

WESTWORLD

President-elect's policy proves unpopular

w/ Adriana Zalloni
Staff Writer

"Sending troops into Pakistan is not the answer to the arising problems in the Middle East. We are still in the middle of a war with Iraq, and we have wasted a lot of resources already. Starting a new [war] will bring out more problems," junior Elias Sopkin said of President-elect Barack Obama's campaign suggestion that the United States might pursue terrorists into the region. "We should not spend more resources and lose more troops by fighting another war when we should be focusing on finishing the first."

According to www.cnn.com, during the first presidential candidate debate, Obama said that the best solution to dealing with Al Qaida and the Taliban was to send more troops to the border. He expressed the belief that it is necessary to send the troops in quickly, to ensure the safety of the American people. According to the article, Obama believes Al Qaida is currently the biggest threat to the United States and by sending in the troops, the military would be able to eliminate that threat by removing safe havens the Taliban and Al Qaida have established in Pakistan.



The President-elect's policy on Pakistan could prove hostile.
Photo courtesy of ANSKERT Campus

Students and staff disagree on the issue of Pakistan and sending more troops in to destroy Al Qaida and the Taliban.

"I think it would be a good thing if Obama went into Pakistan," senior Nadia Fiaz said, "There are a lot of Taliban stationed around the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, and they are killing innocent civilians. They must be destroyed."

Sophomore Marta Villalobos disagrees. "I support Obama," she said. "However, I believe he should try to solve the problems we have in the [United States] before he tries to solve other problems."

Junior Fatima Elahi shares Villalobos' belief.

"The United States is experiencing a financial crisis, and Obama should focus on that before he focuses on other issues," Elahi said. "We have enough problems on our plate."

Obama said during the debate that he wanted to try to encourage democracy in Pakistan before he sent in troops. He mentioned that he planned to insist that the Pakistan government go after the militants.

Applied science teacher Brent Garner agrees.

"Obama should try to work in conjunction with Pakistani authorities," Garner said. "However, if they do not want to go along with it, then Obama needs to do what he needs to do to wipe out the Taliban and Al Qaida. We need to make things safer for our troops. Something needs to be done."

Adult drugs not recommended for students

w/ Bridget Van Der Bosch
Staff Writer

"By not allowing teenagers [the] opportunity" for therapy, "they may feel forced into relying on medication to address their challenges," school psychologist Henry Brown said on the increased incidence of prescribing Zoloft™ to adolescents before different methods are utilized.

Brown said that he is a strong advocate of using all forms of interventions, e.g. different types counseling and therapy without the use of medication, before turning to anti-psychotic medication.

"Once all of these options have been exhausted and little or no improvement is made, then [one] should begin to explore the use of medications," Brown said.

Brown said that psychiatrists are too quick to medicate. He expressed the belief that medicating before using different ways to help teens through personal struggles can have a large impact on their future.

In 2003, www.cnn.com (CNN) reported Christopher Pittman killed his grandparents. The 12-year-old boy had been living with his grandparents when he started taking Zoloft™. Only then did his grandparents notice a change in his behavior, mentioning to his parents that he was out of control. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Jennifer Hahne, school psychologist, agrees with Brown's assessments. She says that doctors can be too quick to prescribe Zoloft™ and other medications, and that she believes that

antipsychotic drugs can be helpful, but there are some problems when it comes to prescribing to children. "I think [antipsychotic drugs] can be very helpful, but [psychiatrists] don't know enough about [they] and the effects [they have] on kids and teens they might have in the future. They haven't been [prescribing Zoloft™ to children] long enough to know all the things that could possibly go wrong," Hahne said.

According to CNN, Zoloft™, like many other antipsychotic drugs, is used to balance chemicals in the adult brain. Zoloft™ increases the level of serotonin, a neurotransmitter in the brain that regulates mood and inhibits pain, and creates growth that forms new brain cells.

Hahne disagrees with the prescription of such adult medications for adolescents. "Our society is too quick to medicate. There is definitely a place for medication, such as clinical depression or anxiety, but there is minimal information regarding its future impact on the mental and/or physical wellbeing of teenagers."

At least one student disagrees. "Zoloft™ really helps me, even though there are some negative side effects," she* said. "[It has] really helped me with my school work and it has really helped my [anxiety]."

Although Brown and Hahne admit that antipsychotic medication can be very helpful in helping those with mental illness such as severe depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and many more, they caution that there are still unknown long-term side effects for children and teens.

*Name withheld at student's request.

Economic downturn affects college choice

w/ Suhail Ansari
World Editor

"My parents want me to go to a public school. They think that it will be a lot more economical because private schools are so expensive, and it is still a good education. But, I really want to go to a private school," junior Nisma Khan said.

Other parents have given their students more choices when it comes to which college to attend, as it relates to issue of cost. "College cost is not a deciding factor because my family started saving early on," junior Aaron Goldfein said.

The bad economy has devalued many college investment savings, and that has more families looking at public colleges and universities, according to the Associated Press. Next fall, the largest number of high school graduates will go onto institutions of higher education in American history. Many parents are now looking at whether they will be able to pay for such an education, and if a public school is a better choice.

Business education and former investing teacher Tricia Brown said that college savings are similar to retirement accounts; parents invest in mutual funds which contain mainly stocks and bonds. In the current economic downturn, many have experienced double digit losses from their retirement plans due to the struggling economy, according to Brown. "This has the same effect on college savings funds. It is a direct relationship:

parents are invested in mutual funds which are tied to Wall Street. When the economy is in a recession, Wall Street takes a hit, along with everyone's long-term investments—college funds and retirement accounts," Brown added.

Although investments might not foot the entire tuition at an institution of higher learning, some students plan to rely on financial aid and scholarships. "When I was born, my parents started saving for college, but I do not think it will pay for all four years. We do have a lot of money invested in our property that we own, but that will not be able to pay for school. I am planning on applying for many scholarships because I want to go to a private college and do not want to graduate with debt," Khan said.

Other students reflect that same attitude toward deciding which college to attend. Junior Josh Lee said, "I am looking at both private and public schools. My parents will help me pay for my tuition, but we do not have much saved. Cost is not a factor in picking which school to go to. I want to go to the best place I get into, and if I have to take loans, then so be it," he said. Lee added that he has visited several schools and almost all of their tuitions are too high to pay for; he hopes that financial aid and scholarships will help him pay for his education.

The bottom line, Brown said, is that it is important to start saving money for college at the earliest possible time; time is the best asset, since it can add value to savings as more interest is compounded.



Suck it up and put your nose to the grindstone

w/ Suhail Ansari
World Editor

Each year around this time, student newspapers across the country—including this one on a number of occasions in past years—feature hand-wringing editorials by juniors and first semester seniors about the insane merry-go-round that includes the quest for the brass ring of education—that perfect college.

As part of such a quantitative culture, students go to often ridiculous lengths to engage in the pursuit of building the best and most competitive transcript. They take multiple classes in one discipline, such as an extra 294 minutes per week of science, on top of a standard 1,554 minutes-per-week seven-class period, often followed by clubs, sports and other extracurricular activities designed to pad their resumes and to catch the eye of an admissions officer at a prestigious university.

Such columns usually lament the emotional and physical strain placed on students as they strive to gain an edge over those in the crowded applicant pools of institutions of higher learning that become more and more selective every year. Such an obsession, the authors imply, merely induces students to make themselves temporarily miserable in order to ensure their dreams of a happier tomorrow, an unhealthy proposition at best, they suggest.

I have three words for such columnists: Get. Over. Yourselves.

Let us face facts. If students attain the honor of attending such prestigious institutions, they are more likely to build a more successful future for themselves and, ideally, a happier one. A little momentary misery in exchange for a lifetime of success can only be justified in my eyes.

At the risk of sounding Darwinian, I think we need a reality check. The truth is that or the successful ideal of the future, students must acquire the best job. The best job will pay the best; the best spouse will be attracted to such a successful careerist; this best union will father the best children; and they will repeat that cycle and uphold that "best" ideal. While the old aphorism that one's education garners the first job and one's experience gets every job thereafter may be true, if that first job is elite, imagine where one could go from there.

One may argue that such preoccupation with extrinsic reward is superficial and, perhaps, unnecessary. However, those who do not apply themselves in high school must settle for noncompetitive universities or community colleges and/or often end up working grueling, minimum wage, 40-hour-per-week jobs (as opposed to careers). Speaking of stress, imagine holding down a job that one despises while simultaneously trying to raise a family, with no hope of advancement.

Faced with such a prospect for the rest of one's working life, 180 days of torture doesn't seem all that intolerable, does it?

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