

THE BATTALION

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Alumni to give Bonfire feedback

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

Former students now have an opportunity to provide feedback on the revamped 2002 Aggie Bonfire at an online survey sponsored by The Association of Former Students.

The Association will analyze the responses and send a report to A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen, who is expected to decide Feb. 8 whether the Bonfire will burn next fall.

A survey to gauge the attitudes of current students toward Bonfire was completed last week and the results were released Tuesday.

The Association's survey, accessible through its Website, www.aggienetwork.com, is open to the public and asks respondents whether they support the revamped tradition with its strict safety features and whether they are willing to support Bonfire financially. Bonfire 2002 could cost as much as \$2 million, but the price tag of future Bonfires will be between \$500,000 to \$750,000, said Bonfire 2002 Steering Committee Coordinator Dr. Bryan Cole.

The survey also asks respondents to rank Bonfire against other programs The association supports, such as the Aggie Band, student scholarships and the support fund for Reveille.

Former students can also vote for which of one of three potential stack designs they prefer. In the student survey, more than 95 percent voted for the wedding cake-like structure, and Cole said that is the design the steering committee will recommend to Bowen. All logs touch the ground, but are cut to different lengths for a multi-level appearance.

The survey also allows alumni respondents a space to provide additional comments. The survey will be open until midnight Jan. 27, and the results will be posted on The Association's Website Jan. 31.

Rock and a hard place



STUART VILLANUEVA • THE BATTALION

Senior history major **Emily Arakelian** scratches an unidentified rock on a small plate of glass during a geology lab in Halbouty Geosciences Building on

Wednesday morning. Scratches on the glass will help determine the hardness of the rock and help identify it.

Faculty reviews SACS standing

By Emily Peters
THE BATTALION

A team of faculty is busy compiling data that an outside committee will review in April to determine if Texas A&M will be re-accredited with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The association is the recognized regional accrediting body for higher education in 11 U.S. Southern states.

A&M is currently accredited, but an updated review is required every 10 years.

Dr. Arthur M. Hobbs, a mathematics professor and a member of the University's re-accreditation effort, said accreditation means the University was formally reviewed and verified as a legitimate institution.

"They examine a roomful of material and certify that we are doing the job people expect from a university like ours, and that we are not a university more focused on research than students," he said.

Accreditation is vital to a school because many government and private funding agencies will not grant funds to unaccredited universities, Hobbs said.

"They want to make sure we aren't a fly-by-night place that hands out diplomas with no expectation from our students," he said.

Accreditation is based on both the university's compliance with current standards and strategic plans for the future, like Vision 2020.

A&M's last re-accreditation was in 1993, but the University was invited to conduct this review early to take part in a pilot program with nine other colleges to restructure the accreditation process.

The University's self-review process usually takes three years, with a roomful of paper for the review committee to go through during a campus visit, Hobbs said.

"The process was very time-consuming with enormous expenditures of effort by a lot of people," Hobbs said.

This year, A&M was the first university to submit its report online, significantly simplifying the system.

The revised program has two stages. The university compiles the information to send to an off-site

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A&M ranked 10th in nation's design schools

By Carol Treecce
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's College of Architecture was No. 10 in the Almanac of Architecture and Design's annual survey of the nation's top design schools.

A&M tied with Yale University. No other Texas school made the list.

The survey asked 3,000 U.S. design professionals to name schools from the 111 architecture programs currently accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board that best prepared their students to be successful in the architectural profession. The respondents were asked to answer based on their experience over the last 10 years.

"Though there are many outstanding design schools that did not make the list, the relevance of the surveys cannot easily be dismissed," said J. Thomas Regan, dean of the College of Architecture.

"The rankings amount to a customer satisfaction survey from the industry that will help A&M recruit faculty and students and increase the size of the college's career fairs," Regan said.

Among the factors considered in the survey are study abroad programs, opportunities for practical design experience and a low teacher-student ratio.

A&M advanced from No. 15 in the Almanac's 2001 top design list. Dr.

Philip Tabb, head of the architecture department, said this was caused by the school's study abroad programs in Italy, Spain, Guatemala and Mexico.

The college is in the process of designing a more structured work study program.

"Texas A&M's isolated location in a small city like College Station allows professors to focus full time on their classes, rather than working on design projects," Tabb said. A&M has the largest architecture doctorate program in the nation, with an enrollment of 60 students.

The Almanac of Architecture and Design is an annual reference book for professionals in all areas of the architecture industry.

Top Ten U.S. rankings for architecture colleges

1. Cornell University
2. Harvard University
3. University of Cincinnati
4. Syracuse University
5. Georgia Tech
6. University of Michigan
7. Iowa State University
8. University of Illinois
9. University of Virginia
10. Texas A&M University & Yale University

SOURCE: THE ALMANAC OF ARCHITECTURE DESIGN

ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

SCS offers academic support groups for students

By Melissa Sullivan
THE BATTALION

Students experiencing academic difficulties are offered counseling programs that teach study skills, stress-combat techniques, and may increase student grade-point ratios higher than a 2.0.

The Student Counseling Service offers two academic support groups this semester open to all students — the Academic Survival series, which begins Feb. 19 after the first round of exams, and Academic Anonymus, which begins on Jan. 30 with an emphasis on study strategies. Both programs will run until April.

"These groups are aimed at students

who are suffering from inconsistent performance, whether that be academic probation, or probation from a student organization," said Patti Collins, professional counselor for SCS.

Academic Survival is used in the fall as an aid for freshmen in the transition from high school to college.

"Both of these nine-week sessions focus on areas students have had the most trouble with in the past, including student motivation, attitude, study skills, and exam-day anxiety," Collins said.

"We try to find a student's weaknesses as well as their strengths and target them," Collins said.

Each session has students setting

academic goals and sharing success with the group. The programs also provide students with academic advisers

"We try to find a student's weaknesses as well as their strengths and target them."

— Patti Collins
professional counselor for SCS

and options for students who are struggling with their studies.

A&M receives grant for birth defect research

By Tanya Nading
THE BATTALION

A \$5.6 million research grant to the Texas A&M Health Science Center's Institute of Biosciences and Technology could save billions of dollars in health care costs for newborns with heart defects — and could save lives.

The grant for research of congenital heart defects in infants, from the National Institute of Health, is shared by the institute, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the California Birth Defects Monitoring Program.

The three teams will use different methods in an attempt to determine the relationship between heart defects,

drugs, environmental exposures and vitamin deficiencies in human babies.

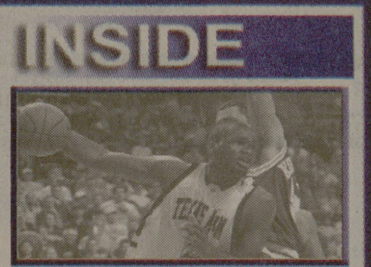
The research team, led by Dr. Richard H. Finnell, director of the institute, will study mice that have undergone genetic engineering to alter their susceptibility to congenital defects.

"We take molecular approaches to modify the mice so they are unable to

take in folic acid on their own," Finnell said. "This modification causes the mice to give birth to babies that have heart defects."

Finnell's team will then attempt to correct the problem with extensive quantities of vitamins to the mice, hoping to correct the birth defect problem.

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Sports Pg.1B

Aggies stun Longhorns

King leads Ags in 80-74 upset over UT

WEATHER TODAY

| | |
|------|-------|
| HIGH | 64° F |
| LOW | 44° F |

FRIDAY

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|------|-------|
| HIGH | 57° F |
| LOW | 33° F |

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.weathermanted.com