

Standards raised

Honor grads to need higher GPRs at A&M

New honors standards for graduating seniors have been established at Texas A&M University to meet a student government request to raise the requirements.

The higher standards will affect more than 12,000 freshmen and transfer students this fall and could cut the number of honor graduates in half. Approximately one-third of the Texas A&M seniors graduated with honors this past year.

"The idea of making it tougher to graduate with honors came from the student senate," explained Dr. J. M.

Prescott, vice president for academic affairs. "The student leaders felt that so many students were graduating with the title that it was starting to lose its meaning."

"The new requirements will affect any student who entered the university after June," he continued.

The old requirements made it possible for any student to graduate with honors by having a grade point average of 3.25 or better on Texas A&M's 4.0 grading scale, Dr. Prescott noted.

The new requirements raised the minimum grade point average for a

cum laude graduate to 3.5. Magna cum laude distinction went from 3.5 to 3.7 under the stricter standards. To obtain the highest academic distinction of all, summa cum laude, Texas A&M students must now have an average of at least 3.9. The old average was 3.75.

"These new requirements could cut the number of honor graduates in half," said Robert Baine, assistant registrar. "Some 30 percent of the students who graduated with honors this spring were honor graduates."

"That means roughly one out of every three received honor status," he added. "How many will graduate with honors under the new requirements is anyone's guess."

University officials said, however, that high grades don't necessarily point to "grade inflation," a situation that occurs when professors give high grades when not academically merited.

A study conducted within Texas A&M's College of Engineering, which accounts for some 25 percent of all students at the university, showed that since 1970 students

grades dropped one-tenth of one percent.

Some students welcome the stricter academic requirements.

"I'm all for it," said Tom Patterson, executive vice president of the Texas A&M Student Senate. "If you're going to have an honor, it should actually be one."

"This will say to students that Texas A&M demands excellence," said Patterson, a senior agricultural economics major. "If people want the distinction of graduating with honors, then they're going to have to work for it."

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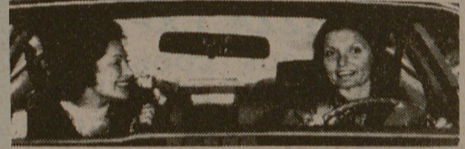


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Texans might could like talking thataway

United Press International
AUSTIN — Twenty years ago phrases such as "might could" and "ought to" were used only by East Texas farmers and other rural folk.

But according to Marianna Di Paola, a University of Texas linguistics instructor, more and more middle-class people are using "might could" and "ought to" — called double modal auxiliaries — in their conversations.

Ms. Di Paola said Texans — especially under 35 — are resorting to dialectal speech to declare themselves different from newcomers to the Lone Star State.

And the linguistics instructor has evidence that dialectal speech is becoming common in the every day conversation of many Texans.

Over the past two years, students in Ms. Di Paola's classes have asked their parents and friends to fill in the blanks of dialogues such as the following:

—If someone says to you, "I'm going to the store, can you use some

Texans are resorting to dialectal speech to declare themselves different from newcomers to the Lone Star State.

eggs," you answer: "I might use some."

—If you think someone has a job to do but you're not sure, you might suggest: "You might do this."

Ms. Di Paola said most of the participants answered with "might could" or "ought to" — and they were anything but backwoods farmers. Most of the participants were urban residents, well educated and native Texans.

Ms. Di Paola explained said the use of double modal auxiliaries among educated urbanites is a phenomenon that has been observed only recently. Prior to the dialect projects of her classes, most

"When you say, 'you might could do that,' you're also saying you're a Texan and proud of it."

linguists considered use of double modal auxiliaries to be a colloquial, rural phenomenon.

"It means that colloquial speech has become a 'prestige ruralism,'" Ms. Di Paola said. "It's a sign that Texans are more aware than ever before of their heritage and proud of it."

She said the Texas dialect survey compares with one conducted in Martha's Vineyard, an old Massachusetts sailing community that has become a resort area. Ms. Di Paola said that younger native residents of the community were using words and sounds that were common among the old-time sailors of the island.

"When you say, 'I might could do that,' you're also saying you're a Texan and proud of it."

Country of paradoxes finds racial accord

United Press International
MANZINI, Swaziland — It is a land of sharp contrasts between white and black, rich and poor, but Swaziland in 10 years of independence has struck a racial accommodation that is rare in Africa.

Britain granted independence to the tiny, 10,000-square-mile kingdom on Sept. 6, 1968, and the capital city of Manzini this month was bedecked with brilliantly colored banners marking the decade of self-rule.

King Sobhuza II, the Ngwanya (Lion) of Swaziland, has managed since independence to maintain a sense of unity and stability despite the startling — and sometimes bizarre — contrasts that characterize his nation.

White South Africans flock to elegant hotels and casinos in Mbabane, where they can see back-to-back pornographic movies and Las Vegas style nightclub acts prohibited in their own country.

But only miles away, young Swazi girls walk bare-breasted carrying tall veils to celebrate the "festival of virgins" marking their entrance into puberty.

There is also a stark contrast between the vast sugar cane plantations that exist side by side with subsistence agriculture.

It is a land of grinding poverty and shining elegance, ancient ways of life mixed with the 20th century. It is sandwiched between apartheid South Africa and socialist Mozambique — and maintains friendly relations with both.

Despite the abounding contrasts, a visitor discovers that white and black have struck an understanding which makes Swaziland refreshingly free of the racism practiced elsewhere in Africa.

"We are all brothers here," a black hotel matron in Manzini tells a white visitor. "We eat together from the same plate."

One key to Swaziland's success is that the 10,000 or so whites have been allowed to retain their economic dominance while political power is lodged in the hands of the 79-year-old Sobhuza. There are roughly half a million Swazis.

Whites hold the top positions in the hotels and casinos, in the shops and department stores and on the sugar cane plantations that provide Swaziland with its largest export.

"Swaziland is governed by blacks, but it is run by whites," said one white Swazi.

To be sure, Sobhuza is pressing his localization program, which calls for the gradual replacement of

whites by blacks. He issued a veiled warning to whites in his speech on Sept. 6 commemorating the 10 years of independence from Britain.

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Study shows less visibility in compacts

Drivers of compact cars and many intermediate and full-size autos should take extra care on hills and curves, a Texas A&M University study shows.

Their choice of automobile has significantly lowered the level at which they view traffic. They therefore see less, increasing the chances of accident.

Highway grade and no-passing zone design assumes driver eye height of 3.75 feet, an average obtained from 1960 studies.

A 1978 investigation by Texas A&M researchers Wiley Cunagin and Tony Abrahamson found it is now critically lower.

"For many drivers, eye height is clearly less than 3.5 feet," commented Cunagin, a research associate with the Texas Transportation Institute.

Some drivers therefore have less sight distance on vertical curves and, to a lesser degree, on horizontal curves, the researchers' report indicates.

Their study indicates consideration should be given to modification of striping for no passing zones and design of curves.

"Current standards do not allow sufficient time for lower cars to return to their lane," Cunagin commented. "The sight distance is just insufficient."

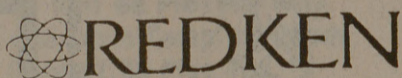
Abrahamson and Cunagin evaluated driver eye height measurements from 161 side view photographs of different passenger cars and pickup trucks. Their sample included 62 small and subcompact cars, 86 intermediate and full-size models and 13 pickup trucks.



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