

When we look past perceptions of our student body,

# THE TRUTH

reveals who we are.



## Page 7

Nike shorts and T-shirts on campus make easy targets for fashion satire



## Pages 10-11

Baylor's international population provides a geography lesson complete with a double-page map

## Page 17

LGBTQ students discuss the ups and downs of living at a historically conservative school



# I can guess your religion, background and interests

Just kidding. Nobody can tell any of that information just from looking at a person, and from behind this keyboard I don't even have that advantage. Unless I know you personally, I don't know a lot about you. You'd say the same about the thousands of people you've never met who are also reading this.

But that doesn't stop people from generalizing about who we are as Baylor students. They look at things such as our tuition, our location in Central Texas and our university's history and manage to form an idea of what the Baylor student is.

When the Lariat initially met to determine the topic of this special section, it was actually Joshua Madden, a graduate student who did his undergraduate work at Kansas State, who first suggested the topic. It's interesting that someone new to Baylor would want to find how many students matched preconceived notions.

Joshua had good reason to think Baylor students act and live a certain way; Baylor doesn't hesitate to advertise what it stands for. We are a Christian university, which carries a set of principles that supposedly guide our student body. We are a Baptist university, which, especially in decades past, brought even more guidelines to the behavior and lifestyle expected from our students.

Understanding and serving God makes up half of the phrase on our school seal (Pro Ecclesia). Our other half reads "Pro Texana."

The politically correct Baylor website stresses "Pro Texana" meant just Texas in the mid-1800s and now means the entire world. But when a school's seal says "For Texas," you can meet a Baylor student on a campus sidewalk and take an educated guess where he or she is from.



Chris Derrett | Editor in chief

Sometimes, though, educated guesses fall short.

You discover someone who follows a non-Christian religion or no religion at all. You might learn his or her sexual orientation isn't what you assumed. He or she might already be married and is still working toward a degree.

Or maybe the student mirrors many of your expectations. The person could be a Nike shorts-wearing, Greek-affiliated student who frequently volunteers in the Waco area and gives all glory to God.

Although we touched on all of the types of students I just mentioned, we realize we can't talk to all 15,029 people enrolled at Baylor.

I guess that's the point, though. We aren't 15,029 copies of one another despite stereotypes of our school.

That's a seemingly obvious thought that's always been in the back of everyone's mind. Now it's time to put that thought in front of our eyes.

## In this issue

### Move it like Burt..... 9

Changes in Baylor's policy on dancing allow the university chaplain to boogie

### No thanks ..... 12

Baylor students wave farewell to pre-med shortly after enrolling

### Brand spanking used.. 14

Some folks' rides are shiny and new; others are literally held together by duct tape

### Whatever it takes ..... 19

The Lariat's cartoonist chronicles a woman's quest for "The Ring"

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# I know where I'm going (and why)

## Faith drives some Baylor students' college choice; for others, not so much

By GRACE GADDY  
REPORTER

Senior year of high school wraps up between a backpack full of memories and a graduation cap. But for seniors, somewhere between taking the SAT and hearing the bassoons in “Pomp and Circumstance,” a package arrived at the door — and a decision had to be made.

For most, a college acceptance letter spawns long hours of thinking, making plans and weighing options. Those seeking higher education may face a buffet of choices that affect their final decision. Some questions: Do I want a big school or a small one? How important is location?

One option includes seeking a faith-based community. Baylor's commitment to faith drew mixed reactions from those who considered it as a factor in the application process. While it wasn't a factor for some, others named it as a priority.

May 2011 alumna Aaryka Matte said the Christian community was the primary reason she chose Baylor.

“It was the only school I applied to because of that, just because it was faith-based,” she said.

Other students shared Matte's sentiments. Plano freshman Lindsay Larimore said she ultimately decided on Baylor because it was a Christian school.

“All the other schools I was looking at were public,” Larimore said.

Lantana junior Janice Wong said she couldn't make up her mind between two schools.

“Academically, the other school, the secular school, was ranked higher than Baylor and I was really attracted to that, but then I started to pray about it,” Wong said. “I think as

I prayed about it, God was saying, ‘Where are you going to grow more spiritually?’ and I was like, ‘Well, I guess Baylor,’ and I started looking at Baylor [and] how many great organizations there are here that are Christian and service-focused.”

So Wong chose Baylor and got involved in two of those organizations: the Steppin' Out Steering Committee, which coordinates Baylor's biannual day of community outreach, and Campus Kitchen at Baylor, which recovers excess food from dining halls to redistribute in the Waco community.

Others say that while the variety of student organizations attracted them to life on campus, the faith aspect did not play a big part.

Houston junior Yalda Ahmadi called Baylor's faith-based environment the “backbone” of the university, but added that for her, it wasn't a

deciding factor.

“I'm not Baptist or even Christian, but I would say that the faith part of Baylor is really great for Baylor. It definitely offers you something that schools that are unaffiliated with religion tend to lack, like the sense of service,” Ahmadi said. “I mean, at first, I think you have to look deeper than what Baylor comes off as. If you think of it as the really strong conservative Southern Baptist, it can turn a lot of people off.”

For Ahmadi, the size and sense of community felt right. Yet for others, it was all about the books.

“I came here more because of Baylor's academic reputation,” said Katy freshman Katie Ovak. “I have faith, but that wasn't very particularly important to me when deciding where to come to school.”

Plano junior J.D. Beeman was also unaffected by the faith-based environment,

which he said had zero impact on his final decision. Beeman credits a scholarship as the reason he chose Baylor.

For many, the campus visit made all the difference. Prospective students can experience the Christian atmosphere of Baylor firsthand, which may only confirm their choice.

Winter Park, Fla., junior Anna Reiman said she loved the Baylor environment, particularly the faith-based community.

“I'd been praying that the Lord would guide me,” she said, “And I didn't really know about Baylor until late senior year, so it wasn't really a contender.”

When a family friend told Reiman about a “good school” in Texas, she decided to see for herself.

“When I came to visit, the students that I met and then the faculty that I met were just really wonderful and friendly and helpful,” she said, “and I could see myself being at Baylor for four years and making good friendships, and just being surrounded by an encouraging community that shared my same values.”

Three years later, Reiman knows she made the right decision.

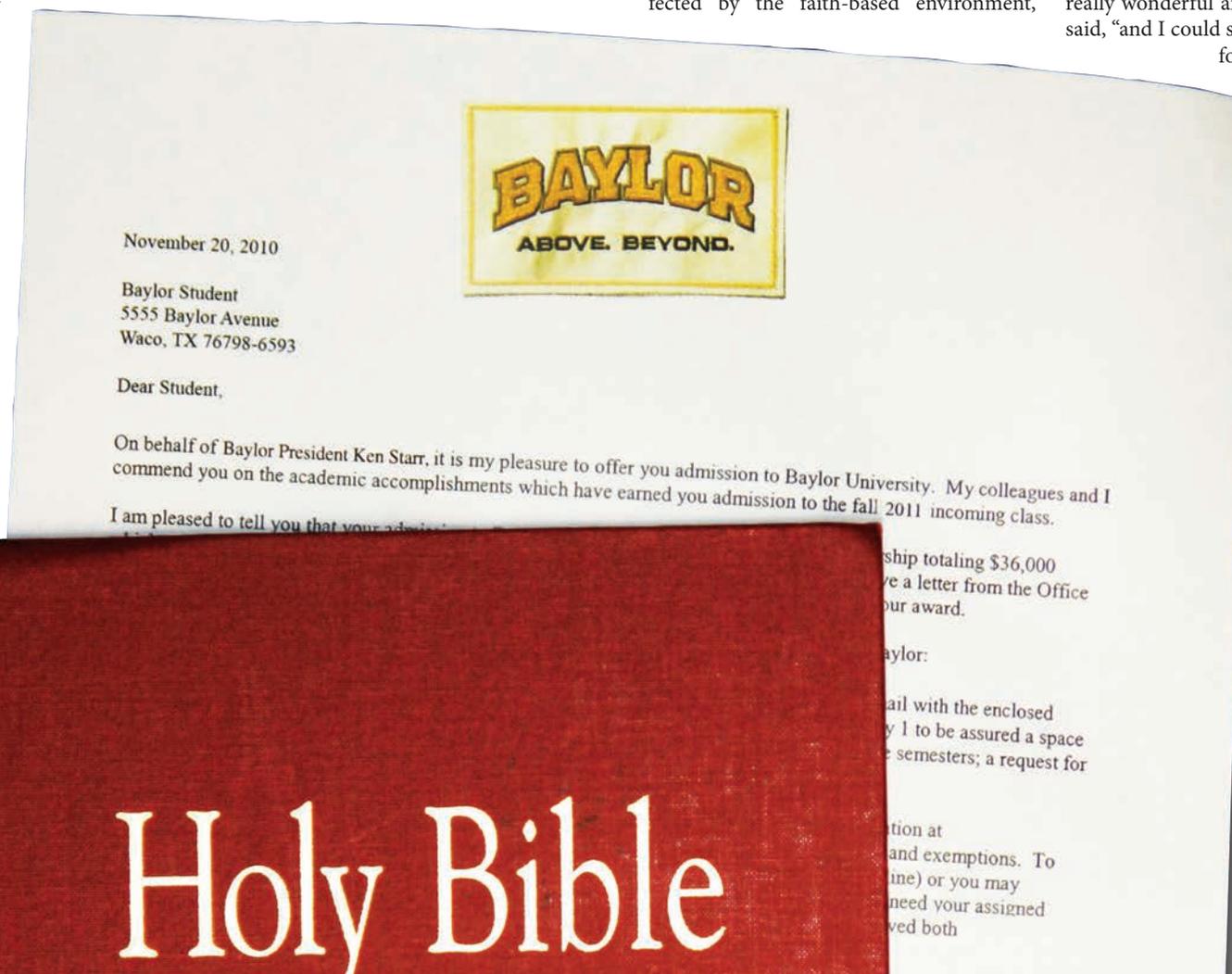
“I wouldn't want to be anywhere else,” she said, noting how the Christian faculty was “also a selling point” for her.

“I knew that I would get a great education, but I would also be taught from a Christian perspective,” Reiman said.

Considering all of this, it was “worth being so far from home” for Reiman — a point that junior Nafalya Francis also understood.

Francis traveled roughly 5,000 miles from Leicester, England, to attend Baylor.

And the faith-based community here played a role in her decision — “quite a strong one,” she said.



# No prayers, no problem

## Atheists, agnostics don't find life at Christian university drastically different

By ROB BRADFIELD  
REPORTER

It can be hard fitting in at a university where many of the people you meet believe you're going to burn in hell.

Baylor, the world's largest Baptist university, has a diverse student body with a range of religious beliefs. In its mission statement, the university outlines its goal to integrate "academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community."

While Baylor works to ensure that students of all beliefs are treated equally, atheists and agnostics are a minority on campus.

Only 43 out of 14,900 students identified themselves as atheists, according to a fall 2010 report prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Testing.

A further 371 students identified as having "No Religion" and 18 did not wish to identify. Baptists had the strongest showing at 5,287, followed by Catholics at 2,128.

For some atheists, it is the religious student culture, not the institution, that is the greatest challenge. At a school with so many students of faith, it's almost impossible to avoid religious conversations and — especially for non-religious students — questions.

"I do feel like sometimes it's harder for me to make friends, especially with people who ask that sort of question outright, initially, and don't have the opportunity to get to know me better," said one atheist student, a senior computer science major from Austin who asked to remain anonymous.

While he says he has enjoyed his time at Baylor and has a group of friends that includes several religious people, he also acknowledges one aspect of Baylor social life in which he can't participate: "I can't join people's churches."

Agnostics at Baylor face a similar situation.

One student, an agnostic senior from Sugar Land who also wished to remain anonymous, tries to avoid the issue altogether.

"I'm not hiding out of fear or shame, although the disappointment in the most fervent Christians' eyes is enough to make me try to reconsider," she said.

This student said her beliefs aren't often an issue. She, like other atheists and agnostics, doesn't believe that there is a certain set of characteristics that sets her apart from anyone.

"It's not like being a 'Baylor girl' in Sperrys and Nike shorts," she said.

She later admitted to wearing both.

These two students, like many other atheists and agnostics, felt uncomfortable publicly identifying themselves.

The Austin computer science major said in the past he has been more open about his atheism, but has recently backed off.

"The majority of people choose to judge me based on that [atheism] before they meet me, and I'd rather that not be the case — it's kind of annoying," he said.

Round Rock senior Erik Remkus has found another solution.

Remkus is the vice president of the Agnostic/Atheist Society, an unofficial student organi-

zation that gives atheists and agnostics a place to come together and socialize.

The organization meets from 9-11 p.m. every Monday and from 5:30-7 p.m. on Thursdays at Common Grounds. The group is open to any student that wants to participate, including students of faith.

Members come together to discuss a wide range of topics and support each other.

"It's mostly nice to talk with some like-minded people," Remkus said.

One of the challenges the group faces is finding possible members.

"There's only so much that we can do because we can't do the advertising — that's the big thing," Remkus said, "and in a very Christian-heavy environment, it is kind of odd to be like, 'Hello, are you an atheist?' You just can't do that."

Even with the support group, some members are reluctant to be open about their atheism. The Agnostic/Atheist Society's Facebook group is closed and private, and some atheists choose not to broadcast their beliefs because of the possibility of tension with members of the faculty or student body.

Some atheists hold work-study jobs and participate in other university programs, and have found that religion, or lack of religion, isn't a problem.

"When I worked for the physics department for two years, they did not know [about my beliefs]. It just never came up, but I suspect for some, they feel that it could be an issue," Remkus said.

Lori Fogleman, director of media communications at Baylor, said atheists and agnostics at Baylor aren't going to feel any official pressure.

"We have no policy on atheist students, but Baylor makes no secret about its mission or its values," Fogleman said. "Who we are is readily apparent on our website, in our materials and in our student recruitment visits."

But for the most part, students that identify as atheist or agnostic aren't any different from the rest of the student body. They don't mind chapel or the required religion classes any more than the average Baylor student. They go to class, football games and campus events.

At a religious institution whose mission is to educate "responsible citizens, educated leaders, dedicated scholars and skilled professionals," atheists and agnostics are just another part of the community.



# Baptist or Catholic? None of the above

BY ASHLEY YEAMAN  
REPORTER

When meeting fellow Baylor students, the question “Where do you go to church?” often comes up as frequently as questions about hometowns and majors.

Situated in the southern “Bible Belt” region and having historical Baptist roots, Christian beliefs at Baylor are a core component of life at college for many students.

More than 5,000 Baptist students attend Baylor, with Catholicism and non-denominational Christianity accounting for more than 4,000 students, according to Baylor’s Office of Institutional Research and Testing 2010 facts.

A small religious minority of about 400 also exists within the student body, which includes students who practice Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam and Judaism, among others.

Sugar Land junior Nevin Shah, a Jain, was initially concerned about coming to Baylor because of its Christian affiliation.

“When I came here for the tour, I thought, ‘I need to look at this honestly and see [if I] could come to campus and be successful, and be OK with the Christian environment,’” Shah said. “I mean, it’s everywhere, and you can’t really get away from it. But I didn’t feel that it was overbearing in any way.”

In making his decision to come to Baylor, Houston sophomore Ali Mohammad, a Muslim, respected the Christian aspect of the university.

“Christians are good people,” Mohammad said. “I figured at least I’d be in a place where morals and values would be upheld.”

Christian faith is directly incorporated into the core curriculum at Baylor, through two religion classes — Christian scriptures and Christian heritage — and Chapel.

Mohammad said for those not of the Christian tradition, these classes often pose challenges.

“It’s a little hard for people who have been studying different religious texts for so long,” Mohammad said. “There are a lot of things taught in the Bible and in religion classes that are different from things in the Quran ... Just small details. In the Quran we believe Solomon was a prophet, and I remember on a test once seeing ‘Who was Solomon?’ ‘Solomon was a prophet.’ ‘No, Solomon was a king.’ Things like that.”

Being at a Christian university poses challenges out of the classroom as well, such as finding a place to worship, Mohammad said. When living at Penland last year, Mohammad remembers contact information was given to students to connect with upperclassmen from Waco churches in order to have a ride to services.

“Well, they don’t consider that, possibly,

people of other faiths would like to do the same thing,” Mohammad said. “You know, maybe a bunch of Muslim students or Buddhist students or Jewish students would like to, maybe, get together. I think that Baylor should take a little more initiative in trying to help others practice their faith more openly and easily.”

Despite the challenges, students have found ways to embrace and strengthen their faith.

Mohammad is currently working to get other Muslim students together to pray on Fridays.

“Friday is considered to be the holiest day by all Muslims. The closest mosque is about two and a half miles from campus, and a lot of us Muslim students don’t have cars, so I’ve been trying to organize a Friday congregational prayer here,” Mohammad said. “I would really like to have it somewhere where we can get together and share our faith.”

Katy sophomore Mihir Bedre, a Hindu, said the Christian aspect of Baylor adds another perspective to the university, but he believes that other religion classes, such as world religions, should be incorporated into the curriculum as required courses.

“Better-educated students lead to a better rounded knowledge of the world and its various inhabitants,” Bedre said.

Bedre said he thinks world religions would make other students more aware of his faith.

“I do not want to call many students ignorant about my faith, but there is a fine line between ignorant and being oblivious,” Bedre said. “Many students do not know about Hinduism and its principles. I try my best to spread knowledge about my religion and culture, but one student can only do so much.”

Katy junior Beena Shah said she benefits from having conversations with her friends about religion.

“Often, I have engaging discussions with my friends about our personal views on [the] meaning of self and our presence,” Beena Shah said. “I like being educated on different religious views.”

Shah said such conversations have strengthened his faith during his time at Baylor.

“I really felt that I delved into my faith when I had to become more independent [in college], to figure out what do I think for myself versus what others think,” Shah said. “[It’s] just a part of maturing — my faith had to mature, too, and as I’m discussing it more and more, I feel like it’s strengthening.”

Discussions with others are also important for Midland senior David Wiseman, a Messianic Jew, because otherwise he finds many students lack knowledge on his religion.

“What I find is more than having misconceptions, people are just clueless,” Wiseman said. “Most people don’t even have a stereotype. For the most part, if someone has a clue at all,

## Not the norm

Baylor students report various religious affiliations

Islam	—	117
Hindu	—	98
Buddhist	—	74
Jewish	—	18

Source: Baylor Institutional Research and Testing

they’ve got generally the right idea. It’s an interesting dichotomy, where either people don’t have any idea, or they pretty much got the right idea and ask for clarification.”

Wiseman added he’s found unity with other minority religion followers at Baylor.

“I spent my entire first year — I hardly knew a Christian,” Wiseman said. “I hung out with Muslims and especially ISSA [Indian Subcontinent Student Association]. It was funny, because even though we weren’t the same faiths, we connected by not being part of the majority.”

It’s that spiritual atmosphere, whether Christian or non-Christian, that drew Jackson, Tenn., junior Isaac Lee to Baylor.

“That’s what I really like about Baylor. You get a faith dimension, and it’s also a great academic environment,” said Lee, who is also a Messianic Jew.

Lee said students’ ideas are not always ac-

curate. In his experiences at Baylor, people are often surprised to learn that he is Jewish because he is also Korean.

“It’s really hard, because they have a preconceived notion of what a Jew is or what a Jew looks like,” Lee said. “But the fact is, there are Jews from all different nationalities and races.”

Lee has come across some conflict when discussing his faith at times.

“We argue, and after that we come to an agreement that there is no agreement to make,” Lee said. “You believe what you believe, but I’ll still practice Judaism no matter what you say.”

Overall, Lee said he believes students, both Christians and non-Christians, are able to come together to discuss faith at Baylor freely.

“Whether you are a Jew or a Christian or a Buddhist or of Islam, you still have a right to see what you see,” Lee said. “I believe we are able to share. We can talk.”

# Go Greek. Or Don't. Either Way.

BY RACHEL AMBELANG  
STAFF WRITER

Greek life is a large part of the Baylor student's experience. According to the department of student activities, 25 percent of Baylor students participate in Greek life.

With more than 40 different sororities and fraternities to choose from, students are free to find a group that they relate to best. The rest of the student body interacts regularly with this community through the countless activities the different groups put on, whether the events are for service or entertainment.

Despite all of the opportunities that come with Greek life, many Baylor students refrain from joining. San Antonio junior David Dernier and Waco junior Ben Herndon have chosen not to join a fraternity even though both received invitations from friends to join. The two were asked for their thoughts on Greek life and why they decided not to get involved with it.

**Q: What are the reasons you do not want to be involved with Greek Life?**

**Dernier:** I don't feel the need to pay to have friends.

**Herndon:** I work 2 to 11 p.m. five days a week, so I don't really have time. Plus I wouldn't make it through all the pledge hazing thanks to my headstrong

smart mouth. That and the dues are ridiculous. I don't need to pay for friends, I have those, and they prank me all the time for free.

**Q: Do you think there's one common factor in why most students choose not to participate?**

**Dernier:** Obviously fraternities take up a lot of time because I never see my roommates, and I would love to ask them about exactly what they do but they're never around because they're busy with their fraternity stuff.

**Herndon:** Probably dues, time constraints, or fear of hazing.

**Q: What do you think is the main reason students do join the Greek community?**

**Herndon:** Probably so they have an easy way to meet people and make friends. That or they just love drama.

**Q: What are the positive outcomes you see from Greek Life?**

**Dernier:** The do seem to provide a lot of philanthropy opportunities, which is good for the community and a good experience for the students.

**Herndon:** [Greek life] does build a sense of friendship that will last.

**Q: Are there any negatives that come from having a Greek community at Baylor?**

**Herndon:** I suppose it would cause somewhat of a divide between Greek and non-Greek, as the Greeks are always busy doing their things, where the non-Greeks occupy their time in other ways at other places.

**Dernier:** I have two friends that rushed for the same frat. One of them got an invitation to join and the other didn't. The one that

didn't is a good guy, so I really think the only reason they didn't let him in was because they didn't think he was cool or something. That just doesn't make sense to me.

Two students who are currently involved with Greek life here at Baylor were also asked their opinion on the pros and cons of the Greek community. San Antonio junior Breanna Villani is a part of the sorority Zeta Tau Alpha, and San Antonio sophomore Joshua Bram is a Sigma Phi Epsilon member.

**Q: Why did you want to join the Greek community?**

**Bram:** I initially joined the Greek community for family purposes.

My cousin was in a fraternity, my uncle was in a fraternity and my dad was in a fraternity so I have grown up with the mentality that I want to join a fraternity.

**Villani:** I transferred to Baylor, and I didn't know anybody. So I thought, join a sorority it's a great way to meet new girls, but it's turned into much more than that. When I walked into that room I just felt at home. All the other girls were really nice and just like me.

**Q: What are the benefits that come with being a part of a frat or sorority to both the people who**

**join and to Baylor as a whole?**

**Bram:** I feel like the whole idea of fraternity (brotherhood) is the most beneficial aspect I've received from joining a fraternity. I know that any one of the guys in my fraternity have my back no matter what. As far as the benefits for the Baylor community, I feel like the Greek organizations have a responsibility to the student body to put on events run by student for student. Events put on by Greek organizations I feel help unite the student body, or at least is an attempt to.

**Q: What is your favorite part of being a part of being Greek?**

**Villani:** I really like [Zeta Tau Alpha's] philanthropy, Breast Cancer Education and Awareness.

**Bram:** My favorite part is just hanging out with the guys. They are my brothers and it's just always fun hanging out no matter what were doing.

**Q: Would you say that Greek life causes a divide among students who do and do not participate?**

**Bram:** I would say that it does but unnecessarily. Whether or not a person is Greek or not should not divide a student body still united under the same school name. Greek life, like any organization, has its secrets and range of members but should neither be raised on a pedestal nor should it be put down.

[Greek life] is a social brotherhood that runs deep within those in the fraternity or sorority.



Breanna Villani

PHOTOS BY MATT HELLMAN | LARIAT PHOTO EDITOR



Ben Herndon

# Baylor fashion is awesome and original! O-M-G!

By JESSICA FOREMAN  
REPORTER

Nike shorts are everywhere. We get it. That fashion faux pas has been around for years and everyone has made their comment. Sperrys, V-necks and leggings under Nike shorts can even be dismissed as a part of Baylor fashion that has not run its trend out just yet. But can the XXL T-shirts, side pony tails and cankle-covering socks have their time in the limelight critique?

Within the past few weeks, campus has gained momentum with this curious trend. The tall socks, reaching about mid-calf, take the "I don't care look" to a new level of cool with a '70s twist. The side ponytail is a bold accomplice.

At least David Yurman and Burberry scarves look good with everything.

Baylor fashion stereotypes are prevalent to anyone walking around campus for a day. The number of people that adopt a particular fashion is noticeable, and happens in a short amount of time. College attire is a style that takes over any undergraduate's wardrobe. Think sweat-

pants, university tees, all-nighters.

But Baylor fashion is even more distinct than that. Nowadays, it seems like the only original fashion attire can be found in Common Grounds.

At least the recent visor trend among Baylor's male population visually communicates chic. There is nothing wrong with filtering out those bright business school fluorescents throughout the day. Imagine the headaches avoided. Better yet, stick with the all-day-with-my-Ray look and just go for sunglasses indoors. Ray-Ban is classic; Wayfarers are Diadeloso. Put them together and it just makes sense that the blend would be a successful look.

REI also has prominent advertising around Baylor's campus, as students are fashioned in North Face, Columbia and camping backpacks that allow anyone to take on classroom culture fully prepared.

Good advice to follow on Easter holiday would be to check out the new pastel line of PFG (Performance Fishing Gear) shirts, however the look is appropriate for any other regular school

day. Make sure to pick up khakis to complete the ensemble.

If a store visit to a local sporting goods department is in the near future to pick up the necessities listed above, UGG boots should be in stock as well. It is beginning to be that time of the year where boots and shorts harmonize to make the perfect comfortable temperature. However, November weather is unpredictable. Is it time to put the Tory Burch ballet flats away, or are they an all-year-long kind of thing like fleece vests inappropriately seem to be?

At least one thing is for certain, and that is how easily students can be identified these days. Thank goodness for the personalization of Jon Hart.

But even more important, thank goodness for a campus full of humanitarians.

The One for One campaign has children all over the world fashioned in TOMS shoes because of Baylor students. The numbers are in the thousands. If only Sperry's could launch a philanthropy.

As a campus, students have almost com-

pletely ditched the Nike shorts and leggings look and just kept the leggings. Arguably, this is a better look. So what if the leggings leave less to the imagination?

It just makes sense to not wear pants if it has become unnecessary; think of the comfort.

Baylor fashion is a stereotype that exists because it is an irrefutable campus characteristic, as proved by a walk through Fountain Mall. There is much diversity embraced throughout campus, no doubt about that; however, trends are inescapably loud.

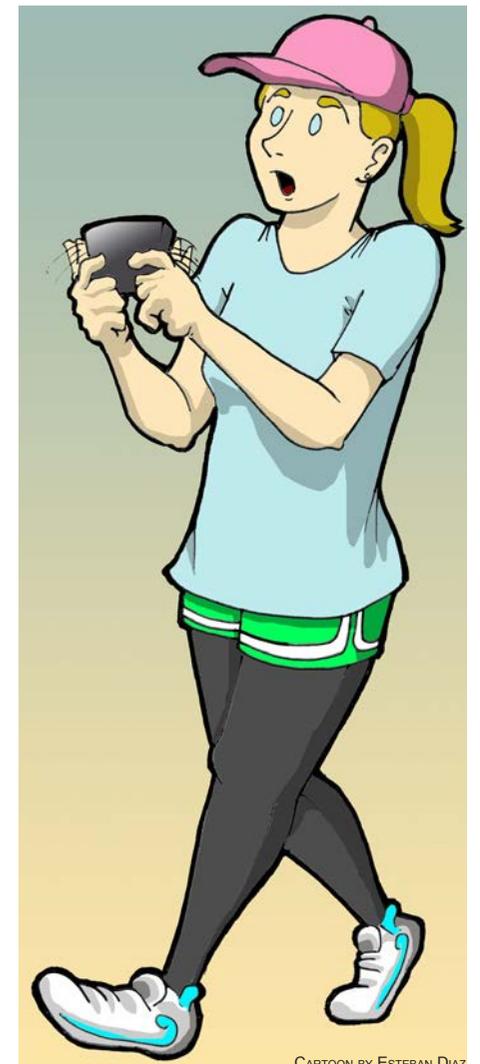
Individuality is expressed in dress. Appearance is a communication tool, telling much about background, personality, formality and mood. The first impression is always visual, and appearance does matter, especially during the transition from college to the business world.

The high socks can be a positive reminder of how individuality is wonderful when embraced. If all else fails, let the person next to you know how their Nike shorts compliment their hair, eyes, T-shirt, Vera Bradley handbag. Compliments are always in fashion.



MATT HELLMAN | LARIAT PHOTO EDITOR

From left: Ashley Fletcher, Ashley Adams, Libby Zoldak, Kendall Lovett and Krista Stephens stand outside Moody Library in clothing female students can characteristically be found wearing on campus. The stereotypical Baylor girl's outfit often includes athletic shorts and university apparel.



CARTOON BY ESTEBAN DIAZ

# Students burst 'Baylor Bubble' ...others stay in 1845

By JADE MARDIROSIAN  
STAFF WRITER

Baylor has more than 15 official student organizations dedicated specifically to service, numerous fraternities and sororities that require members to volunteer, and various other opportunities for students to get out into the community and lend a helping hand. However, not all students choose to actively volunteer in the community.

For Lantana junior Janice Wong, service organizations like Steppin' Out and Campus Kitchen are a good fit for getting involved in the community. Wong is on the steering committee for Steppin' Out, which organizes a day each semester for volunteering throughout the community with various projects, and includes about 2,000-3,000 student volunteer participants.

"The mission [of Steppin' Out] is to raise awareness for students to see what Waco is like and how they can serve practically," Wong said. "[Steppin' Out] also [works] to unify students and help establish leadership in students, while giving them a taste of what service is really like."

Wong also volunteers once a week or every two weeks, depending on her schedule, with Campus Kitchen, which grows and cooks food and distributes it to various agencies in the community.

About 360 students are registered volunteers with Campus Kitchen, and there are service op-

portunities Monday through Friday.

Chico junior Jacob Creighton volunteers through Alpha Phi Omega, which is a co-ed service fraternity. A certain number of service hours are required of its members for every semester and there are different volunteer opportunities throughout the week, which allows members to choose a project that fits their schedule and interests.

Service projects range all across the board and include opportunities with Fuzzy Friends Animal Shelter, Crestview Retirement Home, Habitat for Humanity, World Hunger Relief Farm and Mission Waco, among others.

"I try to [volunteer] at the hunger relief farm," Creighton said. "I really enjoy that project. It's getting your hands dirty and I enjoy that kind of manual labor."

Creighton said he joined Alpha Phi Omega because of its diverse group of members and its service-oriented commitment.

"For me, it was important to find a group of people I could get to know and it was important to me for it to be a diverse group of people who were all interested in giving back," Creighton said. "We get the benefits of giving back to the community and the pleasure of having a brotherhood and a good group of people."

Mary Katherine Van Hook, project manager and placement coordinator for community engagement, service, and scholarship, said that according to the department of Student Life, nearly 10,000 students are actively involved in



MEAGAN DOWNING | LARIAT PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of Steppin' Out prepare to work on a blind widow's house on Oct. 29. Steppin' Out is one of several organizations at Baylor that allows students to volunteer in the community.

volunteering in the community for a total of more than 60,000 hours annually. Van Hook said since students are beginning to hear about the community engagement, service and scholarship office, more are coming by looking for opportunities to get involved.

"We've seen individual students come in and ask for different volunteer and service opportunities and we also hear from organizations as a whole who are interested and really just want a better way to learn about these opportunities in the community, and that's where our office comes in," Van Hook said.

Van Hook said the office has students answer a few questions related to their interests and availability in order to match them with an organization they can best serve. Van Hook said the office works directly with many local organizations, including Meals on Wheels, Texas Hunger Initiative, several food pantries and different churches.

"We are trying to help out the niches [in the community] that haven't been filled yet, and that students haven't heard about," Van Hook said.

However, not all Baylor students feel compelled to volunteer or are able to find the time to get involved in the community.

Joshua junior Colton Dearing works as a tutor at Brook Avenue Elementary School two days a week, but is not a volunteer since he is paid. He said although he enjoys working as a mentor in the community, he does not get the chance to volunteer in Waco.

"I have no time; I work 10 hours a week and have classes," Dearing said. "The weekends are my time to relax."

Coppell senior Brad Parker does not volunteer in the Waco community, although he is involved in the Coppell community.

"I'm more apt to volunteer in my home community," Parker said.

Although he has been at Baylor for four years, Parker said he has never found a service organization he was compelled to get involved with.

"For the first several semesters of school, I was merely very lazy," Parker said. "I am probably more inclined to do something [to volunteer] these days, but accounting kind of rules my life so I pretty much only have time for that and just a little bit of extra time for relaxation."

Although he does not volunteer, Parker said that he thinks Baylor students are eager to volunteer in the community.

"As a whole, Baylor students seem quite willing to help out and give a hand, but maybe that is just because we live in Waco," Parker said. "Waco is pretty clearly impoverished and even kind of walking around the outskirts of campus you can see the effects of it."

Parker said since many students at Baylor come from middle class families, it could be a culture shock to come to Waco and see the poverty-stricken parts of the city.

"I guess that compels a lot of people to want to help out [in the community]," Parker said.

# Dancing in the streets

## Traces of 151-year-long ban no longer affect students who like to boogie

BY KRISTA PIRTLE  
SPORTS WRITER

With people doing the Bernie, Dougie and learning how to wobble, it might be hard to believe that the Baylor dance ban was lifted only 15 years ago.

Because of the close ties between Baylor and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, dancing was viewed as a sin.

But this assumption wasn't made on the grounds of the music engulfing the atmosphere or the types of dancing that could ensue.

"What happened was, all the things around drinking came to be thought of as sinful," Dr. Burt Burleson, university chaplain, said. "For instance, if you went to the honky tonk to drink, that's where you also went to dance. So dancing became problematic."

There was an old saying about this particular issue: "Baptists don't smoke, drink, dance, chew or associate with those that do."

The ban itself arose from the sense of parenthood the university claims over its students.

As a private and religiously affiliated school, the officials believed that in order for its students to flourish, boundaries needed to be set.

"Baylor, in some sense, is akin to a community, a family, in that we try to provide a sense of boundary and I think that probably... if you went to a completely secular school, then they would say it's not our business to create boundaries," Burleson said. "Baylor would say that would be irresponsible as a community. But here we're going to say what it means to reflect a wholeness and create boundaries for that."

The boundaries reflect the sense of a private university, but the beliefs bring in the Christian values.

"By claiming Baptist beliefs and Christian values, Baylor wants to shape its students and guide them in a light pleasing to God," Burleson said.

For dancing to separate itself from its negative connotations, progress had to be made, something that took place over generations.

At Baylor, students came wanting to dance.

But the "d" word was not used on campus. The proper term was "foot functions."

So students at Baylor loved to (d-word).

Fraternities and sororities would travel up to 100 miles away to hold foot functions. However, the safety of their travel was an issue that aroused as the ban was on the verge of being overturned.

"In 1991, we changed our charter for the very first time so that our regents were more self-appointed," Burleson said. "Twenty-five percent are still appointed by the BGCT. That's a real interesting move, saying we are no longer owned and operated by, but more of a partnership with."

Because this happened, the influence the BGCT

had on Baylor was slowly loosened.

Five years later at Diadeloso, Baylor President Robert Sloan Jr., clad in a tuxedo, danced with his wife, Sue, in a sequined evening gown in the middle of Fifth Street to a Beethoven minuet before breaking out in the jitterbug to "In the Mood."

This action brought in news cameras from all over the nation and was a symbolic overturning of the 151-year dance ban.

Nowadays, dances on campus are easy to come by.

In September, Pi Beta Phi hosted the 50th anniversary of the Howdy dance on campus in the Burleson Quadrangle. For many years, the dance was held off-campus, but with the repeal of the dance ban, such events are now commonplace on campus.

"Getting a dance approved on campus is just like getting any other event approved on campus," Houston senior Zach Rogers, student body president, said. "It's just like setting up a dinner on campus. There is no specification between a dance and any other event."

Because of the southern Baptist views on dancing and its sinful implications for so many years, the ban had been enforced for the betterment of the students. Now, Baylor sees no harm in dancing.

"Baylor is trying to be a place of spiritual wholeness, and how that looks changes throughout the years," Burleson said. "Baylor is responding to the culture, but we're evolving in what it looks like to be followers of Christ."

Just like parents letting their children go off to college, Baylor began to see the need to give its students some room for trial and error, to grow and find themselves.

Today, students don't see dancing as a very serious issue. Dancing is just dancing to them.

"Back in the day, it used to be a huge deal, but it's just not an issue to most of us kids anymore," said Quitaque sophomore Lauren Young, who was a member of her high school's dance team. "We get to have dances on campus and it's no big deal."

The negative connotation of dance has been replaced with the understanding that it is a way of life, offering an escape from the real world, if only for a little while.

"Dancing allows me to express myself in ways that speaking can't," Cortez, Colo., junior Lauren Houser said. "It communicates those emotions that are too big and too real to fit into words."

Instead of being a battle with authority for self-expression, dancing has become more of an afterthought.

Baylor tried to break the zumba world record this year at Fountain Mall, Howdy was held in the Quad, the Zeta Zigma Zamma's Kool-Aid man is everywhere and you just might see Dr. Burleson dancing in chapel.



JED DEAN | LARIAT FILE PHOTO

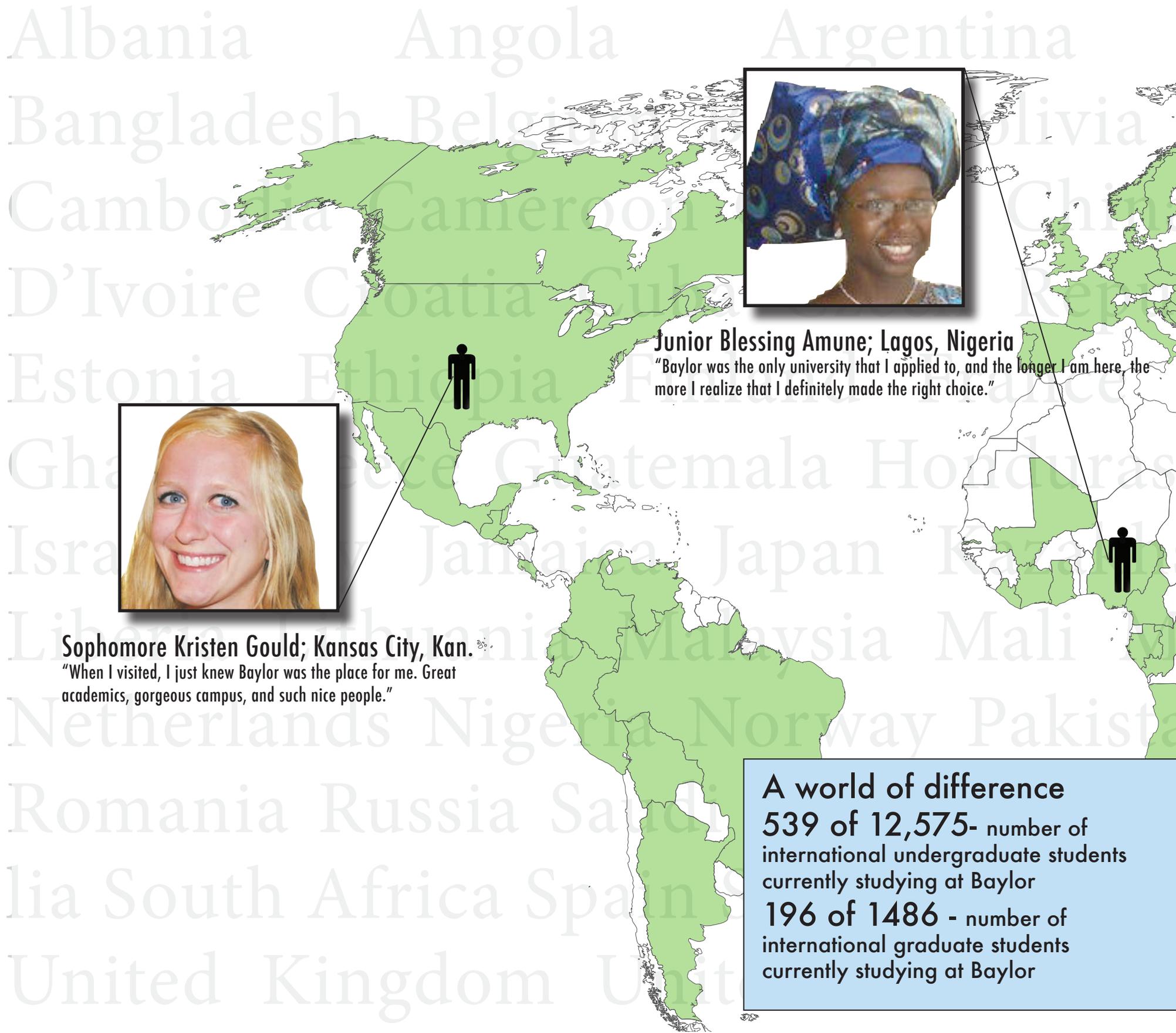
Students, faculty and members of the Waco community come together on Fountain Mall in an attempt to beat the world record for the largest Zumba class Thursday during Diadeloso. More than 600 people were in attendance for the fast-paced, 30-minute dance workout, and proceeds went to fund the Baylor accounting vocational mission trip team's summer trip to Uganda.



MAKENZIE MASON | ROUND UP PHOTO EDITOR

During Baylor's 2011 Extravaganza celebration on Nov. 4, 2011, students of the class of 2013 participate in the "Cupid Shuffle" at Fountain Mall before the bonfire and pep rally.

# Green and Gold A



**Sophomore Kristen Gould; Kansas City, Kan.**  
"When I visited, I just knew Baylor was the place for me. Great academics, gorgeous campus, and such nice people."



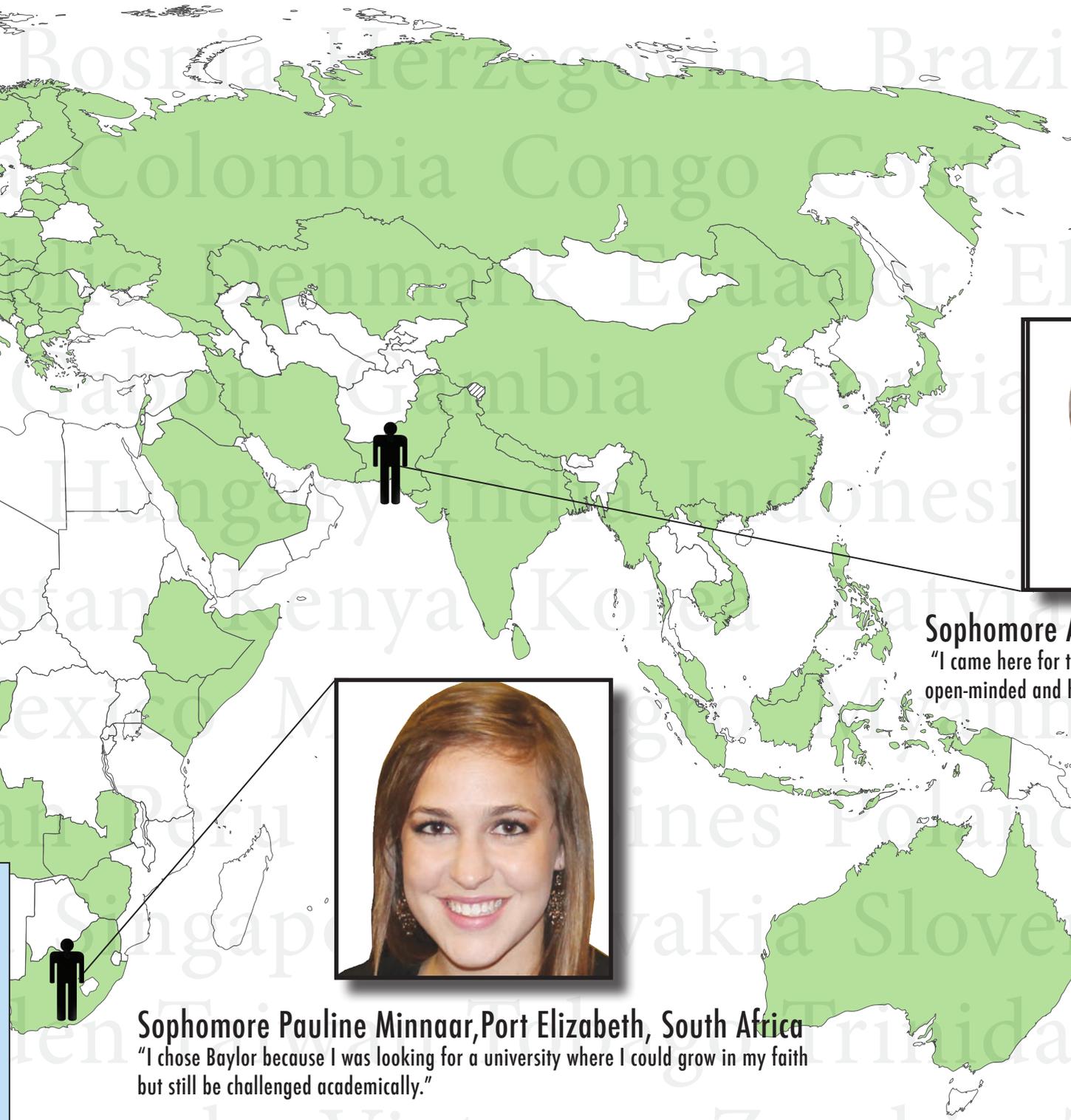
**Junior Blessing Amune; Lagos, Nigeria**  
"Baylor was the only university that I applied to, and the longer I am here, the more I realize that I definitely made the right choice."

**A world of difference**  
539 of 12,575- number of international undergraduate students currently studying at Baylor  
196 of 1486 - number of international graduate students currently studying at Baylor

# Afar

## Baylor students around the world

Armenia Australia Bahamas  
Bosnia and Herzegovina Brazil Bulgaria  
Colombia Congo Costa Rica Cote  
Denmark Ecuador El Salvador  
Gambia Georgia Germany  
Hungary India Indonesia Iraq  
Iran Israel Italy Japan Jordan  
Kenya Korea Kuwait Malaysia  
Mexico Monaco Myanmar Nepal  
Peru Philippines Poland Portugal  
Romania Slovakia Slovenia Soma-  
lia Trinidad and Tobago Ukraine  
Venezuela Vietnam Zambia Zimbabwe



**Sophomore Azeem Malik; Karachi, Pakistan**  
"I came here for the great student body, which I think is more open-minded and has more integrity than many secular institutions."



**Sophomore Pauline Minnaar, Port Elizabeth, South Africa**  
"I chose Baylor because I was looking for a university where I could grow in my faith but still be challenged academically."



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATT HELLMAN | LARIAT PHOTO EDITOR

# Pre-Med students predominate freshman class

## Students continuously flood undergraduate program, feeding stereotype that only future doctors attend Baylor

By JENNIFER KANG  
REPORTER

When others hear of students going to Baylor, the first question asked is often, “Are you going to be a doctor?” But what many fail to realize is that the university has much more to offer and Baylor students go into a variety of fields besides pre-med.

About 1,200 students come into Baylor each year designated pre-med, but only around 200 apply to medical school in their junior year, Linda Haynes, program manager of pre-health studies, said.

“This means that a thousand of those students change their mind,” Haynes said. “Either they’ll change their mind and apply to a different kind of professional school, like a physical therapy school, or they decide they don’t want to be in health care at all.”

Many students graduate from high school thinking they will become a doctor because they enjoyed science and are exposed to more science classes than other subjects, Dr. Richard Sanker, director of pre-health studies, said.

“It’s a natural inclination for a lot of high school students because science is so emphasized at the secondary level,” Sanker said. “But

when they come to college, they get a different quality of science. It’s a little bit more professional and a little bit more intense, and many people discover that it’s not something they enjoy or want to continue to pursue.”

The Woodlands senior Corbin Goerlich came to Baylor with the intention of doing pre-med and business. He is still a pre-med student, but has noticed that many people have switched out of pre-med.

“They just discover something that they like more,” Goerlich said. “They’ll realize that they aren’t cut out for pre-med or it just wasn’t their passion to begin with, so they do something else.”

Although many students switch out of pre-med because of the pressure from classes, Goerlich said he was able to get through the tougher times because he knew he wanted to become a physician.

“It crosses my mind every once in awhile — ‘why am I doing this?’ — but there’s always this affirmation that what I want to become is a doctor,” Goerlich said. “It’s not an easy road and those things cross your mind, but never really materialized more than just a thought.”

Goerlich, president of Medical Service Organization (MSO), said there is no pressure from

the science department to stay with pre-med and that many pre-health organizations help shape pre-med students in their career ambitions and experiences.

“MSO is an organization centered around serving Baylor and the surrounding community through medical awareness, service and training,” Goerlich said. “Since joining as a freshman, MSO has grown substantially and become an integral part in shaping my experience as a pre-med student.”

Like many students who feel pressure from their parents, The Woodlands sophomore Lauren Brubaker started at Baylor as a business major because of her parents’ request for her to have a business background before going into dentistry. She took a few classes but felt no interest in business and changed to biology and pre-dent.

“I knew that I always wanted to do something in the health care field,” Brubaker said. “Baylor is a good community for health care. It’s small enough where you can meet the professors and everyone is so personal.”

Two students, Southlake sophomore Trent Miller, accounting and management information systems major, and Houston senior Britany Thompson, sociology major, found their

dreams of being doctors were replaced by more realistic, hands-on opportunities at Baylor.

“I thought that being a doctor was the way to go,” Miller said. “I decided in my senior year of high school and after a year of it at Baylor, I wasn’t so sure.”

Miller added on a business minor after his first semester at Baylor and received an all-expense-paid trip to visit the ConocoPhillips Headquarters when he won the ConocoPhillips Student Leader Award, a competition he entered after a suggestion from his management information systems professor.

“I felt as if business was more where I needed to be,” Miller said. “I enjoyed studying the sciences, but I didn’t know if eight years of schooling plus residency was actually something I wanted to do after seeing all that I could do at the business school.”

Thompson’s parents, like many others, wanted her to be pre-med and it was her dream to become a doctor. But after taking science classes and doing an internship, she said she realized she wasn’t happy in the field.

“I love my current major because it’s more interesting,” Thompson said. “I started the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core and I realized that I really like to study people and sociology.”

# Scholarship requirements send many students packing

By DANIEL C. HOUSTON  
STAFF WRITER

Of 3,259 first-time freshmen who set foot on campus in the fall 2010 semester, 476 opted not to return for their sophomore year, according to Baylor's Office of Institutional Research and Testing. While some assume students leave because their scholarship packages fail to keep up with rising tuition costs, data compiled by the office of the provost indicate people leave for a variety of reasons, some of which supersede or exacerbate financial difficulties.

In an effort to analyze the most effective ways to boost student retention rates, the university has been working to isolate significant variables that might affect a student's decision to return, said Dr. Sinda Vanderpool, assistant vice provost for enrollment management.

"We actually did logistical regression where you basically compare like students to each other and see which individual factors rise to the top," Vanderpool said. "We never found that finances were a single factor that rises to the top when you're doing logistical modeling. That was surprising to all of us."

Vanderpool said the factor isolated most frequently with regard to retention rates is a student's first-semester grade point average. She did not entirely rule out the impact finances can have on a student's decision.

Vanderpool said many financial difficulties students face are the result of academic performance, which can influence the number of merit-based scholarships for which students are eligible.

"The finances have an impact [on retention], but they come up because of academic performance," Vanderpool said.

Last year, 8,053 undergraduate students — or 66.1 percent of the total undergraduate population — applied for financial aid. Of those applicants, 57.4 percent were found to have financial need, and nearly two-thirds of the average amount needed per student were satisfied by various scholarships and loans.

In total, 6,986 undergraduate students received financial aid in the 2010-2011 academic year, and 6,051 received merit-based scholarships, which typically require the recipient to maintain a minimum-GPA requirement in order to keep the award.

Although academic performance appears to be a key influencing factor, not all students who leave Baylor for academic reasons are failing academically.

In some circumstances, a student may fall short of retaining a scholarship by failing to meet GPA requirements established by the university.

Upon the first instance of students dropping below the average required, they are placed on academic probation, during which time they are given the opportunity to raise their grades and



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATT HELLMAN | LARIAT PHOTO EDITOR

keep their scholarship. If the student is unable to raise his or her grades, the scholarship may be lost.

When students lose scholarships for this reason, they may be circumstantially forced to leave Baylor despite having higher grades than many of their peers, as in the case of former Fort Worth Baylor student Tim Reed.

Reed attended Baylor for five semesters on a scholarship that required him to keep a 3.5

GPA. At one point, Reed fell below the 3.5 GPA required to keep his scholarship but was able to raise his grades and keep his scholarship during the probation period. After his grades subsequently slipped below 3.5 for a second time, he lost his scholarship and financial ability to continue his education at Baylor.

"It was pretty rough," Reed said. "I was disappointed in myself for letting that happen ... I was just also upset because I had a lot of re-

ally close friends at Baylor and I wasn't ready to leave. I didn't want to leave Baylor because ... the campus life was a really important thing for me and I wasn't ready for that to be over."

Vanderpool said a student's involvement on campus is another significant factor that can influence retention, pointing to data that indicates students who participate in on-campus student organizations and university programs are significantly less likely to leave.



a

Littlefield senior Damian Miller  
Ambika Singh | Lariat Photographer



Hankamer junior Samuel Allmon  
Matt Hellman | Lariat Photo Editor

b



Houston junior Christoph Ross  
Matt Hellman | Lariat Photo Editor

c

How do  
you feel  
about your  
wheels?

"It won't get me any ladies, but it gets me 35 mpg so I don't mind." 1

"I love it. It's fuel efficient and I can park practically anywhere." 2



Georgetown senior  
Daniel Thomasson  
Matt Hellman | Lariat Photo Editor

**"My \_\_\_ runs like a dream. She may not be the best, but she gets me where I need to go and in style too." 3**

**"Once I got good at it, \_\_\_ turned out to be a lot of fun and became a pretty efficient means of transportation." 4**

**"I like to \_\_\_ in the Baylor Sciences Building parking garage." 5**



Kilgore senior Jed Deatt  
Matt Hellman | Lariat Photo Editor

# Cyberspace holds relationships together, no matter the distance

By ROBYN SANDERS  
REPORTER

With the help of modern technology, many student relationships are held together across long distances with date nights being replaced by phone calls or Skype sessions.

For some Baylor students, a Skype date is the only way they can see their significant other every day.

Spicewood senior Brie Daniels and her fiancé, Jad Ghaleb, have been together for nearly two and a half years. They got engaged last summer, but are 6,980 miles apart because he lives in Lebanon.

Following Daniels' graduation from Baylor in May, she will move to Lebanon, where they will have the wedding.

Despite the potentially intimidating factor of moving to the opposite side of the globe, Daniels said she is not anxious about any of the cultural differences.

"They really all excite me," Daniels said.

But for the past two years, Daniels has only been able to visit her fiancé during the summer.

Corpus Christi senior Abigail Pitzer is able to see her long-distance fiancé only slightly more often than Daniels.

Pitzer's fiancé, Nick Youngstrom, attends Hillsdale College in Michigan, but is currently living in Washington, D.C., and working as an intern at the Capitol.

They visit each other only during the summer and Christmas holidays, but she was also able to visit him during spring break in March, when he proposed.

Now they are planning a wedding from opposite sides of the country.

The couple met in 2008 at Summit Ministries, a youth leadership seminar in Colorado, and started dating a few months afterward.

For the last three years, they have developed their relationship through Skype and phone calls.

To maintain their relationship, they stay in constant contact in lieu of being able to go on dates, Pitzer said.

"Any time we want to spend time together, it pretty much has to be spent talking," Pitzer said. "We text most of the day and Skype for at least an hour every day and call to say goodnight."

Morro Bay, Calif., senior Jonathan Coss makes daily conversations with his long-distance girlfriend a priority as well, thanks to phone calls and video chats.

"We're able to connect every night before we go to bed," Coss said.

Coss got to know his girlfriend, Robin Lindsey, on a mission trip to Morocco after his sophomore year at Baylor, and they started dating six months ago.

She is studying nursing at Trinity Valley



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MEAGAN DOWNING | PHOTOGRAPHER

Community College in Athens, Texas.

"She had tons of ridiculously awesome qualities," Coss said. "We started dating knowing it was going to be long-distance."

Coss said they've been able to see each other every weekend, and because they live in different places, they have two communities of friends to keep up with, in addition to maintaining their own relationship.

"Just like any relationship, it takes time and energy," Coss said. "We're very intentional in honoring and valuing our friends."

Bellaire senior Mattie Marion is no stranger balancing friendships and a relationship.

She and her boyfriend have known each other since they were 4 years old.

The couple dated for a few years while they were in high school, and then started dating again in March 2010.

He graduated from Texas Christian University last year and now lives in Houston. Marion said they see each other about two weekends every month; on weekends when he comes to visit, she makes him her priority.

"There's definitely been weekends where I've not hung out with friends because it's my one chance to see him," Marion said. "But it's nice when I get to spend time with my friends dur-

ing the week, and then I'll get to really focus on hanging out with him whenever he gets to come up."

Pitzer said being in a relationship at all affects your social life, and that is even truer with a long-distance relationship.

**The biggest challenge is a longing to see her. I just trust the Lord to be there and to comfort her.**

"Your social life in general is affected when you're in a relationship because you're no longer looking for a significant other," Pitzer said. "It requires time separate of your social life to have a long-distance relationship, and they can't really intermix, therefore it takes time away from your daily social life. You have to spend time either on the phone or on Skype."

Daniels said she and her fiancé still make communication a huge priority, even though Lebanon is eight hours ahead of Waco, and that

the biggest challenge in a long-distance relationship is depending on Skype to spend time with him.

"There's times when I actually hate Skype because I can see him but I can't hug him, and it's really frustrating," Daniels said.

Although Coss and his fiancé are able to see each other on weekends, Coss said there are times during the week that he has a free moment he wishes he could spend with his girlfriend, or times when she's going through a rough time and he wishes he could be there for her.

"The biggest challenge is a longing to see her," Coss said. "I just trust the Lord to be there and to comfort her."

For Marion, good communication means making her boyfriend a priority while she's talking to him.

"Whenever I'm talking to him, I'm not watching TV, or on the computer or like having a side-conversation with somebody else," Marion said.

Whether the distance to their significant other is a few hundred miles, or a few thousand, daily phone calls and video chats help to close the distance for all four couples.

"Technology is the best," Coss said. "I can't imagine the letter-writing days."

# Finding a light

LGBTQ students overcome loneliness, uncertainty in search for a home at Baylor

By JORDAN HEARNE  
REPORTER

Some students feel that the standard of equality and normalcy at Baylor stops at sexual orientation.

Adam Short, a homosexual Baylor student, had a slow beginning to his college career.

"Initially, I was really, really, really, lonely. It was hard to not really have anyone to talk to," he said. "I felt forced into isolation."

Short, a Fort Collins, Colo., sophomore, is one of a number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students at Baylor.

While his personal experience at Baylor has been largely positive, he said he believes the biggest issue Baylor has in conjunction with the LGBTQ students is isolation. He said a lack of acknowledgement from the university has caused incoming students struggling with their sexual identity to feel like they have no support.

"They should go to the counseling center, but they don't know that. One person last year

was afraid that if they went to a counselor they would be expelled," Short said.

Short's experience led to the formation of the Sexual Identity Forum (SIF), an unofficial group of LGBTQ students at Baylor, of which Short is the president.

Austin senior Kyneshawau Hurd had an experience on Baylor's campus that stuck out in her mind. While walking with a female friend her freshman year – someone who was not her partner nor romantically involved with her – four male students drove by in an SUV and taunted the women.

"First of all, they almost hit us, and then they rolled down the window and started screaming 'Lesbians! Dykes!'" Hurd said.

She said the instance made it even more difficult to eventually come out as a homosexual student, but facing these types of adversities would eventually build character.

"So throughout all the negative experiences came a positive," Hurd said.

Short said his personal encounters with Bay-

lor students have been friendly. Last April, after a New York Times article discussing LGBTQ groups on Christian college campuses publicly identified Short as a gay student, he was nervous about the reaction.

"I was walking through the parking lot and these big frat guys came up to me and recognized me from the article," Short said. "I was worried, but they were very friendly."

The New York Times article named other universities where students have had difficulties living as LGBTQ students. Amanda Lee Genaro was expelled from North Central University in Minneapolis after being more open about her homosexuality and would only be able to re-apply for admission if she would reject being a lesbian.

At Harding University, administrators blocked a website that discussed the experiences of its gay students.

As to how the general Baylor student population sees LGBTQ students, Short said he believes students view homosexuality and the like

as a subject they will never have to deal with nor take a stand for.

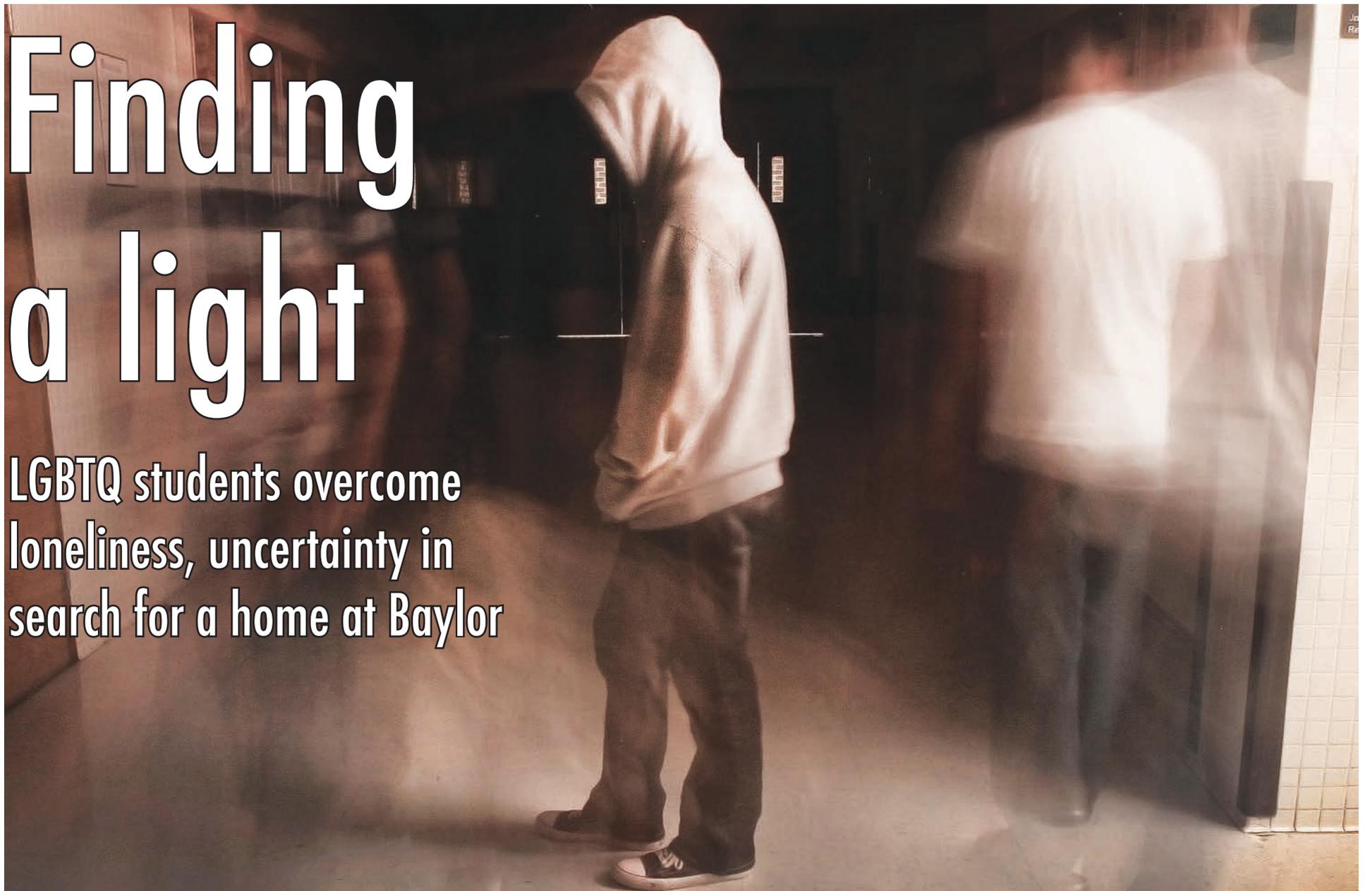
"They should try to get used to it now. When they go out in the real world, they will have gay co-workers and customers and won't just be able to ignore it," Short said.

Hurd said she wants the Baylor community to understand that LGBTQ students are no different from other students.

"It's really weird when people find out 'What? You're not straight?' They completely change how they feel and view me, but I'm the same person you've known for years," Hurd said. "You just learned something different about me. We're not not typical. We are the typical Baylor student."

The Sexual Identity Forum is expected to apply to become a chartered organization after being denied by the university last semester.

Baylor's policy on human sexuality considers heterosexual sex outside of marriage and homosexual behavior deviations from proper sexual behavior.



# From Pat Neff bells to wedding bells

## Juggling academics, wedding plans gives college life an interesting twist

By ANNA FLAGG  
REPORTER

Life can be drastically different at Baylor depending on your relationship status.

Being single or being married can mean different stages of life, but it also adds to the variety and diversity that makes up the Baylor student body.

The “ring by spring” mentality can sometimes have a negative connotation, but many women on campus have learned to deal with the “MRS degree” stereotype.

Elizabethtown, Pa., senior Katie Nilsen Johnson came far from her home of Pennsylvania to attend Baylor with the plan that she would not date during school, much less get engaged.

After a break-up her senior year of high school, she said she decided that in college she wanted to focus fully on school, friends and her commitments at Baylor, without the distraction of a boyfriend.

Then Katie met Grant Johnson, a graduate student at the time, in the Baylor Bookstore as she was buying books for her freshman year.

After reconnecting a few months later while he was deejaying an event, she realized she might just have to break her plans of staying single.

A year and a half later, the summer after her sophomore year, he proposed in her hometown in Pennsylvania. They have now been married for three months, and Katie has learned to deal with people’s opinions on their marriage.

“The people who really know the both of us know that we thought about it and didn’t rush in,” Katie said. “The people we weren’t as close to were not as supportive because they thought he was too old for me or that I wouldn’t finish out my degree.”

Grant works in Waco while Katie is finishing school. Nilsen said it has been somewhat of an adjustment to go from dating to being married in college, but they try to maintain a balance by still making time to spend with their own friends as well as together.

“I think at Baylor there is the ring by spring saying that can give off a negative connotation,” Katie said. “While I see how it could be a bad idea for some people to get married young, it just depends on the individuals as well as the situation. It just worked out better for us to get married, but it isn’t for everyone.”

McKinney senior Alison Sheffer came to Baylor freshly out of a long-term high school relationship, also thinking she would be the last person on earth to be engaged in college.

“My parents raised me to be an independent

person, and I didn’t think I wanted to marry until way after college,” Sheffer said.

But after her high school boyfriend, Nick, who attends the University of Arkansas, began pursuing Sheffer again, she realized that what they had was irreplaceable.

After dating for a year and a half, he proposed during the summer of 2011 below the lit Eiffel tower. They will be getting married after her graduation in May.

Sheffer said she was one of those people who thought college was too early to be engaged, and she understands how some people could have ill feelings toward her early engagement.

She has now realized that everyone’s situation is different and said she is glad that her closest friends and her family have been supportive, even if they are not in the same boat as her.

**While I see how it could be a bad idea for some people to get married young, it just depends on the individuals as well as the situation. It just worked out better for us to get married, but it isn’t for everyone.**

Like Sheffer, Spring senior Meredith Baker began her journey at Baylor knowing she wanted to build lifelong friendships first and foremost.

After meeting her now-fiance, Brandon, they became best friends and began dating shortly after. They dated for three years before getting engaged Oct. 29 on a Baylor swing.

Baker said even though she came to Baylor thinking she would not be engaged during school, she realizes that her plans are not always God’s plans.

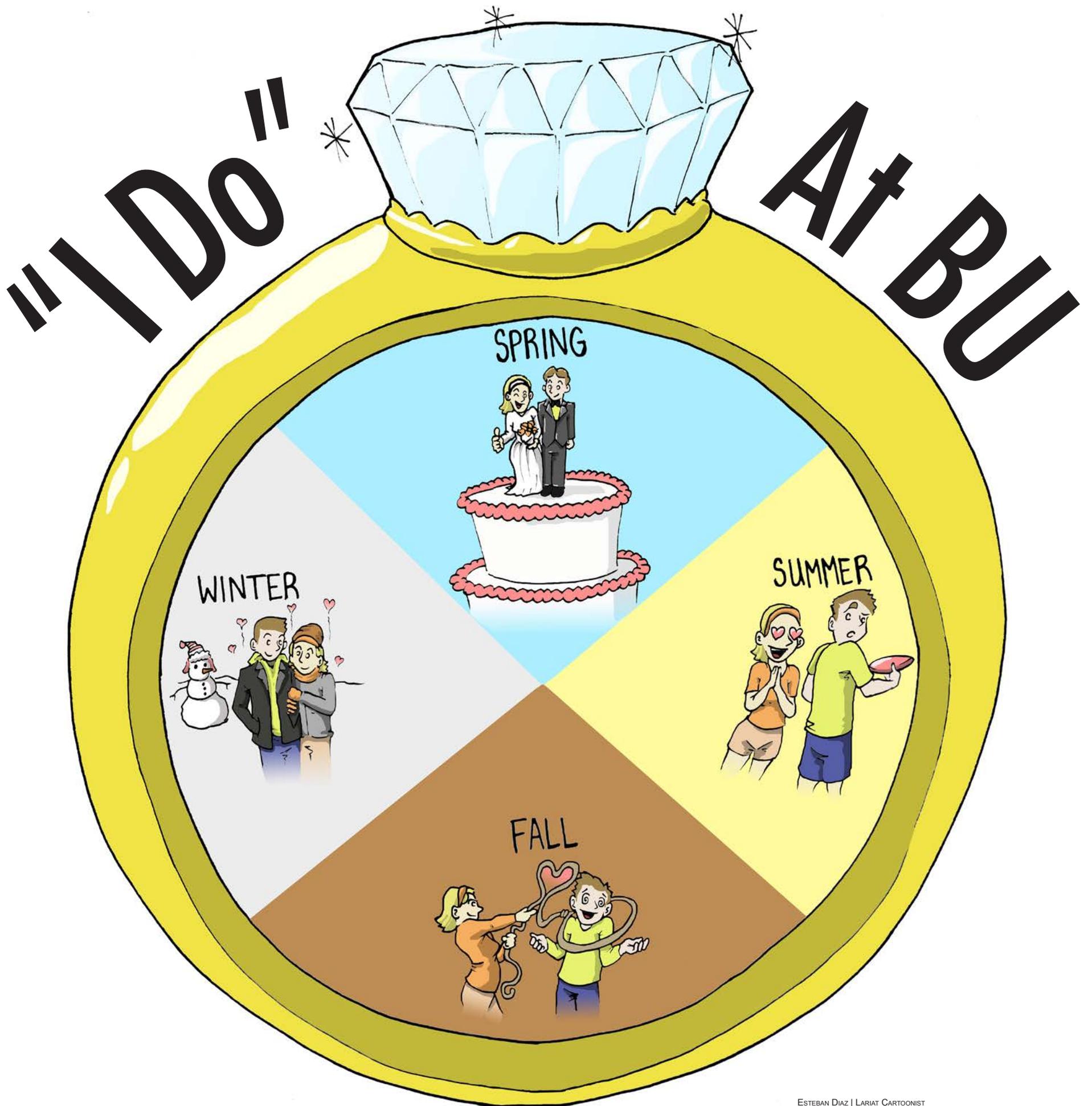
She said she is thankful for the support of family and friends and is keen on not rushing things and making mature decisions about the future.

Baker also hopes to keep wedding planning for post-graduation so she can focus on school and finding a job at present.

“Brandon and I are very excited, but we are focused on graduating and finding jobs first and foremost,” Baker said. “We will definitely stay focused on school.”



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