

Target 2000 plan improving condition of the arts at A&M

By ROBIN BLACK
Senior Staff Writer

At Texas A&M, an institution noted nationally for its traditions, visual and fine arts have traditionally been excluded from the mainstream of campus life. Changes are in the planning stage, however, to increase the amount of both academic and extracurricular humanities at the University.

Target 2000, a long-range plan created by the Texas A&M Board of Regents, was formally introduced in May 1983 to improve existing resources at the University and create new ones — such as humanities and fine arts — that had previously been absent.

Now, just over a year since the general report for Target 2000 was published, signs of progress in the humanities area can be seen. The various colleges are upgrading their departments and reworking degree plans; a visual arts degree — the first art degree of any kind to be considered at Texas A&M — has been proposed by the College of Architecture and Environmental Design; plans for a special events center are in the works; and a core curriculum — with a minimum humanities requirement — is in the developmental stage.

The proposed art degree, one of several presented to the state Coordinating Board in recent years, focuses on a strong technical base with an emphasis on computer graphics. The third and fourth years of study will have a strong base in design graphics, and the student will choose one of two areas of specialization.

One area of specialization will be toward design media and includes drawing and painting, computer graphics and commercial design. The other area will be directed toward 3-dimensional design and includes engineering and technical courses in metals and casting.

This, combined with courses in wood, will provide a student with an opportunity to develop sculptural as well as practical and functional skills, said environmental design Prof. Joe Hutchinson.

Hutchinson is a member of the

committee appointed within the college to outline the visual arts degree plan.

Hutchinson said the committee sees the new art program as a natural offshoot of the current environmental design program.

"Environmental design has gotten to be more directed toward architecture rather than the creative pro-

Arguments against an art degree have been that Texas A&M is primarily a technical university and there is no need for an art degree here since the University of Texas has a strong liberal arts program.

Hutchinson said he feels the proposed degree stands a better chance of approval from the Coordinating Board because of the emphasis on

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Arguments against a tentative part of Target 2000 — an art degree at Texas A&M — have been that the University is primarily a technical university and there is no need for an art degree here since the University of Texas has a strong liberal arts program.

gram that was first developed," he said. "This is primarily because of the changing economic picture within the building trades."

He said Charles Hicks and John Greer, administrators in the environmental design and architecture college, have long felt, along with the art faculty, that there has been a need within the college and within the University to develop a visual studies program.

"I think we can also say safely that the University administration feels sympathetic towards our proposal," Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson said the basic core for the new arts program will be the same as in environmental design and landscape architecture.

He also said all students in the visual arts program will be required to develop a strong portfolio to aid in getting a job after graduation or to use to help get into graduate school.

The proposed new degree plan is one of several art degrees that have been presented in recent years, but all those before met with opposition either with the Board of Regents or with the state Coordinating Board.

technical skills. "The committee feels that there is a need to change the traditional B.A. in fine arts toward a more practical curriculum which will allow students the opportunity to be competitive within the job market," he said.

The committee is in the final stages of planning the program and has already started trying to sell the idea to earn support before it is formally presented to the Coordinating Board. To help push the program, the committee has made an 8-minute videotape describing all facets of the new program.

If the program is approved, there will be a lot of changes going on within the environmental design and architecture departments.

Hutchinson said if the degree plan is approved, it would probably be operational by the fall 1985 semester and he anticipates the program will grow to more than 400 students in seven to 10 years of operation.

Some sign of life is finally visible in talk of building a special events center on campus.

Present facilities — those in the

Rudder complex as well as G. Rollie White Coliseum and the Grove — are insufficient for the activities they're used for. G. Rollie White seats only about 6,000 and has deplorable acoustics and Rudder Auditorium seats only 2,500. Texas A&M has an enrollment of more than 36,000 students.

Because of the archaic facilities, campus organizations such as MSC Townhall and MSC Townhall/Broadway sometimes have trouble attracting the same entertainment that the Frank Erwin special events center at the University of Texas does.

Last spring the Board of Regents finally approved plans authorizing a preliminary design for a special events center at Texas A&M. The architect hired to do the initial plans is none other than the same architect who designed the Frank Erwin center.

Two requests the regents have made about the preliminary design is that it seat more than 17,000 people (the Erwin center seats about 17,000) and that it not look like the Erwin center.

Estimated cost for the center at Texas A&M is well over \$1 million, and it probably won't be completed until sometime in or after 1986.

Even with elaborate plans, the regents' dreams of a more culturally oriented university won't be realized for at least a few more years. Until then, there are some cultural activities at Texas A&M that students can take advantage of.

Two organizations on campus — MSC Arts Committee and the University Art Exhibits — bring a good deal of culture to the University each year.

Other programs students can participate in include: the acting group Aggie Players; vocal music programs including the Century Singers (a mixed vocal group), Women's Chorus (female vocal group), the Singing Cadets (male vocal group) and the Reveillers (mixed modern/jazz group); the Texas A&M jazz band and symphonic band; and the Dance Arts Society.

Texas ranch town gets new museum

United Press International

MARFA — The new \$4 million Art Museum of the Pecos — a 345-acre showplace of modern art funded by the DIA Foundation of New York City — is scheduled to open to the public next year.

But already the residents of this West Texas farm and ranch community are divided in their opinions of the concrete boxes and crushed automobile sculptures acclaimed by big-city art critics.

The brainchild of sculptor Donald Judd, the new museum is located on the site of Fort D.A. Russell, home of the last cavalry regiment to be phased out of the U.S. Army.

In addition to Judd's creations, the museum will have the works of John Chamberlain, Dan Flavin and the late Barnett Newman. All four are nationally renown in art circles.

Fifteen giant concrete box sculptures by Judd already are displayed in a grassy meadow that was once the fort's parade grounds, Antelope Field.

In the heart of downtown Marfa, population 2,466, the DIA foundation is renovating the wool and mohair building to house Chamberlain's crushed automobile sculptures as part of the museum complex.

Terry White, manager of an arts and crafts shop in Marfa, said opinions in the town are divided over the aesthetic qualities of the art.

"Personally, I think it's a good idea that we have this museum to expose our people to different types of art," she said. "The general idea of art around here is a painting of some desert scene."

Marco Giles, a retired school teacher, said he has kept up with the work of modern artists but has not been able to develop a taste for the concrete blocks, which can be seen from long distances on the highways leading into Marfa.

Giles said he could not help but think of all the people who could be fed with the \$15,000 per slab

of concrete used in the boxes.

But 76-year-old Harry Fraybrook, a Marfa oldtimer, thinks the new museum is an asset to the city and admires Chamberlain's ability to take junk and make something out of it.

At the old fort on the outskirts of Marfa, the concrete box sculptures are located about 200 feet apart from each other on the historic field. The 1st Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Army bid for Antelope Field Jan. 25, 1992, according to a photograph in the administrative offices of the museum, a renovated barracks. The ceremony is believed to have marked the last use of horses by the U.S. Army.

"We're renovating everything, but we're still trying to preserve the nature of the military post," she said.

Although the post was closed in the 1930s, the installation was reopened during World War II to house German prisoners of war. Two long warehouse-like buildings called gunsheds which once housed German prisoners are now the permanent home for 56 of Judd's box sculptures made of unfinished aluminum.

"Museums that house sculpture need to be spacious," Campbell explained. Plans call for a new domed roof for the gunsheds. Brick walls were ripped out, replaced by plate glass sides.

"The new roof will cool the building naturally," she said. "We will use available sunlight when it is better for the works of art, as well as practical."

By the end of the year, Campbell said, the museum will complete the renovation of a barracks to house the astonishing fluorescent lighting sculptures by Flavin that bend around corridors.

Marfa promoters hope the new museum will attract modern art lovers and tourists to bolster the economy of the drought-ridden cattle-industry town, about 200 miles southeast of El Paso.

The decentralization of art museums from big cities to smaller communities is a trend of the future, he said.

Vocal group offers audiences variety

By JEFF WRIGHT
Reporter

The Century Singers, established in 1971 as the New Tradition Singers, is the only mixed choir among the four vocal groups at Texas A&M.

The original name recognized women as the "new tradition." The present name was adopted in 1976 in honor of the University's centennial.

"Most choral literature is written for mixed groups, so we have a lot of freedom in our choice of music," director Patty Fleitas says. "We take advantage of that freedom and cre-

ate an exciting and fun way to represent Texas A&M."

The choir's purpose is to represent Texas A&M in the community and in other cities. About 12 to 15 concerts are booked for the year, including conventions and church services. Although about 60 percent of its repertoire is classical, the choir performs music from all periods of literature and for all types of audiences.

"We try to appeal to all audiences by offering a diverse selection of music," Fleitas says. "We perform pop music, show tunes and even a little jazz."

The choir rehearses a minimum of four and a half hours a week. Rehearsals are at noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Any Texas A&M student is eligible for membership in the choir through a vocal audition and an informal interview. Auditions are held the first two weeks of each semester. The audition, which consists of singing a familiar song and sight reading (singing a song you have never seen before), is given by the director. The interview is conducted by a committee from the choir.

New members are called Pollards.

They are named for Rick Pollard, former Century Singer who was the choir for 13 semesters. Pollard has certain duties that help him earn the right to be a Century Singer member.

Kathleen Campbell, a Century Singer, says it's fun to be in the choir. You get to meet a lot of people you wouldn't ordinarily meet, since people from all over the campus join the choir, she says.

"The neatest thing about choir is that it's a group of Aggies that share a common love of music," Campbell says. "It gives you a real sense of belonging."

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For additional information, call or visit:

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