage discourse and instigate the exchange of ideas? How can we instill in our undergraduates a desire to

stick around campus? We need a pub, on-campus and available to students and faculty. Ivy League schools have 'em, Oxford has four, and it's time we caught up. If SMU dining services can transform a hole-in-the-wall sandwich counter into a marble countertop cyber-café, surely it can throw a few beer taps and a jukebox into the Varsity.

Now this will undoubtedly draw out of the woodwork a mass of "How can we encourage drinking on campus?" outrage, but I quite simply don't care. You can argue that alcohol is terrible, that it leads to a variety of health problems, that it's easily and frequently abused, and that the university puts itself at a terrible risk to serve it on campus. I'd say you're absolutely right. I'd follow though with the irrefutable point that people drink anyway, many legally, and that responsible Friday-afternoon happy hours among students and faculty are drastically more valuable than the perceived 'threat' of encouraging drinking. Oxford, Harvard, Yale, Brown, Princeton, Duke, and Rice agree.

The political science department has already caught on, and you can catch department faculty and students at the Barley House one Friday each month, exchanging ideas, arguing politics, and continuing discussions from the classroom over a pint. Responsible individuals socialize in an atmosphere where alcohol is served, and engage each other in discussion that at least simulates thought and exchange. Who wouldn't want to throw one back with their professor, or buy their department chair a drink?

*Michael Hogenmiller is a senior political science and music major.*

### Do you have an opinion about...

politics, music, class, television, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, 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 ?

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## Mapping the way out: Is helping Mexican immigrants across the border humane or hazardous?

by Rebekah Hurt

On Wednesday the 25th, CNN covered a story reporting how a Tucson, Arizona-based group called Humane Borders is collaborating with Mexican authorities to distribute some 70,000 high-resolution maps of the U.S.-Mexico border marked with "best route" options to would-be illegal immigrants in order to better inform the potential border-crossers of the real magnitude of the journey they are undertaking, to demonstrate where immigrants have previously been killed or died from exhaustion while attempting to cross in desert territory, and to provide the locations for water and relief-stations set up along the way for Mexicans who do decide to take their chances.

Some organizations in the U.S. such as the National Human Rights Commission (a group that receives government funding but that operates independently) support the dissemination of these maps, saying that the bulletins will not further encourage illegal immigration but will simply preserve the lives of the hundreds of aliens who die each year in the desert en route to towns north of the border by directing people in trouble to rescue beacons or, at the very least, to areas with cell phone reception. This round of information distribution is not a new phenomenon. In 2005, 1.5 million copies of a comic-book style handout were distributed in Mexico to warn immigrants of the dangers ahead and to offer tips on staying safe if they choose to attempt a crossing. President of the Humane Borders group Reverend Robert Hoover and his associates make the compelling argument that the opportunity for informed migration is a basic human right and that the United States government should be grateful that groups like Humane Borders are working to mediate border-relations in this manner, since both Mexican labor in the U.S. and Mexican-based industry is such a major factor in the American economy, especially in the American Southwest.

However, the Department of Homeland Security and others within the Bush administration are, predictably, less pleased with this development. A spokesperson for Homeland Security Russ Knocke is quoted by the CNN/AP coverage as saying, "It is not helpful for anyone, no matter how well intended they might be, to produce road maps that lead aliens into the desolate and dangerous areas along the border, and potentially invite criminal activity, human exploitation, and personal risk." Knocke continues, "Our message should be clear: we are securing our borders and we're dramatically increasing the likelihood of apprehensions."

The administration's criticisms of the Humane Borders map dissemination does not stand up under fire. The right for American citizens to distribute literature and print material whether in the country or abroad is protected as freedom

of speech and press, provided, of course, that that print material does not reveal sensitive military or strategic-governmental information that is not part of the public knowledge. The fact is that, while the Humane Borders maps include the basic geographical features that any AAA map would offer; a

series of concentric rings demarcating how far it is possible to walk in one, two, and three days; and the previously mentioned symbols for previous, publicly documented border-crossing casualties and apprehensions, water stations, and places for assistance; these maps do not disclose any information whatsoever regarding the location or absence of border-police or the like and, therefore, cannot be said to substantially encourage illegal immigration any more than the Google earth maps universally available to PC-users.

Furthermore, the spirit of the arguments made by Humane Borders' critics seems questionable when one con-

siders the very floods of immigration and acceptance of foreigners in search of upward social mobility that characterized our nation in its founding and historical states. All of this is not to discount the practical economic and political barriers to unlimited immigration between Mexico and the U.S., but nevertheless, these temporary barriers seem quickly diminished in size when one contemplates the real magnitude of the problem of the exploitative Mexican-American relationship at hand.

To my thinking, at least, the entire situation smacks of the Underground Railroad - the heroes and heroines of which can only now, some two hundred years after the fact, be lauded as such. Perhaps in years to come our country's administration will awaken to the fact that heavily relying on the poorly compensated labor of our Mexican neighbors while turning a blind eye to their destitute material conditions and unthinkable quality of life beyond the maquiladora is no more acceptable than was the exploitation of African American slaves in service of a plantation culture gone by. Unfortunately, the likelihood of this transformation in foreign policy seems doubtful and will be slow coming if it materializes at all. So kudos to Humane Borders for at least making an attempt to even the playing field, as it were.

*Rebekah Hurt is a senior English major.*

For documentation and more on this story, visit: [www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/americas/01/24/migrant.map.ap/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/americas/01/24/migrant.map.ap/index.html)



## Under the weather? Dallas winters make getting ready each day a Herculean challenge

by Yasmin Awad

One of Dallas' many wonders is the wide variety of weather we get—too bad that variety is experienced in a matter of 24 hours. Even the weather-oblivious who roam around with t-shirts year round have experienced this phenomenon. You tiptoe out of bed on a cold morning for that 8 o'clock class. You bundle up in a sweater, a Burberry or North Face jacket, and (hopefully only for girls) mini-skirts (which would be hybridizing if not for Uggs—men, you can pay tribute to these boots later). You sip your hot chocolate or coffee and are mentally ready for cold weather.

A few classes later, you walk out to a hot summer day with the sun shining bright. You suddenly wish you could trade in your outfit for shorts, flip-flops, and designer sunglasses. You begin questioning your sanity and think you imagined that cold weather morning. Everyone seems to be wearing weather-appropriate clothes and are eyeing you. But wait, you're not crazy! By five in the evening, it's chilly again.

This change can be especially irritating for commuters. You can't run home and change while the mercury jumps up and down in thermometers. And think of all the laundry you have to do if you have to change into four different outfits—one for each season you experience that day.

When I began to consider asking advice from dogs and squirrels on how they deal with their fur coats in the changing weather, I knew the weather change was getting to my mental health. Research has shown that changes in the weather can trigger migraines and weaken the immune system. Just imagine the stress our bodies must go through going from an insulator to a radiator.

This year, I couldn't even say we got our usual few millimeters of snow for a couple of days. All Dallas experienced was ice on streets and many casualties.

On Groundhog day a few days ago, the myth is that a groundhog emerges from its burrow and if it doesn't see its shadow, winter will soon end. You know what that means! Dallas could possibly get a winter that's under 75 degree during the day! Yes, you might want to pull on your

union suits (full body underwear) for that.

I decided that the best solution would be to wear an outfit suitable for average weather. This might mean I would get slightly cold in the morning and experience a few hot flashes during the day. It would be smart to study the hour-by-hour weather predictions and plan out how to dress. It takes strategic planning. But it never seems to work completely. So all I can do for now is complain—or move.

*Yasmin Awad is a sophomore journalism major.*

### Career fairs worth little more than all the free stuff they promise continued from page 1

no coincidence that I, a non-affiliated student, also imagine the rush process to be one of the worst possible ways I could spend a week of my life. At least the company reps don't sing and clap.

Seriously, though, how well can I distinguish myself to potential employers – my qualifications, personality, accomplishments – during a five-minute "meeting," amidst a sea of other candidates, in a crowded, noisy room? This is definitely not my idea of an ideal get-to-know-you environment. What benefits do I really gain over utilizing personal and professional networking contacts, submitting my résumé independently, or doing my own research online and through informational interviews? At career fairs, the companies seem to sell themselves with promotional items, but I'm not sure emblazoned Post-Its, phallic water bottles, or cheesy beer koozies should be indicators of career quality.

I did stop by one booth before leaving, a company for which I would be interested in working. I glanced at printouts that directed me to visit the Web site for more information. I explained my work experience and post-graduation plans while the rep applied her lipstick. I shook her hand; she gave me her card.

And I took a free pen, lest I leave without anything of worth.

*Kasi DeLaPorte is a senior advertising and journalism major.*



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