

The News Argus

The Student Newspaper of Winston-Salem State University

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fidant that federal loan subsidies would help cushion the increase," said then-Secretary of Education William J. Bennett in 1987.

The "Bennett hypothesis" — the theory that as long as someone ensures the bills will get paid, colleges will raise tuition — makes sense, especially in light of government's guarantee of an affordable college education for all who want one. It's a reality corroborated by Murray State University President Dr. F. King Alexander, who in a recent hearing told the House Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness that some schools do, in fact, raise tuition because government will cover it.

Unfortunately, despite Alexander's revelation, subcommittee members spent little time digging deeper into the Bennett hypothesis. It's an attitude reflected in "The College Cost Crisis," which gives Bennett's theory only a cursory — but emphatic — nod, with quotes from recent articles in Newsweek and Forbes: "Because parents and students keep coming back for more, there is 'no market constraint to keep them from raising tuition,'" Newsweek quotes Ronald Ehrenberg, director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute, as saying, "People continue to knock on their doors." And, of course, the federal government continues to increase spending.

So what does the report suggest as a possible solution to the

tuition inflation problem? Colleges and universities policing themselves. It would rely on "commitment from the higher education community to not only acknowledge the problem but work toward addressing it, and broad cooperative efforts from all stakeholders in higher education...."

Good luck. If the Bennett hypothesis is true, schools have no incentive to rein in costs. As long as colleges are in competition, and university jobs and salaries depend on schools drawing kids away from competitors, institutions of higher learning won't stop buying the latest equipment, building new facilities, and hiring expensive, "celebrity" professors. That is, unless tuition and other funds become more scarce.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is an excellent opportunity for all the college-educated folks in Congress to explore the real causes of skyrocketing tuition. Unfortunately, if "The College Cost Crisis" is any indication, higher education will continue to be treated as a federally ensured entitlement, driving politicians to keep on fueling the tuition rocket they say they want to ground.

ABOUT THE WRITER
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Corrections

In sports article by Samuel Harley, the ending to the story was inadvertently cut off. It should have read, "the Rams finished with a victory."

Also in the KRT headline for the story "Bush asks for Millions to aid rebuilding Iraq," the president asked the country for billions not millions. Also, the ending of this story was also cut off. It should have read, "But they've been throwing bombs instead."

We do apologize for these errors.

— The News Argus Staff

American society is advancing to a halt

By Scott Molski and Silvio Laccetti
(KRT)

Recent developments indicate that Americans are spending the majority of their time in "technology advancement," while neglecting social and cultural progress. We create too many gizmos and not enough new cultural forms and institutions to improve the lot of humanity.

In order to achieve a better social product — society — we need two things: creativity and the leisure time in which to develop or exercise it. Behind the situation are some paradoxes regarding work, productivity and leisure.

Is the typical American overworked? One side argues that the average workweek has steadily increased for both white- and blue-collar workers. They say Americans take fewer days off per year than workers in any other industrial country, and that this situation is forced upon the American worker.

The other side presents labor statistics to show that the average workweek has remained fairly constant over the last 40 years. And, where the workweek has increased for certain individuals, it has been by choice: the typical American worker wants more hours because it means more pay or career advancement.

Ironically, in the workplace we are increasingly productive and innovative. The U.S. government tracks worker productivity, which has hit record levels recently, according to the Labor Department. With greater productivity, one might think that there is more leisure time, but there isn't.

The importance of creative leisure time was made abundantly clear by the ancient Greeks. They astounded their world with creations that are the very foundation of our Western Civilization. From their surplus of leisure came totally new forms and concepts: democracy, philosophy, naturalistic art and literature.

What do we do with our leisure? According to a 2002 Harris Preference Poll, Americans have about 20 hours per week to pursue leisure activities, an amount largely unchanged since 1989.

American adults indicated reading (26 percent) as one of their top two or three leisure time activities (respondents could name up to three activities). Other top activities were watching TV (15 percent), spending time with family (11 percent), fishing (8 percent), gardening (8 percent), playing team sports (7 percent), going to the movies (6 percent), and swimming and

golf (5 percent each). Painting and writing were 2 percent and 1 percent each, respectively.

What conclusions can be drawn from this survey? Reading is an encouraging sign, depending of course on what is being read! Otherwise, the poll shows that Americans are involved in mentally passive leisure.

Americans are spending their leisure time mostly entertaining themselves. Very few are creating or discussing ideas, are thinking about society and the future, or are coming into contact with others who should be doing the same thing. What to do?

In light of Sept. 11, our society needs more interaction and exchange of ideas in our various groups and communities. We know the impact the Internet has had on technological discourse and development. We must also be aware of the impact it can have in promoting American social progress.

Lately, political candidates like Howard Dean, former governor of Vermont, have realized the Internet's potential for political organization. Other things can and must be done in this electronic environment where any one person can found a non-governmental organization with every hope of attracting attention to their cause. Technology can be a major aid in socially constructive leisure.

Of course recreation is still important. People will never be able to function at their mental peak if they are in poor physical health. Everyone needs to have some time to kick-up his or her feet or go swimming. The Greeks knew this too. But they still allotted time enough for reflection and pondering the meaning and improvement of life.

These uses of time do not seem to exist for today's Americans. Lack of constructive leisure time is much to our disadvantage as the world's leading power.

So what needs to be done? Americans must realize the need for social advancement as well as technical and scientific advancement. In the years to come, our technology will continue to be superior, but if we are unable to make progress as a society, interacting with one another, the greatest technologies will be wasted in narrow applications.

Leonardo da Vinci said, "Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigors of the mind." Let us, as Americans, not have our collective brainpower waste away by overlooking or ignoring social concerns. We need to realize value of those issues and strive for more quality leisure time.

New tune: Napster goes legit; Kazaa offers a deal

KNIGHT RIDDER/TRIBUNE
NEWS SERVICE (KRT)

The re-emergence of Napster as a legitimate online music vendor grabbed attention last week for good reason. The former bad boy that Santa Clara-based Roxio Corp. bought after recording companies drove it under will offer 500,000 tunes, selling downloads for a dollar and jukebox subscriptions by the month.

But another press conference was just as intriguing — and perhaps, in the long run, more significant.

An organization representing the parent company of Kazaa, the most popular file-sharing network since Napster's demise, threw out an offer and an olive branch.

It proposed a plan to stop piracy by enabling music companies to sell music to their customers over Kazaa and other file-sharing services. Internet service providers would monitor and bill for songs that customers downloaded.

The details are sketchy and, at this point, the idea appears far-fetched. ISPs have expressed no interest in serving as file-sharers' bookkeepers, and the music industry would rather break Kazaa's back than break bread with it.

But it may also signal the opening move in Kazaa's effort to deal with the music industry's complaints and forestall retribution from Congress. And other file-sharing services and some consumer groups are pushing a

simpler idea that deserves a look, notwithstanding the labels' initial opposition: some form of compulsory licensing of music over the Internet.

Under that concept, all Internet users would pay a monthly fee, perhaps based on the speed of their Internet connection, entitling them to download and trade whatever tunes they want. An independent body would distribute royalties based on artists' market share of downloads.

That's how it works in radio and with public performances: ASCAP and BMI license copyrighted works and, through extensive sampling, parcel out the money.

There are legal prece-

dents, an economic rationale and a technological argument for compulsory licensing.

Peer-to-peer networks, with decentralized control and redundancy, are a technological advance and should be embraced, not demonized.

If the formula for distributing royalties is fair, musicians will make more money.

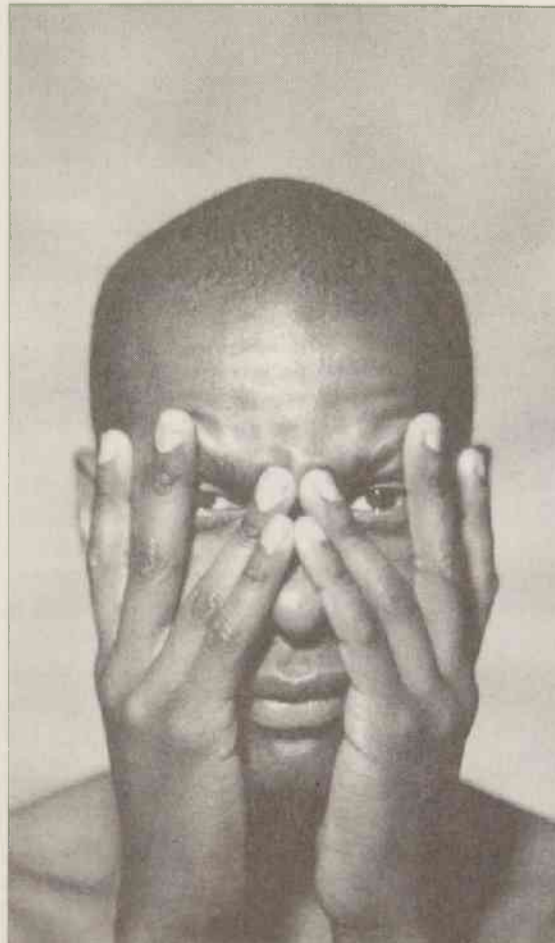
Once everyone pays a levy or fee, piracy disappears, and consumers are treated as customers again, not bandits.

For now, the labels are ignoring the file-sharing services' overtures and pursuing a double-edged strategy of suing big file swappers while striking

deals with a growing number of vendors like Napster and Apple's iTunes.

The labels' commitment to selling music over the Internet, though belated, is real. But their refusal to consider including peer-to-peer networks may be self-defeating. Millions of young people continue to swap files illegally, notwithstanding the labels' modest success in scaring them through litigation. The lost revenue is staggering.

The labels may never see peer-to-peer as a cure to their troubles. But Congress should take a detached view, weigh the benefits of new technology and explore options like compulsory licenses.



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