

# Texas A&M The Battalion

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## Improvement center response optimistic

by Robert McGlohon

Battalion Staff

The response the Center for Teaching Excellence has received during its first year at the University has been striking, says the center coordinator.

The center, which was established a year ago this month, helps faculty and administrators maintain and improve the quality of instruction at Texas A&M.

Coordinator Glenn Ross Johnson, member of the advisory committee, was appointed coordinator of the center in January of this year.

"I've been amazed at how well this has been received," Johnson said.

If the center, which is located on the first floor of Harrington Tower, has to have a slogan over its door, it would read "Dedicated To Excellence in Teaching," Johnson said.

"Everything that comes out of here has that slogan behind it," he said.

In striving toward its goal of excellence in teaching, the center offers many services. Johnson teaches short-term workshops with such titles as "Preparation and Delivery of Lectures," "Test Construction for Your Course" and "Alternatives to the Lecture."

He also teaches longer workshops, such as "Cognitive Interaction Analysis" and "Enhancing College Teaching," the latter offered to both teaching assistants and faculty.

Both workshops are offered on college and department levels. However, the long-term workshops require a minimum of 10 faculty or administrators.

In addition to the workshops, the center offers individual consultations either through direct or videotaped classroom observation. In the past the consultations were offered by one of Johnson's assistants — who left in May. The position will be vacant until September.

Johnson stresses that any consultation with the center is confidential and is not used for instructor evaluation.

Despite the success of the workshops and consultations, Johnson said that by far the most popular of the center's projects are the "Network of College Professors Teaching" and the incentive grants.

The "Network of College Professors Teaching" is Johnson's own brainstorm, one designed to make the most of the talent at Texas A&M. He

isolated 350 instructors, deemed by their peers to be especially proficient at their jobs, and asked them to form the network and lead seminars throughout the year on subjects of their choosing.

Surveying the 160 responses he has received so far, Johnson said the reaction has been extremely favorable.

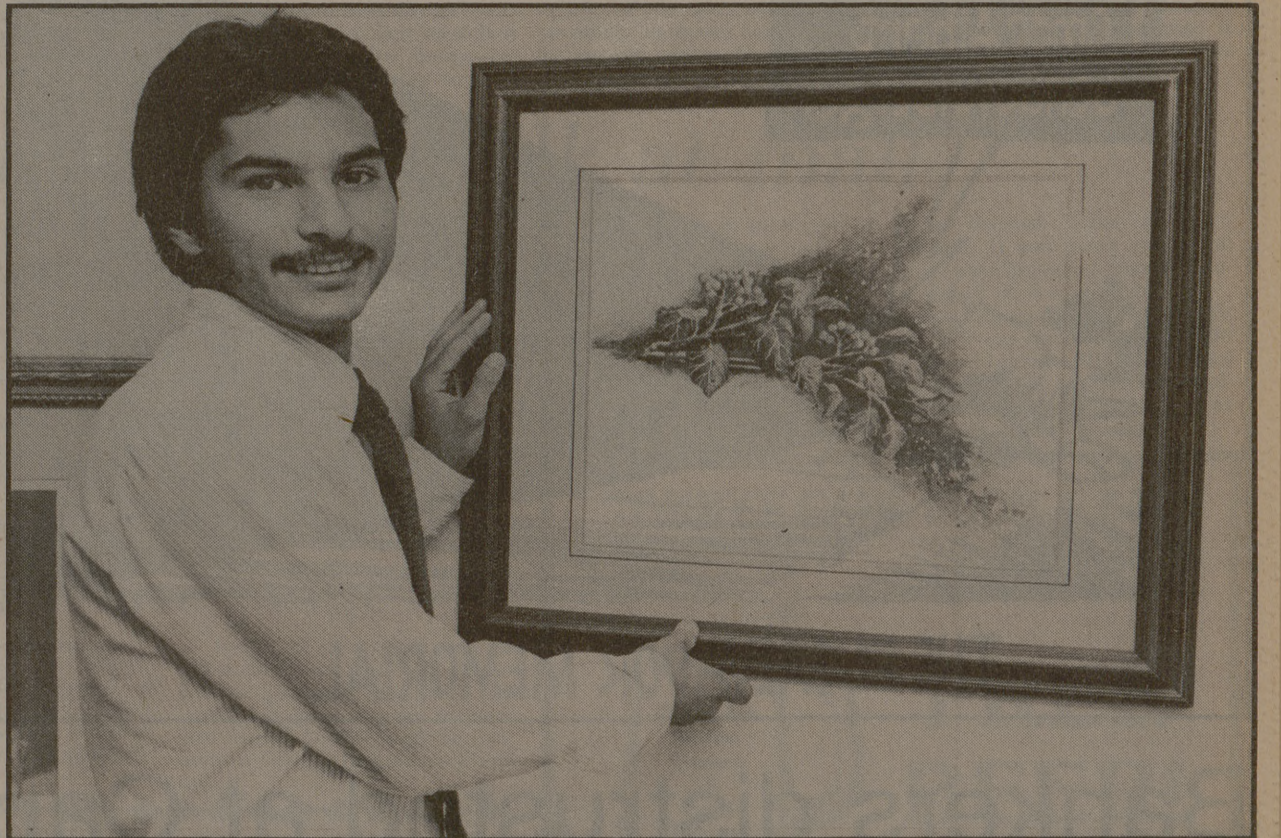
"I had no idea there would be that kind of response," he said.

Another program that has been received well is the incentive grant program, Johnson said. Here the focus is on innovative teaching. Instructors are to use the grants "to do something different than conventional," Johnson said.

Examples of how the grants are used include: computer-assisted instruction, case studies and audio-tutorial programs. One instructor used his \$1,000 grant to buy the apparatus necessary to videotape living microorganisms, Johnson said.

Originally, only 10 grants were available. However, the Association of Former Students recently donated an additional \$25,000 to the program.

"(The incentive grant program) has caught on quicker than anything we've done so far," Johnson said.



staff photo by Peter Rocha

Mike Lara displays one of his prize-winning paintings. Lara will display at least 13 of his paintings at the River Bend Art Gallery

in College Station Friday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Lara's paintings will be exhibited until June 18.

## Engineering student paints, shows portraits

by Scott Griffin

Battalion Staff

Michael Lara uses some interesting aids in his work as a painter — a hairdryer, a toothbrush and a nail.

To some, the use of the tools may seem rather unconventional, at least for an artist, but Lara has an explanation.

"In one of my mountain scenes, I have these trees in the background. I use a nail because it's sharp, and it helps lift up the trees. And I love to use a toothbrush, it's my favorite. I can throw any color on — it's a finishing touch, like dessert or something. I use the hairblower to dry with if I don't want to work wet on wet."

Lara will display at least 13 of his paintings at the River Bend Art Gallery in College Station Friday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The exhibit will run until June 18.

A mechanical engineering student here, Lara began his painting career in his pre-school days.

"I started drawing pictures when I was in kindergarten, and through the years, I kept it up."

"When I was in junior high, my mom started taking me to art lessons, and I painted in oils until my

senior year of high school," he says. "After oils, I started painting in wash technique, which is acrylic and watercolor. And then in 1982 and 1983 I started painting in watercolors."

Lara describes the steps in producing a painting. "Usually, before I do any painting I go through a week of preliminaries. I do a lot of fast sketches and drawings, then I start the painting."

Lara takes about two weeks to start and finish a painting, he says, working three to four hours per day.

"I usually work from about 10 at night until two or three in the morning because I can't paint when people are around — too many distractions."

Lara says he likes to paint all types of subjects. In his collection, one can find everything from a drawing of a rugged cowboy to a painting of a sunflower.

But right now, Lara says he doesn't want to pursue painting as a career, citing the low pay.

"Artists go month by month," Lara says, "and some months are really bad. I'd like to get an engineering job, get some money in

the bank, and then take up art on a full-time basis."

He decided to attend Texas A&M to study engineering because of the challenge it presents, he says.

But Lara says he enjoys painting, and his efforts in that area have not gone unrewarded. In 1980 and 1981 he won two scholarships from the Coppini Academy in San Antonio.

He recently won first place in the watercolor division of a contest sponsored by the Brazos Valley Art League, and won first place at a watercolor contest this spring at the University.

Lara says he's learned to paint with watercolors on his own, but his mother has helped him.

"She gives me the critique I need," he says. "If I ever slack off on a painting, she lets me know about it and pushes me to work harder."

After college, Lara says he wants to move back to his hometown, San Antonio.

"It's a good art area," Lara says. "It's an art-oriented city, and it gets better every year."

## Nicaraguans expelled

United Press International  
MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaragua's leftist government arrested the leaders of an opposition party, charging they had contacts with three U.S. diplomats expelled for allegedly plotting to kill the country's foreign minister.

In harsh retaliation for the expulsion of the American diplomats, the State Department Tuesday ordered

21 Nicaraguans in diplomatic service to leave the United States and closed six Nicaraguan consulates in the country.

The move in Washington brought a swift condemnation from Nicaragua's ambassador to the United Nations, Javier Chamorro.

"This is one more step toward the hardening of relations between the

U.S. and Nicaragua," Chamorro said. "I hope it does not lead to a situation of war."

Nicaragua accused Linda M. Pfeifel, a political affairs officer, David Noble Greig, first secretary, and Ermila Loreta Rodriguez, second secretary, of plotting to kill Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto with poisoned brandy.

## House committee OKs cutoff of covert aid

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — The House Foreign Affairs Committee approved, 20-14, today a Democratic-backed bill that would force the administration to halt U.S. support for anti-Nicaraguan rebels.

The bill, previously approved by the House Intelligence Committee, was sent to the full House where administration supporters hope to modify the absolute cutoff of covert aid.

The vote to report the bill favor-

ably was on almost a straight party line, with just one Republican voting for it.

The Democrats rejected President Reagan's claims that aid to the Nicaraguan rebels is intended only to stem the flow of arms from Nicaragua to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador.

The Nicaraguan insurgents "are actively seeking to trigger a civil war in which thousands would die," said Rep. Gerry Studds, D-Mass.

Rep. Dan Mica, D-Fla., voted with his fellow Democrats, but indicated

he will press efforts to reach a compromise acceptable to both sides when the bill comes up on the House floor. Negotiations had been under way between the Democrats and administration officials, but the talks failed to produce an acceptable plan.

In a key vote Monday, the committee rejected, 21-12, a Republican amendment that would have halted the covert aid to the rebels only when Nicaragua agreed to stop aiding leftist guerrillas in neighboring countries.

## University student charged with check forgery

by Kelley Smith

Battalion Staff

A Texas A&M student was charged Tuesday with forgery by possession, a third degree felony, said University Police Detective John Phillips.

Police arrested David Lackey of Nacogdoches Monday at the Coke Building while he was attempting to cash another student's check, Phillips said.

Phillips said Lackey allegedly

cashied eight personalized checks for a total of \$1,425. The checks reportedly were stolen from a student's condominium along with the student's identification card.

Phillips said that until Tuesday police had no leads to who had been cashing the student's checks. However, police notified workers at the Coke Building that someone was cashing forged checks and they were told not

to cash any more of the student's checks.

It was when Lackey tried to cash the check Tuesday that a worker at the Coke Building called the University Police.

Lackey allegedly used the student's stolen identification card to cash the checks, Phillips said.

Lackey resembles the photograph on the identification card, he added.

The penalties for a third degree

felony range from two to 10 years in prison and up to a \$5,000 fine. However, Phillips said the penalties sometimes can be reduced.

Lackey is awaiting an indictment. He also may face University action, Phillips said.

Lackey's attorney and the district attorney will decide whether there will be a plea bargain. In a plea bargain, the defendant pleads guilty and

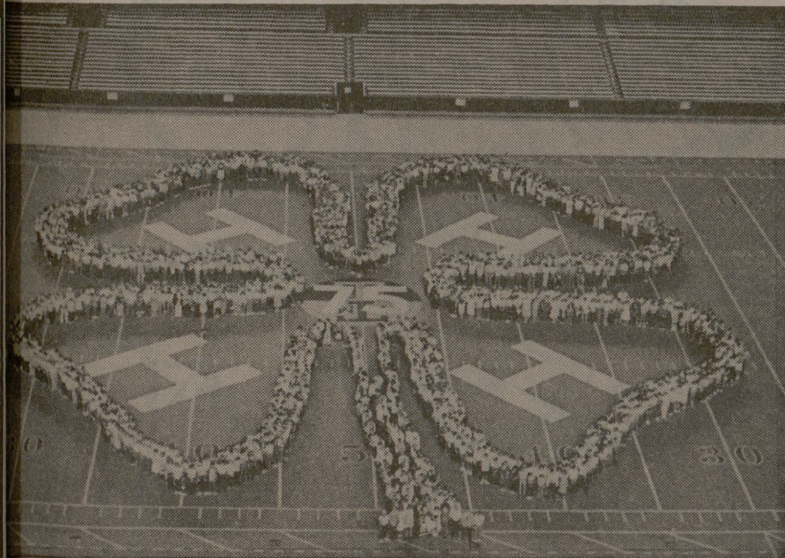
the case does not go to court. The suspect usually receives a lesser charge and sentence in this type arrangement.

If a plea bargain is agreed upon, Lackey could receive two to five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine or about a six-year deferred adjudication term and restitution — paying back the money.

Under deferred adjudication, the suspect pleads guilty but is not found

guilty or innocent. The suspect is placed on a probation term, which if completed without problems, can result in the charge being taken off the suspect's criminal record. If the suspect causes trouble during the term, the charge and a guilty sentence are permanently placed on his record.

Phillips said there is no guarantee that there will be a plea bargain or that the student's money will be paid back.



staff photo by Peter Rocha

### Looking over a four-leaf clover

Approximately 2,300 4-H members and sponsors form a giant clover on Kyle Field Tuesday evening to have their picture taken. The photo session was part of the 75th anniversary of the 4-H Roundup held here.

## Thatcher asks British voters for a conservative landslide

United Press International  
LONDON — Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher headed into her final campaign day today, challenging voters to give the Conservatives a landslide election victory and banish the "dark divisive clouds" of socialism from Britain.

"The choice at this election is crucial. It is about the very nature of the country our children will grow up in," Thatcher told a standing crowd of supporters in Fleetwood in her last major speech before the balloting Thursday.

The latest opinion polls today put Thatcher on course to win a spectacular victory for five more years of conservative government, with as much as a 252-seat majority in Britain's 650-seat Parliament.

The opposition Labor Party and a Social Democratic-Liberal Alliance were battling for second place. Two new polls showed the Conservatives at 45-46 percent, with the main Labor

opposition at only 28 percent and the Alliance just behind at 25-26 percent.

"At this election, we have a chance to banish forever the dark divisive clouds of extreme left-wing Socialism. It's a clear decisive choice," Thatcher said. "And we are asking for a clear decisive mandate, a mandate to carry out the will of the people."

Unlike the American system, Britain does not vote as such for a prime minister. The party with a majority of seats is invited by the queen to form a government and that party's leader becomes prime minister. Despite her lead in the polls, Thatcher faces 10 opponents in her own district, more than any other candidate defending a constituency. Only two are considered serious contenders, however.

Thatcher's fringe opponents include a man dressed in a Batman costume anxious to enter the Guinness Book of Records for polling the smallest number of votes, and the rock singer Screaming Lord Sutch from

the Monster Raving Loony Party who wants to bring back the village idiot.

On the last day of campaigning, the prime minister turned her attention to her own constituency of Finchley in north London, while opposition Labor leader Michael Foot headed to his electoral home base in south Wales.

Both had problems on the campaign trail Tuesday.

Outside her wildly successful Fleetwood speech, the mood was ugly. A crowd of about 100 people yelling "coward" threw eggs and posters at Thatcher's car. She was unharmed, but one man was arrested.

Foot, an easy target in an open bus while campaigning in Manchester, was hit in the shoulder with a tomato. A woman with Conservative supporters hurled an egg at the Labor Party bus, and in a third incident some youths threw a flour bomb at Foot and missed.

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### forecast

Clear to partly cloudy skies today with a high of 86. Winds from the southeast at 10 mph. Mild temperatures tonight with a low near 66. Partly cloudy skies Thursday with a high near 88.