

Ocean research brings world scientists to A&M

By Curtis Culberson
Reporter

A&M to open ODP facility, University research park

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Texas A&M will dedicate the new world headquarters of the Ocean Drilling Program Friday at 4 p.m., officially opening the University's new research park on Discovery Drive, located just west of the veterinary school.

Board of Regents Chairman David Eller will present the \$5 million facility to University President Dr. Frank E. Vandiver.

Dr. Mark Money, vice chancellor for research park and corporate relations, will give a short address to open the 434-acre research park which is designed to attract high-tech industry to the University community.

Michel Halbouty, chairman of the Geosciences and Earth Resources Advisory Council, and

Dr. D. James Baker, president of Joint Oceanographic Institutions, Inc., also will speak at the dedication.

Dr. Melvin Friedman, dean of the College of Geosciences, will preside over the program and ODP Director Philip Rabinowitz will speak on the presentation of the new program facility.

The new 60,000-square-foot Ocean Drilling complex is the world's largest and most sophisticated facility of its kind, Rabinowitz said, and the world's best facility for studying core samples taken from below the ocean floor. Construction already has begun on a 40,000-square-foot office and laboratory facility for the research park's first corporate tenant, Granada Genetics. A subsidiary of Granada Corp.

water. All this allows the ship to handle a rig which, in turn, can handle more than 30,000 feet of drill pipe.

Rabinowitz says the ship has seven stories of laboratories, including a chemistry lab, an X-ray lab, a petrology lab and a photography lab.

Rabinowitz adds that the ship has two mainframe VAX-750 computers that communicate by satellite with two other mainframes stationed in the new program facility.

"The two computer systems completely mirror each other, giving us vast computer capability," he says.

The ship already has completed 12 cruises, uncovering new information about the causes of long-term changes in the Earth's atmosphere, its oceans, polar regions, biosphere and magnetic field as well as information on climate and tectonic evolution.

Another 2-month cruise is planned for January to the Antarctic, Rabinowitz says.

After each expedition, the different scientists who conduct research in these many different labs publish their findings in two volumes. The first volume is an on-site report and the second will be published several years later, after more in-depth research has been conducted.

"Of course, they'll be bound in maroon," he says.

Rabinowitz says that since the scientists will work on their articles at the new facility, the University will get worldwide exposure.

"Many (scientists) are surprised when they see A&M," he says. "There's more down here than most people think."

operator give students a chance to go on drilling cruises and work first-hand with the best geoscientists in the world," Rabinowitz says.

"We have a staff of about 160 people and many are A&M students," he says.

A&M also is responsible for determining which scientists will go on each research cruise.

"We try to get a good representation from all the countries involved," Rabinowitz adds.

The program is managed by the Joint Oceanographic Institutions Inc., a nonprofit group of 10 major U.S. oceanographic institutions, including A&M's oceanography department.

But it is JOIDES, the Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling, that provides overall planning and program advice for the series of scientific cruises.

The ODP's drilling vessel, is named after the international group of scientists and institutions overseeing the program. The vessel was converted from a commercial drilling ship into a sophisticated floating experiment station.

"The ship underwent many changes," Rabinowitz says. "We have constructed a ship with experimental capabilities that can't be matched on land or sea."

"The ship is capable of drilling in depths over 25,000 ft. while most commercial drilling vessels can only go as far as 3,000 (ft.)."

The drilling ship is 470 feet long and 70 feet wide, with a derrick that towers more than 200 feet above the

Top scientists from around the world will meet at Texas A&M to discuss findings from ocean-drilling expeditions as an integral part of the Ocean Drilling Program, program director Dr. Philip Rabinowitz says.

The program last week moved to a new \$5 million facility in the university's new research park. Some of the world's foremost geoscience experts will meet in this new facility before and after a series of near-drilling cruises in an effort to reveal the history of the Earth from samples obtained below the surface of the ocean bottom.

The 60,000-square-foot facility is the largest and most sophisticated facility in the world for storing and studying core samples from the ocean floor, Rabinowitz says.

The facility also will serve as world headquarters for the international program in which world scientists will take core samples from waters over the globe.

A&M won the bid for the project over the University of Miami and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California at San Diego. The Scripps Institute formerly headquartered a similar program, called the Deep Sea Drilling Project, which conducted research from 1968-1983.

"The Ocean Drilling Program is by far the largest research program in Texas A&M," Rabinowitz says.

The 10-year program is the gem of the university's research programs, with expenditures reaching about \$30 million per year. A&M is ranked 11th in the nation in research funding with \$146.4 million. The ODP takes about 30 percent of that amount.

The program receives international funding from the U.S. National Science Foundation, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the European Science Foundation Ocean Drilling Consortium, which consists of 12 other interested European countries.

Each of these six members involved with the program contributes \$2.5 million per year to the program.

Rabinowitz says the Soviets will join the program in January.

As science operator for the program, A&M can provide a definite advantage for undergraduate and graduate students studying the geosciences, Rabinowitz says.

A&M is responsible for operating and staffing the drill ship and ensuring that adequate scientific analyses are performed on the core samples. A&M also must provide logistical and technical support.

"Our responsibilities as science

legislators and Common Cause are criticizing an offer by a Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority lobbyist to pay Harris County legislators for attending Metro cocktail parties.

Lobbyist Sandy Sanford, hired to help influence legislators to preserve Metro's 1-cent sales tax dedication, told the *Houston Post* in a copy-righted story Wednesday he expects each lawmaker who attends to leave the meetings \$500 richer.

Sanford wrote in an invitation sent to 33 legislators that money raised at two upcoming receptions in Houston will be divided among their office-holder accounts, funds used to defray expenses associated with legislative business.

State Rep. Randy Pennington, R-Houston, said he declined Sanford's invitation and said his colleagues should be more than uneasy about it.

"They should be incensed," he said. "It's such an outright attempt

to buy special interest from the Legislature."

Of seven legislators contacted Tuesday by the *Post*, only Rep. Tony Polumbo, D-Houston, was unconcerned, saying he believes the meeting is a crucial one.

MTA board Chairman John King said he does not consider the money payment for attendance.

The 300 to 400 invitations included a request for a \$500 gift.

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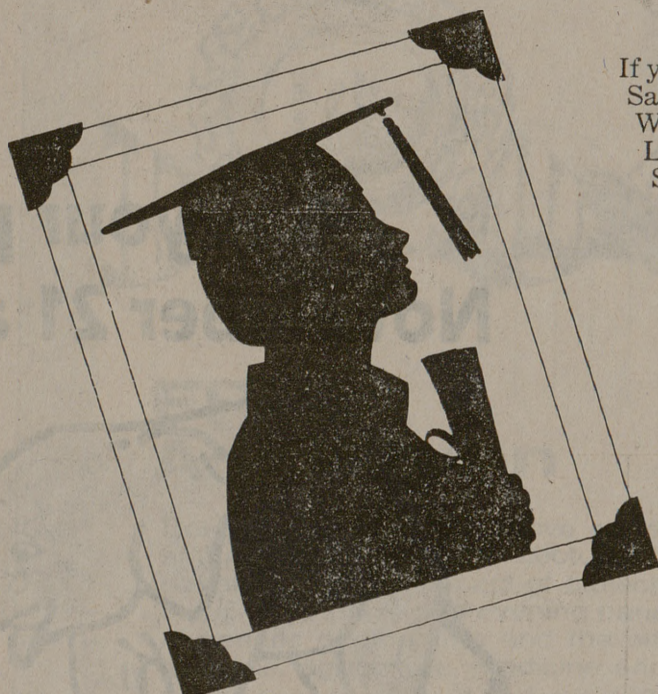
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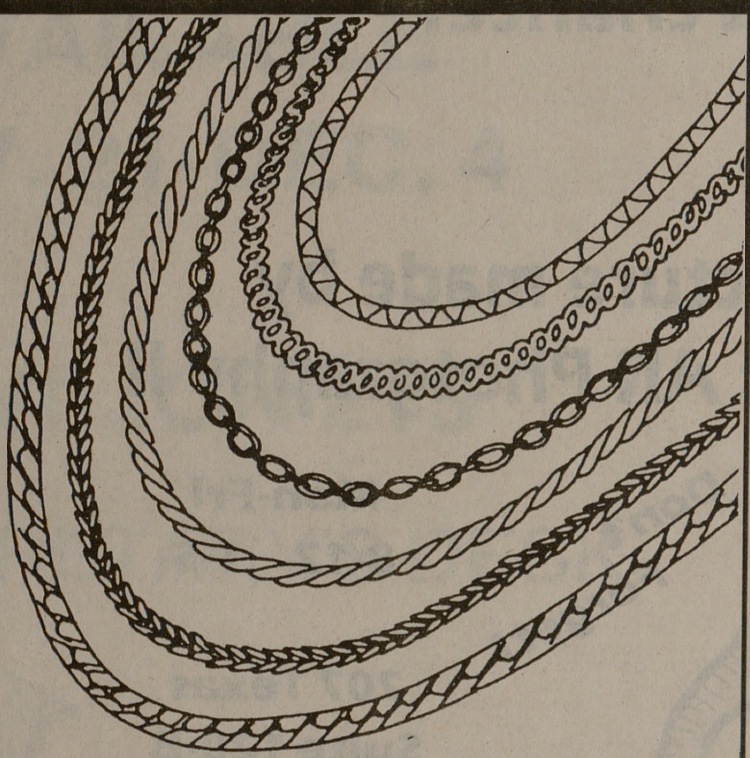
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