

# State and Local

## Senate bill seeks deposit reduction in Aggie Point Plan

By Rodney Rather  
Staff Writer

Three bills were introduced to the Student Senate Wednesday that call for reductions in Aggie Point Plan deposits, urge the University to reestablish 24-hour health care at A.P. Beutel Health Center and state the need for the University to install more bicycle racks around the Zachry Engineering Center.

All three bills were sent to the student services committee after their introduction to the senate.

The bill recommending lower deposits for the point plan, which was introduced by senator Chris Dowdy, says the current \$250 minimum deposit required for initial activation of a point plan should be lowered to \$175 and that the subsequent deposit, which is the minimum amount that can be added to an account, should be lowered from \$100 to \$75.

Additionally, the bill calls for the withdrawal fee — charged when students drop the plan before their account is exhausted — be lowered from \$50 to \$25. It also says the withdrawal fee should not be imposed on graduating seniors or any student during the first or last week of the semester.

The bill urging the University to reinstate 24-hour emergency care at the University health center was introduced by senator Chris Kopp and reinforces the view held by the Graduate Student Council.

A letter from the graduate council written this summer to John Koldus, Texas A&M vice president for student services, says 24-hour emergency service is needed because of the large amount of campus activity at night and on weekends.

The bicycle bill was introduced by Jose Castro, chairman of student services, and says more bicycle racks are needed at Zachry because many students run into bikes that have fallen on the sidewalk.

6-year sequence to be national model

## A&M begins special ed. program

By Jinks Gholson  
Reporter

Not many people know that a special education major exists or exactly what it is.

But the U.S. government thought it important enough to give funds to Texas A&M to implement a new six-year program and use it as a national model, said Dr. Douglas Palmer, associate professor of educational psychology.

A&M's special education program involves teaching education students to deal primarily with mentally disabled children in a classroom environment.

Palmer said it's rare for the government to give undergraduate scholarships in the area of special education.

A&M began its generic special education program in 1977, and plans for the mandatory master's program began five years later, Palmer said.

He said the A&M special education staff began developing the program through research and collaboration with other colleagues in the field to decide exactly what teachers need to know.

"If we are going to be involved in teacher training, we want to have the best training experience possible," he said.

Mary Millan, one of three students currently involved in the graduate phase of the program, said she believes the best part of the program is the in-class experience she receives.

*"If we are going to be involved in teacher training, we want to have the best training experience possible. It's what the teachers who have been teaching for a while said they needed to have but never got in their training."*

— Douglas Palmer, Texas A&M associate professor of educational psychology.

"I feel like I could go ahead and teach even without student teaching," she said.

Palmer stressed that hands-on training is one of the most important parts of the special education curriculum and one of the reasons the special education faculty decided to extend the program.

Millan and the other two special education graduate students, Laura Steffy and Lane Minor, all could have graduated under the old four-year program but decided to change to the six-year program during their senior year.

Minor said she knew she would eventually have to get her master's degree and considered A&M's program a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so she took it.

Steffy agreed, saying she had already planned on getting her master's, and that she knew it would be beneficial for her to go ahead and do it now.

Palmer said he thinks the design of the training program is unique.

"It's what a lot of people have been talking about," he said. "It's what the research has been saying. It's what teachers that have been teaching for a while have said they needed to have but never got in their training."

"So we are a program that decided to design something that really did reflect what the field has been saying for years."

Palmer said the new program is rigorous. To be accepted, students must maintain a 3.0 grade-point ratio during the last 60 hours of their undergraduate degrees. They also go through a clinic the summer before their senior year.

In addition to the instructional part of the clinic, he said, the students also attend classes.

If students don't get accepted into the graduate phase, they change to elementary or secondary education. Students can no longer graduate with a four-year undergraduate degree in special education.

Palmer compared getting into the graduate phase of the program to getting accepted into law or medical schools. The undergraduate level includes the breadth of the program, while the graduate level focuses primarily on hands-on training, he said.

## Correction

The Oct. 8 issue of *The Battalion* ran an article about a bill to raise the speed limit to 65 mph on some parts of the Texas interstate system.

Sgt. Fred Forsthoft of the Texas Highway Patrol was quoted as saying a higher speed limit would not increase the traffic fatality rate, and the speed limit could be raised on some sections of Texas interstate highways.

However, Forsthoft now adds that lifting the speed limit wouldn't be smart because some drivers might maintain the higher rate when traveling on a highway with a lower speed limit.

He adds, "I, as well as the Department of Public Safety, support the current 55 mph limit on the basis of its life-saving effect."

## NASA to build \$40 million visitors' center at Houston site

SPACE CENTER, Houston (AP) — NASA's Johnson Space Center announced plans Wednesday to build a \$40 million visitors' center with a mini-Astrondome and two high-tech movie theaters, all at no cost to taxpayers.

The visitor's center will be built on 123 acres of unused land at the Johnson Center and NASA officials hope to have it open and operating by late 1988 or 1989.

A large geodesic dome, a small-scale version of Houston's famed Astrondome, will be the central structure of the center. The two theaters will show the new Omnimax and Imax type of motion pictures.

A part of the visitors complex will be a space education center dedicated to the Challenger astronauts and paid for by donations, officials said.

Plans call for a nonprofit foundation, the

Manned Space Flight Education Foundation, Inc., to receive a license to build and operate the center.

Harold Stall, president of the foundation and JSC public affairs director, said studies predict about 1.7 million visitors annually to the center within a short time after it is opened.

Stall said the foundation will issue tax-free bonds to pay for the construction. These bonds will be repaid through funds collected for admission tickets and sales of souvenirs and food at the center.

JSC currently has a visitors center that charges no admission, but the space equipment on display is scattered among a number of buildings.

"It's clear that our facilities now are woefully inadequate," said Stall. More than a million people tour the JSC facilities annually, but they must share parking and cafeteria facilities with employees. The center of the current visitors complex is an auditorium building that must be closed to tourists occasionally for JSC employee functions.

The new complex will be on the edge of the 1,620 acres that make up the Johnson Space Center. Stall said that a perimeter fence will be moved inward and that security gates will be relocated. This will permit tourists to go to the visitors complex without passing through NASA security, as is now required.

Groundbreaking for the new facility is expected in the first quarter of 1987. Plans call for these displays at the center:

- A simulated lunar landscape, with a full-scale lunar lander, lunar car and moon surface scientific equipment;
- A Mission Control Center simulation;

- An exhibit hall that will include a spacecraft from the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo eras, a full scale mock-up of the Skylab spacecraft, a bookstore and gift shop, and food services. This hall would be housed in a 120,000-square-foot geodesic dome rising 140 feet above the display floor.
- Two theaters that will show films in the large Imax and Omnimax formats. These projections provide viewers with 180-degree left-to-right and 90-degree vertical panoramas.

Films on space flight will be shown, including one film that was taken by special cameras during four space shuttle missions.

Chanello's Prediction:

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