

The NEXUS

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**Journalism Education Association/
National Scholastic Press Association**
Fall National Convention 2009, Fourth Place
Spring National Convention 2009, Fourth Place
Spring National Convention 2008, Third Place
Fall National Convention 2007, First Place
Spring National Convention 2007, First Place

**San Diego County Journalism
Education Association**
Grand Sweepstakes 2005-2008 First Place
Newspaper Sweepstakes 2006, 2007, First Place

San Diego Union Tribune
Best High School Newspaper 2007, 2008

National Scholastic Press Association
Pacemaker Finalist 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009
Pacemaker Winner 2003, 2008

Columbia Scholastic Press Association
Gold Crown Winner 2009

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Abundance of honor societies devalues student achievement

Because of budget woes, Commack High School in New York has cut or combined four of its honor societies this year.

But most of the students could care less about the lack of honor societies available. All they have to do is walk across the hall to join one of the other 11 honor societies established at Commack for only about 400 of its juniors and seniors.

According to *The New York Times*, there are nearly two dozen recognized high school honor societies nationwide. They range from recent additions such as the National English Honor Society, which has accumulated nearly 21,000 members, to the "gold standard" National Honor Society, which boasts more than 700,000 members nationwide.

The problem isn't the lack of honor societies—there are more than enough of them. The problem is deciding how much "honor" is too much. Schools like Commack have 11 honor societies.

Westview has one.

And it needs to be applauded for not caving into that pressure to water down the integrity of honor societies everywhere.

Because so many of the students at schools like Commack are joining up to nine honor societies, showing up just to get that sash or cord at graduation and to bulk up their college applications, the quality of honor societies have been diluted.

There are no rules or regulations to dictate what exactly an honor society has to live to and, right now, so many other students are involved with so many honor societies that quantity seems to have trumped quality.

It is completely ridiculous that students at schools which offer only one high-quality honor society are being outlasted by students enrolled in schools who offer upwards of 10.

A student boasting membership to the English, French, Latin, Platinum Torch (dedicated to community service) and Science Honor Societies will most likely have a more impressive college application because of the sheer number of "honor" societies he is involved with.

That holds true, even though students may have put far more effort into that one society, organizing chapter service projects, going to all the meetings, and taking leadership positions, than the student who just showed up before graduation for the gold cord.

William R. Fitzsimmons, Dean of Admissions at Harvard University, says that with so many different honor societies, it is difficult to determine what students are actually bringing to the table. Chester E. Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, says that once everyone is wearing rhinestones, you might not notice someone wearing diamonds.

Admission into prestigious colleges has become increasingly competitive, but the solution does not lie in creating more honor societies. That would be equivalent to the government printing excessive amounts of money to combat recession. It defeats the purpose.

There sorely needs to be a limit on the number of honor societies available at schools to limit the absurd number of memberships students boast of on their applications.

Students and colleges are becoming so desensitized to the notion of an "honor" student that the term rarely has much significance anymore.

That's because when everyone is special, no one is.

The NEXUS Mission Statement

The Nexus is an open forum for Westview students that aims to provide the public with information that follows standards of accuracy, ethics and professionalism. As a source of news, opinions and entertainment for its readers, *The Nexus* commits itself to impartiality and depth of coverage.

The Nexus is published by Journalism 2 students. All editorial decisions are made by the students with the guidance of adviser Jeff Wenger. The editorial board comprises of selected staff members, who write and select the staff editorial.

The opinions published in *The Nexus* do not necessarily represent those of the Westview administration or PUSD school board. When opinions of an individual are expressed, they are labeled as such. Letters to the editor must be signed as the opinion of the individual. The editors select submissions for print based on relevancy to readers, and they may be edited for space or content reasons.

Terror threats outweigh privacy

Daniel Edwards
EDITOR IN CHIEF

There is no debating the fact that the attempted attack of the "underwear bomber" on Christmas Day could have been prevented. Although the fundamental issue was the failure to connect the overly obvious dots among our many intelligence agencies, Flight 253 presented us with a serious question, one that will most likely change airline travel forever: How far are we willing to go (or how much are we willing to show) to help prevent another terror attack?

The point of contention has moved beyond the intrusive, uncomfortable and ineffective pat-downs to a far more sophisticated and expensive mode of detecting weapons and potentially explosive substances.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) currently has 40 full-body scanners deployed in 19 airports nationwide, and has funding to purchase 300 more.

Despite the obvious concerns over what the images show, Americans cannot afford to let the remarkable technology these scanners offer go to waste.

There are two types of scanners currently being used by the TSA. The millimeter wave and backscatter machines use radio waves and low-level X-rays, respectively, to show certain objects in contrast with skin and body heat. Both machines require an average of 20 seconds per passenger, as opposed to the much quicker metal detectors that passengers currently walk through at airport security checkpoints.

The issue: how much they show. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been the most outspoken critic of the machines, unfoundedly claiming that they im-

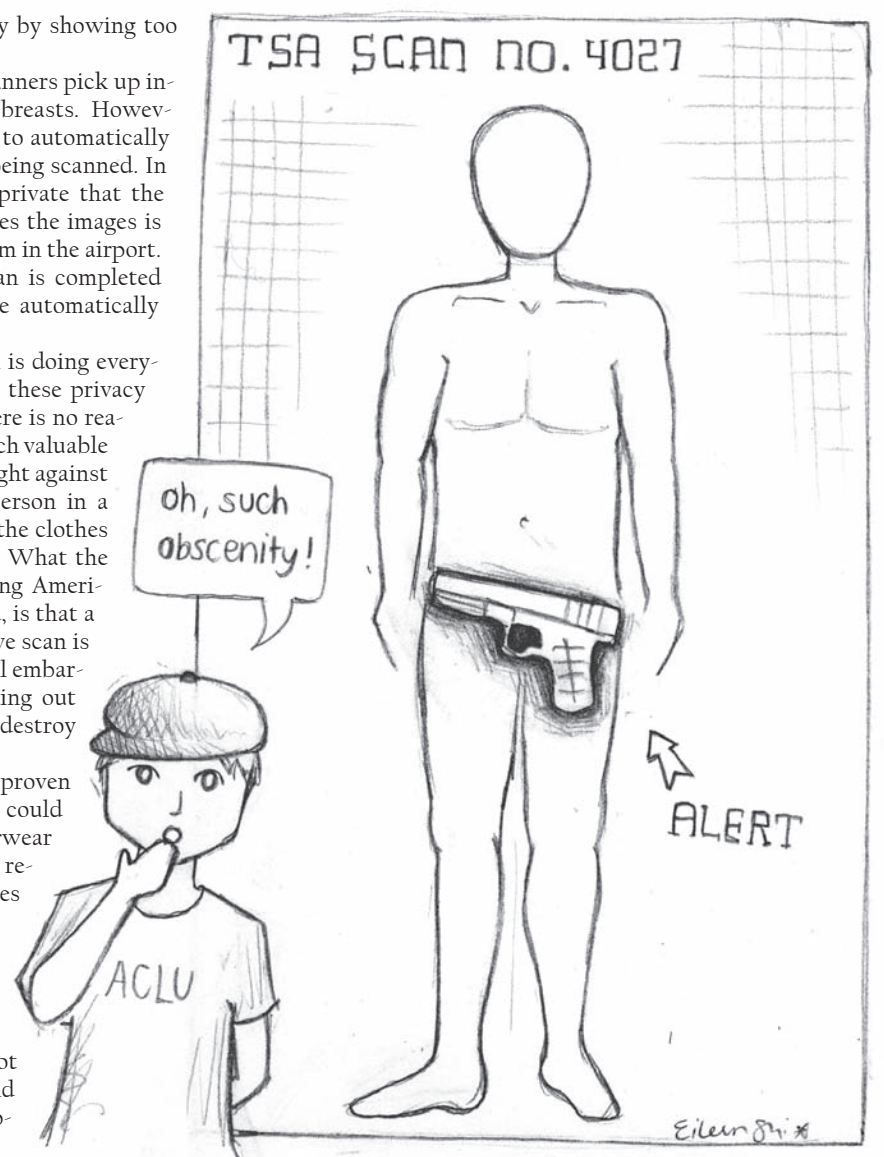
pinge on Americans' privacy by showing too much.

The images that the scanners pick up include genitals and women's breasts. However, the software is designed to automatically blur out the faces of those being scanned. In fact, the TSA makes it so private that the person who actually analyzes the images is in a completely separate room in the airport. Furthermore, after each scan is completed and verified, the images are automatically deleted.

It is clear that the TSA is doing everything in its power to avoid these privacy concerns. Rightfully so. There is no reason to abandon the use of such valuable technology in the ongoing fight against terrorism, just because a person in a back room can see beneath the clothes of an unidentifiable person. What the ACLU, and frankly the flying American public must understand, is that a quick, physically unobtrusive scan is worth the time and potential embarrassment, if it means weeding out the people who threaten to destroy our own lives.

Although it cannot be proven completely if such scanners could have detected the underwear bomber's substances, the research of what the machines can show speaks for itself.

If America isn't committed to protecting itself from acts of terrorism by participating in these scans, we could end up with a lot more flights like 253—and we might not have such happy endings.



Career-specific studies narrow minded

Eileen Shi
OPINIONS EDITOR

With the cost of a college education rising and employment rates at a low point, students are focusing more and more on the college majors that are perceived to translate into higher-paying jobs.

Before they even begin their first undergraduate year, students are already zeroing in on specific, career-oriented majors that are most likely to lead to a spot in the workplace.

Ironically, however, instead of helping us move forward, specializing is putting us further behind.

College was once regarded as a place for intellectual growth and exploration. A core liberal arts curriculum was considered essential in a student's process of self-discovery and higher learning.

But in the frenzied race into biomedical and business majors, the value of this liberal arts education is frequently overlooked, or eliminated altogether. In being so focused on becoming a lawyer or a doctor, students leave themselves very little room to develop themselves as broad thinkers.

For example, the University of Louisiana, Lafayette is discontinuing its philosophy major, while

Michigan State is doing away with American studies and classics in the face of student demand for more career-relevant majors.

Furthermore, in a 1971 UCLA survey of more than 400,000 incoming freshman, 37 percent said that it was essential or very important to be "well-off financially," while 73 percent said the same about "developing a meaningful philosophy of life." In 2009, 78 percent stated that wealth was a goal, while only 48 percent were looking for a meaningful philosophy. The statistics had practically reversed themselves.

The student attitude toward college education has changed, and this change is reflected in institutions nationwide. What was once seen as a cornerstone in higher learning is now seen as a luxury.

This trend is a source for concern. Career specializing not only detracts from a student's overall college experience, but has a detrimental effect on the perceived value of a broad, liberal arts education.

In truth, a liberal arts education is far from being an elitist extravagance. The result of a recent survey done by the Association of American Colleges and Universities suggested that contrary to popular belief, employers do not want their employees trained with a narrow educational focus.

When asked what they wanted their employees to learn in college, 89 percent of surveyed employers said they wanted more emphasis on "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing," 81 percent asked for "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" and 70 percent desired "the ability to innovate and be creative."

And these are the exact same skills that a liberal arts education teaches. Yet, budget woes and students are treating the liberal arts as if they are disposable and unnecessary.

In reality, companies are not looking for people who trained in one specific area.

Companies demand employees who have acquired a broad set of skills and who are able to apply those skills in a variety of problem solving situations. In this way, an employer greatly values an English, psychology or art history major's unique perspective and skill set.

In the end, the skills and experiences provided by a liberal arts education are infinitely more important than what a student majors in.

A broad, liberal arts education will educate people for the future, impacting them for decades to come - not just for the next two years in a cubicle.

Teen driver risks necessitate more training

Helen Bavin
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Sixteen-year-old drivers are estimated to be three times more likely to die in a motor vehicle crash than any other driver. From 1995 to 2004, crashes involving drivers under age 18 claimed the lives of 30,917 people, according to 5MyTeen, a website dedicated to receiving reports on teenagers' driving. Of those 30,917 killed, only 11,177 were the teen drivers themselves.

Despite the common assumption of the presence of drugs or alcohol being the main reason for an accident, only about 24 percent of these drivers were under the influence, meaning that more than 75 percent of these accidents were due to a lack of a solid foundation in their driving education.

With online driving "schools" luring kids into their programs with names like E-Z Way Driving School and advertisements like "Easy Fun Course, Get your permit quick! Start today!", the statistics aren't surprising.

With hundreds of companies nationwide offering classes online, the importance of drivers' education has

slowly declined. These online driving schools are unable to know if the students are actually reading the information on the screen or if they are just watching the timer at the bottom of the screen tick down until they can click "next." Students easily dismiss their driver's education as meaningless and bothersome and are missing out on an important in-class experience.

The experience of a teacher drilling information into your mind over and over again, the experience of multiple fear-instilling videos and the experience of raising your hand when a question comes to mind all used to be important elements of the "old-school," in-school driving education course.

These classes show videos that share real-life experiences which are important in educating teenagers because it brings a different light to a certain situation. Even if all these videos do is instill a little fear or a little reality into the minds of many teenagers who think they are impenetrable, this could prevent future accidents.

But with most in-class driving schools only having in-school driving classes on Saturdays, teenagers with

sports games or other extracurricular activities don't even have the option of taking an in-class course.

About 10 years ago, online driving school weren't as popular and many teenagers instead took a driving class at school, on campus, during school hours. This allowed for more supervision and far greater consistency in learning the material. With the high rate of teenage-involved car accidents, it could be time to return to the old-fashioned ways of getting your driver's license.

Though with the lack of funding public schools face, it may seem to be a difficult class for schools to fund, but a class fee could be charged, just like at any other driving school.

With the frightening statistics in mind, it's time to do something about the way teenagers are receiving their driving education. An online class that allows for pages to be skipped over or for videos to be muted is not enough to prevent the dangers of the road.

It's time to give on-campus driving classes another chance. Hopefully a chance that will begin to drop these teenage driving statistics slowly, but surely.

ROAD TO DANGER

• 16-YEAR-OLDS ARE **THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY** TO DIE IN A CAR CRASH AS COMPARED TO DRIVERS OF ALL AGES

• IN 2003, TEENS WERE INVOLVED IN APPROXIMATELY **1.5 MILLION** ACCIDENTS

• **65%** OF TEEN PASSENGER DEATHS HAPPEN WHEN A TEEN IS DRIVING

• **53%** OF TEEN DEATHS OCCUR DURING WEEKENDS

• THE **NUMBER-ONE CAUSE** OF DEATH FOR PERSONS AGED 15 TO 20 IS CAR COLLISIONS

• IN 2004, **2/3** OF TEEN DRIVING DEATHS OCCURRED TO TEENS WHO WERE NOT BUCKLED UP

Source: Smyteen.com
Sidebar by Will Ellis and Halie Albertson

CODE OF CONDUCT: A light-hearted trial of our social graces... or lack thereof

• As the new book *Game Change* hits bookshelves, we are finding out that Sarah Palin had an issue with the fact that there are two Koreas. Let's hope she can add that and other types of quality commentary with her new pundit job on Fox News.

- Daniel Edwards

• Forget all the bouquets, cards and chocolate. The ultimate act of love? Changing your Facebook relationship status from "single" to "in a relationship." Now it's official.

- Melissa Truong

• Winter Informal is a Sadie Hawkins Dance? All of us dudes won't have to lift a finger to get a date? I don't think we can comprehend the concept.

- Dominic Lucisano

• I think I need to take a break from all this SAT studying. You know you've been answering way too many SAT Questions of the Day when you get excited after they change the format.

- Derek Dyer

• "Edward Cullen is watching you pee." At least that's what the papers in the bathrooms tell me. Man, now the line for the girls' bathroom will be even longer.

- Anna Mills

Major infraction

Hung jury

Spotless Record

To submit a Code of Conduct, drop your submission off in room L-104. Include your name, grade level or job title and phone number.