

Employees believe outdoor fountains at A&M worth extra effort, expenses

By Melisa Hohlt
Reporter

Outdoor fountains at Texas A&M provide a source of aqueous beauty that makes their cost and maintenance worth the effort, two University employees say.

"A lot of people consider them (fountains) a luxury, but I think they give the University a feeling of warmth," University Center Manager Steve Hodge says. "They're as important as the trees and they're worth the trouble," Hodge says.

University Physical Plant Director Joe Estill agrees, but says one must be wary of upkeep costs. "They're a nice feature to have, as long as there aren't too many of them," Estill says.

The Physical Plant is responsible for the fountain in the mall area by the old Chemistry Building and for the Fish Pond across from Sbis Dining Hall, he says.

The mall fountain is drained, cleaned and checked for leaks twice a year, he says, but it also is cleaned when chemicals that aren't water-soluble are put into it.

These chemicals range from any kind of detergent, such as soap suds, to oil and grease, and are potentially harmful to the pumps that make the fountains work, he says.

Damage to a pump can be expensive, he says. A replacement seal costs about \$125 and a new pump costs about \$600, and because the fountain has three pumps, damage costs can be very high, he says.

The Physical Plant supplies the 300 gallons of water needed to fill the fountain and the water is recycled, Estill says. The water is only about 60 cents per thousand gallons, so money spent for water is not a major concern, he says.

Estill says light spots on the bricks around the fountain are caused by a reaction between chemicals in the water and the mortar between the

bricks, which requires the mortar to be replaced periodically. Another operational cost of the fountains is the electricity used for the lights and the pumps, which is generated by the University and costs about \$225 a month, he says.

The mall fountain is used all year, but Estill says the Fish Pond is only used during football season because the masonry is very weak.

"It (Fish Pond) is very old, very small and very fragile," he says. "We're just trying to hold it together for tradition as long as we can."

The Fish Pond may be well-worn, but the fountains in front of Rudder Tower and behind the offices of the Texas A&M Board of Regents are only 13 years old, Estill says.

Hodge says Rudder Fountain was part of the Rudder complex construction and the regents' fountain was part of Memorial Student Center renovation.

Unlike the fountain in the mall area, Rudder Fountain and the regents' fountain are cleaned at least once a week, he says.

Hodge says he was not sure how much water the fountains use, but they too use recycled water from the Physical Plant.

Electricity used for the pumps and lights is generated by the University, but Hodge says he has no idea how much it costs, although he says it's a small percentage of the University Center electric bill.

Hodge also says turning off Rudder Fountain at night wouldn't save the University any money. Maintenance costs would increase because the water would get dirtier and have to be cleaned more often, he says.

"By turning it off, you'd be trading savings for expense," he says. "We feel it's part of the University, and you don't turn it off."



Photo by Bill Hight

This fountain, located in the mall by the old Chemistry Building, is one of the fountains that decorate the A&M campus.

While the regents' fountain is turned off only for cleaning, Hodge says, Rudder Fountain is turned off when the wind blows water out of the fountain and onto people.

Estill says the mall area fountain also is turned off during strong winds.

All three fountains are kept run-

ning in the cold weather because running water keeps the pumps from freezing, he says. The only exception is if the temperature is below freezing and the wind is blowing onto the pavement. This can be dangerous because the water will freeze and make the sidewalks slippery, he says.

Program offers seniors research experience

By Deborah A. Jensen
Reporter

Although the topic of discussion is research, the participants are not university professors or graduate students. They are seniors gaining research experience in the University Fellows Program at Texas A&M.

In 1980, 35 A&M seniors representing all academic colleges submitted research proposals and participated in the program. This year's crop of 105 students was chosen out of hundreds of seniors who submitted research proposals to the Fellows program.

Louise Canfield, director of the University Honors Program, said any senior with a 3.5 grade-point ratio and with one fall and spring semester left is eligible to submit a proposal, but participation in the

University Honors Program is not required.

The Fellows program offers undergraduates the opportunity to gain research experience similar to that of a first-year graduate student, Canfield said.

The experience the students gain in research methods and analysis makes them good candidates for graduate school admission and corporate employment, she added.

The first step to becoming a Fellow is choosing a faculty adviser, she said. After the students find an adviser willing to work with them, they develop a possible research topic.

Emily Davidson, an associate professor of psychology and a Fellows faculty adviser, said the program gives students the chance to work closely with the faculty.

The faculty adviser works with the student from the beginning proposal to the final symposium.

Canfield said the main goal of Fellows is to provide high-quality learning through an apprenticeship atmosphere between the students and their faculty advisers.

The students do their research for two consecutive semesters.

During the research process, all Fellows meet in groups of 15 to discuss their research with other Fellows from different academic areas.

The discussion groups give Fellows the opportunity to experience the problems and triumphs of research in topics other than their own, Canfield said.

When the students complete their research, each writes a senior honors

thesis and submits it to his or her adviser for grading, Canfield said. Theses are presented for suggestions, and all theses are put in the archives of Sterling C. Evans Library.

The program ends in April with a symposium at which the Fellows present their theses.

Tight budget takes toll on Houston police

HOUSTON (AP) — Major cities in Houston are up but for the time in 25 years, the police force in Texas' largest city is shrinking at a tight city budget.

"If this trend doesn't improve, we're going to be digging our own graves," City Councilman Goodner said. "I think this is a serious problem and it may intensify."

The decline in the police force amounts to about 180 officers — less than 1 percent of the peak force of 4,618 in November. Police records indicate if the trend continues by the end of the year, depletion will amount to about 20 percent of the force.

Three municipal judges last week refused to sign a misdemeanor obscenity warrant sought by police against a bookstore worker who sold officers several explicit magazines.

Sgt. Gene Freudenberg, head of the vice detail, said, "We went in and bought the vilest, raunchiest magazines we could find and presented them to the judges and the county attorney."

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