

# Group gives Texas C's, D's on higher education report card

by Crystal Yednak  
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Texas earns C's and D's on a national report card released Thursday on state higher education systems.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gives Texas a C-minus for its preparation of college students, a D for the percentage of its population enrolled in college, a C for affordability of higher education, a D-plus for graduating students with degrees and a C for the economic and civic benefits the state receives for educating its residents.

The nonpartisan group acknowledged that Texas has recently been moving to improve access to and affordability of a college education. "We know we face challenges," said Ray Grasshoff, a spokesman for

cent in top-performing states.

The report also shows that 43 percent of full-time students at Texas' four-year colleges and universities complete their degree within five years, compared with 66 percent in high-performing states.

In Texas, 25 percent of residents ages 25 to 65 have a bachelor's degree or higher; that number is 34 percent in the top states.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education compiled its report using information from agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Education, Educational Testing Service and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Grades were determined by comparing each state to the best-performing states.

No state received straight A's on the report card.

Other large states such as Califor-

# Parents upset about student newspaper's reprint of Playboy cover

by Shannon King  
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COLUMBIA, S.C. -- The goal was to update students on a few graduates of Dutch Fork High School. But the result was nothing more than obscene, some parents say.

"As a mother it goes against everything I believe," said Greta Bickley, who has a 14-year-old daughter at Dutch Fork. "This district holds itself up as being excellent in terms of academics and this is the best they could come up with."

The fuss is over a story that ran in the October edition of the school's student newspaper, *The Renaissance*. It included a photo of Dutch Fork graduate Lauren Hill, who posed for the cover of *Playboy* magazine's October 2000 issue.

Bickley and a few other parents question the newspaper's decision to print the *Playboy* cover in the newspaper.

Debra Milhous wrote a letter to the school newspaper staff saying that the photo was in poor taste.

"I didn't think it was appropriate for the students to print," said Milhous, who has two children at Dutch Fork. "The damage has already been done and there's nothing they can do about it now. But if they're going to let this happen, then what's next?"

Editors of the newspaper said they stand by what they did and they have the support of the teacher who oversees the staff, and district administration.

Student advisor Amy Medlock said she discussed the photo with attorneys and school principals before permitting students to print it.

Medlock said she even edited the photo so it would not be revealing.

Medlock and the editors agree students were interested in the article, which also featured three other graduates:

- Matt Duffie, a model for Abercrombie and Fitch.
- Charissa Seaman, a dancer for pop singer Britney Spears.
- Erik Kimrey, a football player

at the University of South Carolina.

"It's entertainment and that's what the students want to read about," she said. "We wanted the students to know about the interesting jobs some of the graduates are doing, and being on the cover of *Playboy* is a big deal."

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1988 that school administrators do have the discretion to determine when published material is inappropriate for students.

Mike Hiestand, an attorney at the Student Press Law Center, in Arlington, Va., said reprinting the cover isn't illegal and agrees there is some news value in informing students of a graduate's success.

"I don't think they did it in a sensational way," Hiestand said. "They heard the rumors, they checked it out and reported the news."

Melody Fitzwater, 16, a junior at Dutch Fork, said the photo wasn't offensive to her and the newspaper had every right to publish it.

"It wasn't like they inspired anyone to choose a career," she said. "It was just a harmless (article) for students to read about former Dutch Fork students."

Butch Barnhart, chairman of Dutch Fork's School Improvement Council, said he hasn't heard any concerns from parents about the photo.

"I haven't had one call about it and it wasn't mentioned at our meeting a few weeks ago," Barnhart said.

Bickley said she was stunned when her daughter showed her the photo. She said she was even more offended that the article didn't feature graduates in other careers.

"I didn't see anything highlighting a doctor, lawyer or teacher," she said. "I don't want my daughter thinking the best she can do is be in *Playboy* magazine."

Medlock said that because Dutch Fork opened only nine years ago, most of the graduates are still developing their careers.

She said the newspaper staff is considering making the updates part of a series.

Hill, an Irmo native, was unavailable for comment.

# Adventurous college students chow down on insects

by Diane Suchetka  
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CHARLOTTE, N.C. - They tasted like chocolate, crunched like Rice Krispies, went down easily.

It wasn't until afterward that you felt a little queasy, when your tongue automatically went for that little piece stuck there, in your molar.

Then, you couldn't help but imagine a leg or antenna.

That's what it feels like to eat a chocolate-covered immature cricket.

Yuk, you say. But more than a dozen students did it at Davidson College.

"Do I have worms in my teeth," senior Anna Padgett asked, smiling big at her friends.

"I've never tried a worm before. Maybe I'll put it on my resume."

The crispy critters were part of a zoology lesson, taught by assistant professor Chris Paradise, which included fruit fly banana nut bread, mealworm chocolate chip cookies and mealworm larvae and cricket nymphs fried in garlic butter.

Why did the professor cook insects for lunch? "A couple of reasons," he said.

For one, about 75 percent of the world's population eats insects as part of their diet.

"A lot of Davidson students will travel abroad," Paradise said, "and we want to expose them to the things they'll experience in other cultures." Ross Cocklin, a senior from

Owensboro, Ky., figures he'd eaten worse inadvertently, he said while trying the garlic worms - nothing for a guy who once swallowed a goldfish on a bet.

The banana bread with fruit flies went down easiest. You couldn't see the flies. Besides, Paradise had only enough to pour about an 1/8 of a cup into each loaf.

The cricket nymphs, being covered in chocolate, weren't so bad either. But the mealworm larvae were another story.

The pan full of tiny worms, one to two inches long, their little legs curled up but visible and fried to a golden brown, looked like a pan full of worms.

Those brave enough to try them, some with their eyes closed, said they tasted like garlic butter, crunched like corn flakes.

It was a learning experience for Paradise, too. He never before had made cookies from scratch.

The cricket nymphs - immature crickets - he explained, were a little easier. He dry-roasted them first. Then he melted chocolate in a double boiler and dipped them in.

They were so good, Cari Lentzsch, a senior from Dallas, wrapped leftovers to take home, then confessed she was going to leave them out for her unsuspecting roommates.

"Sick and twisted, yes. I know," she said, dropping the bugs into a napkin.

"But you've got to find fun where you can."



Cari Lentzsch serves herself a spoonful of mealworms sautéed in garlic butter. The meal was presented by Davidson College professor Chris Paradise as part of a program that exposes students to other cultures.

"We know we face challenges, but we're already working on it."

-Ray Grasshoff, a spokesman for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. "But we're already working on it."

The coordinating board adopted a plan in October called "Closing the Gaps" that aims to increase the pool of qualified college applicants by making a college prep curriculum standard in high schools and by reaching out to minority groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education.

A group convened by Lt. Gov. Rick Perry has also been discussing strategies to ensure that Texas colleges and universities keep pace with a changing work force and population. Universities are preparing to ask legislators for a large investment in higher education during the next session, which starts in January.

According to the Measuring Up 2000 report released Thursday, 32 percent of the state's high school graduates enter college right after high school, compared with 54 per-

cent in at least one category, while Illinois got A's in preparation, participation and affordability. Massachusetts earned 4 A's or A-minuses, but a D for affordability. Closer to Texas, Louisiana received failing grades in college preparation and participation, and Oklahoma earned a D-plus in preparation and a C in participation.

The report also showed differences among states in how much money students borrow to attend college and how much of their own income they must contribute toward tuition.

The Measuring Up 2000 report was compiled for legislators to use in developing higher education policies in their states.

Each state will be graded again in 2002 and 2004.

The public policy organization's full report can be found on the Web site [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org).

# University grabs a leadership role in a provocative field - Disability Studies

by J. Linn Allen  
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Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO - With a blitz of high-profile hires, the University of Illinois at Chicago has made itself the top school in the country in a cutting-edge discipline that bridges health, social policy and the humanities: the study of how people with physical and impairments see and are seen by the world.

Like race studies and gender studies in the previous generation, the growing field - called disability studies - has shaken up academia by putting on center stage a group that has previously been shunted to the margins.

Disability scholars say the field can change the way society looks at the disabled and has a huge potential constituency in the disabled themselves, those who care for them and live with them, and the vast numbers of Baby Boomers who will be prone to disabilities as they age.

These scholars' approach to disability is a far cry from the "medical model," which deals with it as an illness to be prevented, treated or ameliorated by crafting better wheelchairs or hearing aids.

Instead, they propose that the so-called normalcy of a non-disabled body is not a given but is a socially conditioned concept that can and perhaps should be changed.

"Rather than looking at a man with a cane or a blind person with glasses, (the field) looks at the social construction of disability in literature and film and in the way people think about the

world," said Lennard Davis, the new chairman of the English department at UIC and a leading light in the movement.

Once a minor province of medical specialists and social workers, disability studies has expanded significantly in the past decade among ambitious academics, and UIC has pushed to lead the charge.

"UIC is just miles ahead of almost any other university" in the field, said Susan Schweik, an associate professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, who is co-directing an effort to establish a disability studies program there.

At UIC, studies of disability and human development were raised in 1998 to the level of an academic department, one that offers both master's and PhD programs. And with the arrival in the same year of Stanley Fish, the empire-building dean of UIC's College of Arts and Science, the discipline began to assume star status.

The aggressive Fish has recruited not only Davis, who has a joint appointment in English and the new department of disability and human development, but several other trailblazing disability scholars.

They include Sander Gilman, a world-renowned cultural historian who has written some 40 books, including important work on the depiction of disability in art; and David Mitchell, until recently head of the Society for Disability Studies.

Mitchell is heading UIC's doctoral program in the field, the only one of its kind in the country.

Courses in the UIC graduate program have such titles as Disability and Culture, History of Human Differences: Disability Minorities in America and Advocacy and Empowerment in Disabilities.

"We're not as concerned about how to cure diseases that affect certain people, but how (physical) differences are defined and how the differences affect people because of social forces and cultural values," said Carol Gill, an assistant professor at UIC and current president of the Society for Disability Studies.

The frankly political stance implied in such an approach allies the scholarly work to the disability rights movement, just as African-American studies is closely identified with black rights and gender studies with women's rights and gay rights.

"To form the definition of disability for a historical moment is a political act," said Mitchell. "We are engaged in politics by reformulating."

That includes reinterpreting the very term "disability" to denote a condition imposed by society rather than a factual description. Increasingly, the preferred term in the field for the actual physical state of limited functioning is "impairment."

Gill, who uses a wheelchair, notes that if society suddenly changed to become "a nirvana of accommodation," she would still be impaired but not disabled.

"I wouldn't be able to use my arms and legs in the way that most people do, but I wouldn't be compromised in my interaction with society," she said.

Naturally, when society is seen as the cause of disability, the disabled and their advocates are going to see a need for social change.

But Davis said he thinks the field is much more than a niche for a special-interest group indulging in identity politics. He contends that disability has the potential to affect most of the population, especially as Baby Boomers age.

"The so-called marginal group is actually part of the social fabric," said Davis, who is not himself disabled but whose parents were deaf.

The field has engendered some conflicts within academia. Some question how an academic discipline can remain objective while being so advocacy-oriented, just as some are skeptical about the polemical thrust of African-American studies and gender studies.

Others within the disability movement ask whether it's appropriate for people who are not disabled to be teaching and doing research that focuses so strongly on how disabled people experience society. Mitchell said the majority of scholars in the field probably are not disabled, though he noted that he knows of no figures on that issue.

Nefertiti Nowell, who entered UIC's PhD program this year and who is not disabled, said she understood she lacked the world view of the disabled.

"There is a gap, but people with disabilities will help me fill the gap and keep focused," she said.

Nowell, 27, who has a master's degree in counseling and has worked as a therapist at clinics in Chicago, added that, as an African-American, she has insight on being a minority. She said she

is planning to do her research on how African-Americans with disabilities - "double minorities" - form their identities.

Another tension in the field exists between the traditional biological and medical approaches to the subject and the new wave of social criticism. Indeed, UIC insiders note that the new disability PhD program is an uneasy union of the new disability studies track with the traditional departments of physical therapy and occupational therapy.

But Gill said such conflicts can be worked out.

"Just because you shift your angle in looking at a phenomenon ... doesn't mean you kick out anything," she said. "You just put it in a different perspective."

As an example, she said a new piece of assistive technology, such as an innovative wheelchair, could be developed within the older framework but then analyzed from different points of view. A social policy analyst might ask how the development of the wheelchair was funded; a cultural theorist might look at how teachers and students react when one pupil uses the wheelchair in class.

"Getting at the intricate relations among culture, society and physical differences is absolutely the cornerstone," Gill said.

The Foundation for the UIC program has been laid over a stretch of years as the school gradually took over government programs, snared grants and added staff to the area.

Helping to orchestrate the rise was

David Braddock, who came to UIC in 1979 after working as a White House consultant on disabilities. He is now chairman of the university's department of disability and human development in the College of Health and Human Development.

When Fish arrived as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1998, he was quick to see the possibilities of disability studies, according to Braddock and others.

"We've certainly seized the initiative there," Fish said. "One of the reasons it's going to work, if it does work, is that it puts together the strengths of the university, the humanities and the social sciences and the medical side."

Davis, he noted, has a cross-college appointment in Arts and Sciences and Health and Human Development, and Gilman - lured away this summer from the University of Chicago - will cut across three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Medicine, and Architecture and the Arts. (Gilman is currently teaching in Germany and will begin his \$200,000-a-year UIC position next fall.)

Fish sees disability studies as an example of the "critical theory" wave that has swept through many academic fields, subjecting hallowed tenets to social and historical analysis and questioning accepted ways of looking at things.

"It's been a great ride as discipline after discipline has awakened to this," he said. "Predictably, the younger people come in very excited and the older people get very nervous because they fear, quite correctly, that everything they've been assuming in their work is now being challenged."

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