



# State of the A

by Angel Stokes  
Battalion Staff

Traditionally the fine arts — music, painting, sculpture, theater and other forms of cultural expression — have been considered unnecessary at Texas A&M.

Current trends in the administration reflect awareness of the need for cultural enhancement, but no great changes have been made.

"The attitude of the administration from Chancellor (Arthur G.) Hansen on down is popular and aggressive toward arts," says J. Wayne Stark, special assistant to the President for cultural development.

But, he says that too many projects, such as the industrial park, are in the works and all the money needed can't be raised at one time. The administration must decide what projects come first.

University President Frank E. Vandiver says Texas A&M is entering a period of long-range planning and certain things have to be done first. But, he says, as these things are accomplished, resources must be saved for programs that are needed further down the road.

"No university can afford to move in only the practical areas," he says.

Texas A&M doesn't rank highly with respect to fine arts in comparison to other major universities, Vandiver says.

"But our history is part of the cause...A&M was organized as a land-grant university...based on agriculture and engineering," he says.

"We need to start almost from scratch in regard to fine arts," he says.

## Target 2000 report

When the Target 2000 Committee presented its System-wide report at the May 1983 Board of Regents meeting, several recommendations for establishing and expanding fine arts at the University. The commit-

tee — established as a special committee to research the University and make recommendations for where it should be by the year 2000 — had members from all over Texas and the United States.

Recommendations include:

- Establishment of a baccalaureate degree program in the fine arts.
- Construction and establishment of a major visual arts center.
- Enrichment of the University's cultural environment.
- Facilities and opportunities for students to experience a rich variety of cultural resources and events that develop sophistication in appreciation of the arts.

The establishment of a baccalaureate degree program in fine arts at the undergraduate level is considered high priority, according to the committee's academic report, because with elective options for non-majors the program would enhance and improve the quality of life of Texas A&M graduates.

But approval for establishing a fine arts department must come from the state Coordinating Board. The 18-member board was set up by the Texas Legislature in 1965 to coordinate and prevent duplication of programs at all public institutions of

higher learning in Texas.

Two requirements the board has for approving a new degree program are:

- Does the program fit the board's definition of the institution?
- Do similar programs exist in the state?

*"The attitude of the administration from Chancellor (Arthur G.) Hansen on down is popular and aggressive toward arts." — J. Wayne Stark.*

At least three requests in the past six years for an art department have been denied by the Coordinating Board, Stark says.

Stark says the board feels that students interested in art can attend universities such as the University of Texas and Southwest Texas State University which already have art departments. Also, the board still defines Texas A&M as a land-grant college with an emphasis on science, engineering and agriculture.

But the University administration argues that balance is needed between the expanded science programs and the underdeveloped area of arts, Stark says.

Vandiver says the Coordinating Board needs to be hit hard with the idea of a fine arts department. He says it would add a great deal to the University.

"We can't be without fine arts," he says, "if we are to be a comprehensive institution."

## Visual arts center

The addition of a fine arts program would support the operation of the recommended visual arts center.

Some members of the Target 2000 Committee also are members of the Texas A&M Commission on Visual Arts — a committee of approximately 125 people from seven or eight states who were appointed by the president.

The studies by the commission include size and cost of a visual arts center, Stark says.

Already a collection of Western and Impressionist art has been offered to the University, he says. The owner, John W. Runyon Jr. of Dallas, is a former student. Stark says Runyon has made one stipulation to the donation: the building to house the collection must be in a heavily traveled area of campus. He says Runyon wants the collection to be easily accessible to students.

The visual arts center will be named the Texas A&M Art Center, Stark says, because studies have shown that people have a dislike for the name art museum.