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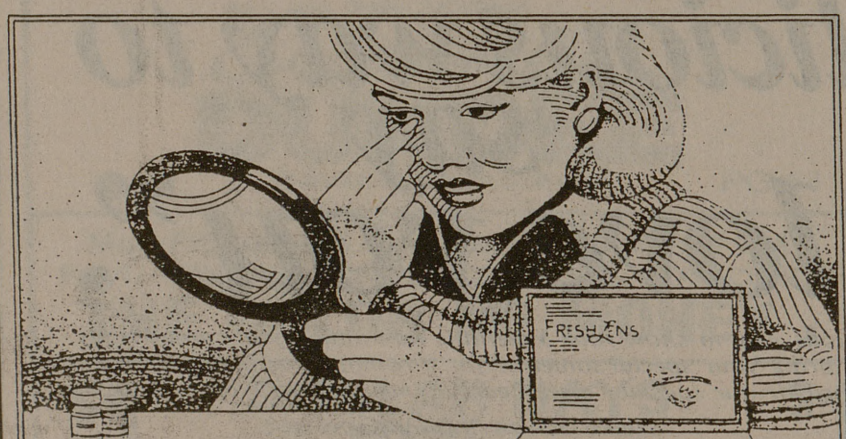
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Economic Outlook Conference

Officials say 1987 will be record year for A&M

By Olivier Uyttebrouck
Senior Staff Writer

Texas A&M officials project that 1987 will be a record year in two ways: The University may secure \$172 million in research funds, and the University may award as much as \$100 million in construction contracts.

Wesley Peel, A&M Vice Chancellor for Facilities and Construction, told an audience at the Brazos Valley Economic Outlook Convention that the University currently has 15 major construction projects underway with a combined value of \$70 million. During the next 10 to 14 months, A&M may contract 13 new projects, he said.

Peel said the contracts for the \$22

million biochemistry and biophysics building and the \$12 million parking garage may both be awarded at the Board of Regents meeting in May.

A&M also is considering a \$10 million expansion of the University Center, which will probably be constructed between the Memorial Student Center and Rudder Tower.

Peel said that the \$36 million special events center A&M hopes to build just west of Kyle Field is still on hold because of a lack of funds.

With many of the area's business leaders assembled for the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored conference, Texas A&M administrators seized the opportunity to describe the University in dollars-and-cents

terms, emphasizing A&M's value to the community.

Duwayne M. Anderson, A&M associate provost for research, said A&M may receive as much as \$172 million in research funds in 1987 — a substantial increase over the \$146 million A&M received in 1986.

Of the projected 1987 total, \$90 million would be federal research funds, Anderson said.

Nationally, A&M ranks 11th among all universities in the amount of money it receives for research, Anderson said. The money A&M receives from all sources has grown dramatically since 1981, when it was ranked 18th in the nation, he said.

A&M owes its funding growth in 1983 and 1984 to the \$30 million-a-

year Deep Ocean Drilling Program awarded the University, Anderson said. Now A&M is close to securing a companion project, the \$15 million-a-year World Circulation Program, also sponsored by the NSF.

Anderson said Texas has a chance of attracting the \$50 million Superconducting Super Collider because of the cooperative work and three other Texas universities have done at the Texas Accelerator Center, located at the Woodlands outside of Houston.

Anderson said the four-university consortium gained a national reputation by building a superconducting magnet that could become the heart of Superconducting Super Collider.

Houston economist: State will see job increase over next two years

By Robert Morris
Staff Writer

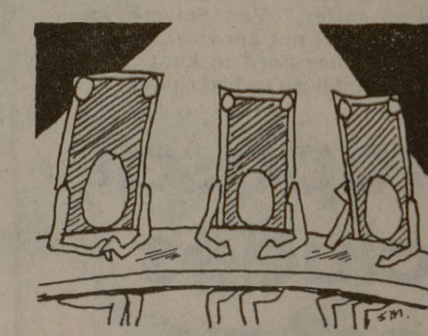
After an unprecedented drop in employment in 1986, Texans will see an increase of more than 140,000 jobs in the state over the next two years, a Houston economist said Thursday.

In a speech at the Brazos Valley Economic Outlook Conference, Dr. James Cochrane, chief economist for Texas Commerce Bancshares Inc., said that last year, Texas lost about 65,000 jobs.

Yet that small loss was tough for Texas because the state is accustomed to growing by 200,000 jobs per year, Cochrane said.

Growth is expected to return in the future for several reasons.

"At this time, we have several external forces shaping the way the Texas economy is performing," Cochrane said. "The first is the be-



lief that under the current leadership of the Federal Reserve Board, the United States will probably not have an erosion in the economic growth that it has enjoyed since the Christmas buying season of 1983.

"We have had an unprecedented period of expansion in the U.S. economy, and the overall U.S. economic climate looks pretty good this year. That's important to Texas, be-

cause each quarter our state economy and the U.S. economy are becoming more and more in sync."

The second area of importance is the world oil export market.

"There are some fundamental barriers set in place to keep the price from breaking through \$20 (per barrel) or from dropping below a \$15 to \$18 level in any serious way," Cochrane said. "So I think there will be some enhanced activity in the industry."

However, the bad news about \$18 per barrel of oil is the reduction it causes in domestic exploration, he said.

"Most companies can't engage in any new oil and gas activity unless oil is at least in the \$20 to \$22 per barrel range," Cochrane said. "Last year we lost 300,000 barrels of pro-

Developers A&M attract businesses

By Clark Miller
Reporter

Texas A&M is an important attraction for bringing new businesses to the Bryan-College Station area, three local economic developers said Thursday during the Brazos Valley Economic Outlook Conference at the College Station Hilton.

"We have a great advantage over many other industrial parks because of the presence of A&M," said Dr. Mark L. Money, A&M vice chancellor for research park and corporate relations.

Task force head: Texas must 'think nationally'

By Sandra Saldivar
Reporter

Texas has built walls around itself and needs to think more nationally to bring new businesses into the state, a co-chairman of Gov. Bill Clements' job creation task force said Thursday at a Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce convention.

Speaking at the Brazos Valley Economic Conference luncheon, Jim Adams used intrastate trucking

regulation as an example of one of the barriers Texas has put around itself. Not only are routes and prices regulated, but the commodities on the trucks also are regulated, and that may be one reason Texas is losing business to other states, he said.

Adams said that one discount chain overlooked Texas because the trucking industry is so regulated.

"Walmart, for example, settled a large distribution in Louisiana instead of Texas," he said.

Texas has more small businesses than any other state in the nation. However, Texas government has not been known to give support to small businesses, Adams said.

"The governor will be signing a proclamation to encourage entrepreneurship and small business development, because he believes the governor and legislature should reflect to the world how important small business is," Adams added.

To show that state government is

more attentive to small business, Small Business Development Center project has been started that will work in partnership with the Small Business Administration to act as a source of information.

Adams said a two-year-old development center in Beaumont, Texas, has been successful in helping new small businesses by providing such information as how to create business plans, get partners, finance and learn about bids for federal and state projects.

Experts forecast economy as 'partly cloudy'

By Melanie Perkins
Staff Writer

According to area experts who gathered at the College Station Hilton for the 1987 Brazos Valley Economic Conference Thursday, the economic sector forecast for the Brazos Valley is partly cloudy with a slight chance of rain.

Though most analysts are projecting an even tougher year for retailing in 1987, starting off with sluggish sales and consumer spending

growing only 2 to 3 percent, Dr. Larry G. Gresham, associate director of the Center for Retailing Studies at Texas A&M, sees things in a brighter light, at least for Texas.

He said 1987 retail sales in the Brazos Valley will be at least as good and probably somewhat better than 1986 sales.

Mark Arnold, general manager of the College Station Hilton and Conference Center, has high hopes for tourism in Bryan-College Station in

1987, even though estimated occupancy for 1986 was 42.8 percent, only .8 percent above 1985 occupancy levels.

He said Bryan-College Station is a good place to hold meetings in Texas because 79 percent of the state's population lives within 200 miles of the area.

This fact, combined with a vigorous new advertising campaign aimed directly at meeting planners, should

help the hotel industry in the Arnold said.

Steven A. Holditch, petroleum engineering professor at A&M, doesn't see such a bright future for the oil and gas industry, but after the trauma of 1986, he sees even a little confidence in oil prices very important.

He said there is a direct correlation between the amount of oil

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